

Uncle Sam's Strange Mail Carriers

By GEORGE W. MORRIS



Philippine Mail Cart drawn by Water Buffalo

To the average reader the delivery of a letter through the United States mail pictures only the regular and neatly uniformed letter carrier in shining brass buttons, who trips lightly up the front steps and hands in letters from all over the face of the earth. Yet the letter carrier, if the most familiar method of receiving one's mail from the care of Uncle Sam, is only one of many schemes employed by the government for disposing of the millions of letters annually turned over to the postoffice department throughout the world.

For instance, Uncle Sam, aside from the city delivery of letters and the rural free delivery carriers, has regular contracts by which letters are delivered by steam launches, by mail boats and by teams of half-wild Alaskan dogs. In Porto Rico Uncle Sam has native mail carriers who carry United States mail on donkeys; in Samoa the relay runners carry the sacks on their brawny shoulders as they race for hundreds of miles through the islands.

Native Philippine Relay Runners.

In the Philippines native runners thread the jungles, carrying letters from home to soldiers in far-away posts on the very outskirts of utter savagery. On the superb military and mail roads constructed by the United States war department crude native carts creek their way for hundreds of miles, while in the primeval wilderness of the Philippine jungle strange native carts, with solid wheels sawn in a single piece from the round trunk of some gigantic Filipino tree, keep the mile moving toward the address, often in a big American city.

Camels, aside from donkeys and big eight-horse teams, are used to draw the United States mail. In the Philippine archipelago the strangest of all the animals which pull the United States mail bags are found. These are the native Filipino water buffaloes. Strange animals are these, with many

uncanny humps on their backs and long, thick horns. They alone can be used so far in the islands as beast of burden, as the rinderpest still continues to kill all oxen and similar animals imported from other countries.

The government has been for years trying to find some one method of making American cattle immune to the rinderpest, but so far without success. Therefore the water buffaloes continue to be all Uncle Sam can depend on to haul his mail sacks in the widest section of the land of the Filipino.

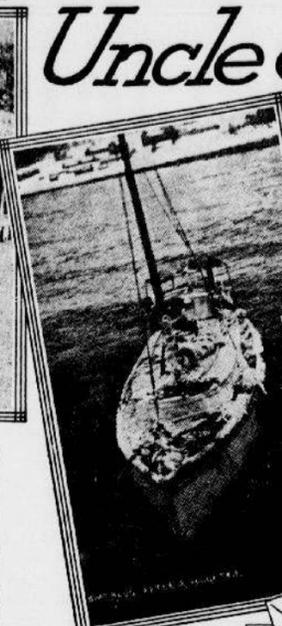
The handling of all mail in the Philippine islands, curiously enough, has nothing to do with the postoffice department. It comes under the jurisdiction of the war department, and, incidentally, the practical part of the managing is done by the bureau of insular affairs, at the head of which is Brigadier General Clarence Hansom Edwards, who, by the way, did some fine soldierly fighting in the Philippines and knows personally the conditions in the islands and the needs of the population, both native and acquired.

The view shown of the Benguet mail and military road shows that great highway as it is wending north from Manila on its way into the recesses of the island and on to Luzon, where it strikes off into small native trails. Only native bearers can venture to endure the final journey to deliver mail to jungle points of the interior.

In such cases the mail carrier not only delivers mail, but also provisions and other commodities. In many cases these carriers are the sole method of communicating with the outside world of civilization.

Despite the curious looking animals and quaint carts the United States mail is just as sacred in character in the jungles of the Philippines as on Broadway, New York.

At first the natives continually attacked and robbed the mails, but the war department merely detached a few hard-riding, rapid-shooting American soldiers, and since then there has been



Mail Boat Hegg after a Rough Trip in Alaskan Waters

no molesting of United States mails, in even the widest sections of the islands.

Queer Carriers in Hawaii.

Over in the Hawaii islands Uncle Sam has a letter carrier who uses a small gasoline launch just once a week so that the business men of Kawaihine, Lahaina and Kiholo bay and Kahala can receive their mail and hear how things are progressing in the remainder of these United States and the rest of the world in general. These folk will be a week in learning whether a national election has gone one way or the other.

They were a week in learning that President McKinley was shot and that Theodore Roosevelt had become president of the United States. This letter carrier has only 40 miles to cover, but the overland trails are so bad that it takes him over nine hours to make the 40 miles. The carrier draws a salary of \$1,100, but must pay all his own expenses, so the job is no sinecure.

Another Hawaiian letter carrier has a job of getting the letters from Pihala to the Volcano house. He makes the trip in about six hours. Last year he got \$1,268.86, and doubtless is considered a rich man by the natives of the island.

There are only 17 mails a year at Pago Pago, Samoa, and these come via Honolulu to San Francisco, a distance of over 5,000 miles. It is detail of this sort which cast an educational light on the queer places, and the vast distances covered by Uncle Sam's letter carriers throughout the world.

In Alaska and Yukon Region.

The Yukon river is not much known to the casual traveler or to the ordinary citizen. Yet it is one of the great rivers of this continent, a river that vies with the Mississippi and Missouri in volume and width, and is of vast length. On this mighty river for certain periods of the year the Northern Commercial company delivers all the United States mail from the swift little launch, the "Messenger," with a speed of 15 knots. It is a more shell, and yet day after day it drives its way around the shifting ice blocks and through the thin skin of ice on the Yukon river on a 1,200-mile journey, and has never failed in the end to "deliver the letter" as per agreement.



Delivering Mail with Dog Teams, Interior of Alaska

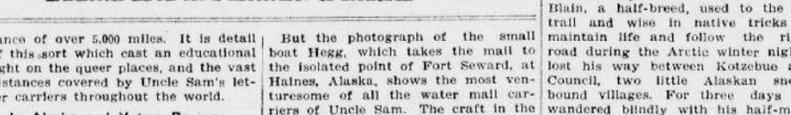
ka, laden with sacks marked U. S. M., that the palm for daring must be awarded. One of these trails, that from the postoffice to Barrow to Kotzebue by way of Point Hope—is so dangerous that only two trips a year by land are arranged for by the postoffice authorities, and only about 150 pounds of mail matter of all classes can be delivered by the postoffice authorities.

Driven Insane by Hardships.

It was only last January that George Blain, a half-breed, used to the icy trail and wise in native tricks to maintain life and follow the right road during the Arctic winter nights, lost his way between Kotzebue and Council, two little Alaskan snow-bound villages. For three days he wandered blindly with his half-maddened dogs, dragging the little sledge on which the mail sacks were piled.

Finally at Kotzebue sound he lost his way in a tremendous snow storm and his hands and feet became frost bitten. When he staggered into Council, George Blain, United States letter carrier, was violently insane, but he still guarded the precious sacks of letters. He had been four days making 12 miles, and he was so badly frost bitten that he lost both hands and nearly lost both feet.

His mind is lost entirely and there is no hope of his recovery of his reason, according to the physician at this outpost of civilization. Such are the meager details of this adventure of one of Uncle Sam's letter carriers in the frozen north.

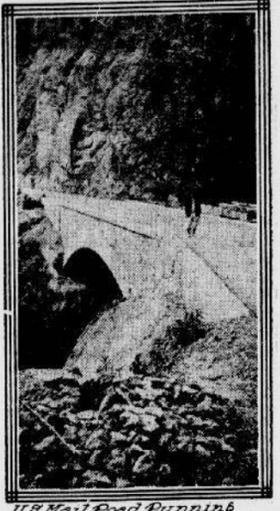


Launch used on Yukon River Alaska

But the photograph of the small boat Hegg, which takes the mail to the isolated point of Fort Seward, at Haines, Alaska, shows the most venturesome of all the water mail carriers of Uncle Sam. The craft in the photo is shown loaded down with ice, which has accumulated aboard the vessel on one of her daring trips through the Arctic waters.

The little vessel carries practically nothing but the invaluable mail packages. She is swift and light, and her daring crew drive her through ice floes and around huge blocks of ice that would deter any but the most hearty of Arctic mariners. Fort Seward lies just back of the Hegg, in the photograph, and this is probably the most northerly postoffice with regular deliveries of mail in the whole world.

But while the water buffaloes of the Philippine, the donkeys of the Porto Rican and the ice-clad mail boat Hegg are picturesque, it is to the dog sled teams that dare the icy trails of Alas-



U.S. Mail Road Running North from Manila

The dog sledges in an important section of the Yukon and Alaskan district form the only means of delivering mail from November until May. But Uncle Sam has arranged regular postoffices, and once a month or once a week, and in a few instances at least once a day, the barking dogs, half wolf in many instances, strong, powerful and wholly savage, pull on little sledges piled high with mail sacks, and the work of keeping Americans in touch with the world at large goes on despite death and suffering.

The dogs are usually harnessed tandem to the number of half a dozen. The sledges carry only the mail and the carrier must foot the whole distance.

On the sledges will be a few rations of dried meat and the snowshoes of the letter carrier. At stations placed at various distances along the nearly obliterated trail in the deep snow are log houses, where food and firewood are stored, and the letter carrier usually stops here to eat, and if his schedule permits, he sleeps in these snowbound huts.

But if the task of carrying mail to these out-of-the-way places of the earth is hazardous and expensive, the joy of the sojourners at distant points in seeing the familiar mail sacks, with the brand U. S. M. on them, is pitiable to behold.

The bills for this work are very high, running sometimes up to \$3 and \$4 per mail package. But the citizens of these United States pay no bills so gladly as that of furnishing mail communications between the big centers of human life and the most isolated points, no matter what the cost or the hazard of maintaining the efficiency of the mail service.

PLANS LONG BALLOON VOYAGE

FRENCH AERONAUT DARES TRIP ACROSS ATLANTIC OCEAN—HIS CAREER.

"If I can get a balloon large enough I will cross the Atlantic from London to the United States. Such a trip has been my life's ambition, and I will do it before I die."

This statement is from A. E. Gaudron, one of the most intrepid and experienced balloonists in the world, who has just justified his claim to at least one of these titles in breaking the long distance over-sea record by piloting his balloon from Alexandria palace, London, to New Alexandrovsk, Russia, a distance of 1,117 miles, as the crow flies.

If any man in the world warrants, by his extraordinary career, the statement that he has the necessary daring and venturesomeness for foolhardy feats it is this aeronaut. Few men have made so many ascents; he long ago lost count of the actual number, but he possesses record of no less than 3,000. He has risked death so often that his familiarity with danger has bred contempt for it, and he now speaks of his ascents as being but little more hazardous than the boating of the ordinary man in the street. It is doubtful if the counting of the men in this world who have been face to face with imminent death as often as Gaudron would exhaust the fingers on both hands. He can boast of having viewed this earth from a greater distance than any other individual, for from the St. Louis exposition grounds he ascended more than 20,000 feet, establishing a record that has stood ever since. Ballooning to him is an absolute passion.

Begins Career as Aeronaut.

"I was living in Paris when I first became interested in ballooning," he says, "and took to the business from the start. After making two or three ascents with a Parisian aeronaut, I decided one day to go up alone. I was only in my 16th year, and, naturally,

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not so cautious then as I might be now; otherwise I would never have done such a foolhardy thing as I did.

"When the hour came for the balloon to ascend an immense crowd had gathered in the suburb of Paris. To my disappointment the balloon, for some reason or other, would not rise with my weight and that of the basket combined. After waiting some time, the spectators, who had paid their money to see the performance, became impatient and not knowing just what to do, I suddenly decided that I would cast off the basket and go up in the ring. As you perhaps know, every balloon has, just below the neck at the bottom, a wooden ring, which holds up the car. This particular balloon was well built, the ring a good, strong one, and supported as it was by hundreds of ropes, it did not occur to me that there could be any danger at all in my making the ascent without the basket.

"So I instructed the men to cast off the car, and the balloon, minus its basket, and with my own light weight, shot up into the air. Of course the crowd cheered wildly and I felt quite pleased with myself during the first few minutes. I had not been in the air long, however, when I began to feel a sort of dizziness coming over me, and I became so faint that I could scarcely hold on to the ring. I could not account for the feeling, as I never experienced any inconvenience from ascending, such as is the case often with some professional aeronauts.

Overcome by Gas.

"Suddenly I realized what was the matter. I was being asphyxiated by the gas coming from the bottom of the balloon. My position in the ring, instead of in the basket, brought me quite close to the neck of the balloon. Almost all balloons are open at the bottom—especially those filled with hydrogen, as mine was. As the balloon went up, the cooler atmosphere contracted the envelope of silk, and thus forced out a lot of gas over my head. I made a feeble effort to lean out from the ring, so as to escape from the hydrogen fumes, but it was no good. I had no rope by which I could lower myself below the ring into a place of safety; and, even if I had had one I doubt very much if I would have had strength enough to hold on, as the hydrogen had made me quite sick.

"Finally, after some moments of intense bodily and mental anguish, I could not resist the terrible feeling of sleepiness that came over me, and I passed off into a state of unconsciousness. Perhaps this was the best thing for me, for I had fully realized my terrible danger, and I might have thrown myself out of the car in despair.

"After five hours in the air, during which my senses never returned to me, I landed on a haystack 25 miles away from Paris. As I was unconscious, the peasants thought I was dead. They carried me to a hospital in a small town, and I was ill for several months.

Seeks More Adventures.

"One would naturally think that after this adventure I would have been effectively cured. But as soon as I got well I began to yearn again for the excitement. No occupation seemed to suit me unless I was interesting myself in aeronautics, and finally I gave up everything and became a professional balloonist.

"After making many hundreds of ascents, from various parts of Europe, I went in for parachute work. Coming down in a parachute from a balloon is not, perhaps, so dangerous as

it appears. Quickness, a good eye, and judgment are, of course, required. If one makes careful preparation beforehand, seeing that every possible precaution against mishap has been taken, overhauling all the ropes, testing the slip knots to ascertain if they work properly, and all that, the actual descent entails few dangers.

"I always made my parachute descents with great success, and soon gained a wide reputation. Various cities invited me to give exhibitions, and I traveled about all over Europe. In the whole course of these varying experiences there was only one time that I felt that I was a 'goner.'

Parachuting Without a Parachute.

"Sixteen years ago—when in my 26th year—I was invited to give an exhibition at Trieste. I did not speak the native language but employed an interpreter to help me in giving directions to the men who were engaged to get the balloon ready.

"This balloon had been made especially for parachuting. It carried no basket, and there was no valve by which to let out the gas when you wished to come down. I was engaged in fixing the parachute to the bottom of the ring, and told the interpreter to 'lift up, gently.' He misunderstood me, and, before I knew what he was saying, he called out to his men in Italian, 'Let go.' I was sitting in the ring and the parachute was not hooked on. Suddenly the balloon shot up in the air and I found myself almost in the same predicament as in the case I have already described, with the additional danger that a strong wind was blowing me straight over the Adriatic sea.

"My first impulse was to jump from the ring, for I knew that in an hour or so I would be 70 miles from land, with mighty slim chances of being picked up. Before I could make up my mind to jump, however, the balloon had gone up 4,000 feet, and, of course, to jump from that height would have meant sure death.

"I had presence of mind enough, on this occasion, to climb out on the netting, where I made myself fast by passing ropes in the eyes, ears and mouth. After losing consciousness for a short time the balloon began to descend of its own accord, and I got back to a breathable atmosphere. The experience, however, was a most unpleasant one.

"In the recent long distance trips which I have undertaken there has been little element of real danger. The only trouble I ever had was from the natives of Russia, where I landed some years ago in a trip from England. These people seemed to regard the descent of an aeronaut as a godsend, and they at once proceeded to loot my outfit. They stole pretty nearly everything movable from the balloon, including even the anchor. Though the instruments could not have been of any earthly use to them they seemed to consider it their duty not to leave anything. It was only after I began to protest in earnest that I succeeded in getting the authorities to interest themselves. I had to bribe them to get some of my instruments back.

"Since that experience I have always gone armed, and I do not hesitate to give the people to understand that I intend to protect myself. I have had little trouble since I adopted militant tactics, and kept the officials well 'greased' with money.—London Correspondence Chicago Tribune.

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AGRICULTURAL NEEDS OF MONTANA

DIRECTOR LINFIELD CALLS ATTENTION TO OPPORTUNITIES WHICH NOW EXIST.

To The Missoulian:

I noticed recently in a daily paper of the state that during the past two years 5,000 names had been added to the voters' lists of the state, and that this meant an increase of 35,000 people during that time. Even if we be conservative in this matter and reduce this to 25,000 people, it shows a more rapid increase in population than Montana has had in many years.

Where are these people coming from? Why are they coming here, and where are they settling?

During the past two years in connection with the Farmers' Institute work, and in an endeavor to learn all I could about the agriculture of the state, I have traveled over nearly every mile of railway in the state, and have also made very many trips to districts more or less remote from the railroads. This has given me an opportunity to learn a great deal about the settlement of the country and also of its possibilities for settlement. Not a day scarcely passes that does not bring a letter to my office inquiring about the chances for the settler in Montana, and inquiries convince me that state and county officers are also receiving such letters, and so are a multitude of real estate dealers.

All these things are conclusive evidence that the tide of settlers is coming toward Montana. From the central and eastern states they are coming to this newly discovered northern state and spreading themselves by thousands over the land. North of Culbertson, in the northern part of the state, every quarter section of good land from the Dakota line to the Indian reservation and north to the Canadian border is taken. At Glasgow, from 15 to 20 miles north and south of the town, the good farm land is nearly all gone. North from Glendive, out 20 to 40 miles, the good homesteads are nearly all gone, and railroad land is being rapidly sold at \$8 to \$10 per acre for good farm land. South of Wibaux the good farm land has all passed out of government ownership. Along the new Milwaukee railroad from the Dakota line to Terry the good land is going rapidly into the hands of the settler, and they are spreading south for 40 to 50 miles.

The settler is also moving out on the benches south of Terry and of Forsyth and north of Billings into the Lake basin. The immense Judith basin is being rapidly homesteaded, and the large ranches are being divided up to satisfy the land-hungry settler. The government irrigation projects and also various state and private irrigation enterprises are attracting their quota of people.

This is a farmers' immigration. They are after the treasures of the soil, as the first settlers were after the treasures of the placer gravel and the mineralized rock. It means the second great step in the development of the state, and the state should use its best endeavors to bring this development to a successful issue, as with its fruition will come the next step, when the unlimited resources of

waterfall and coal and timber and mine will be combined in immense manufacturing enterprises.

Director Linfield Calls Attention to Opportunities Which Now Exist.

As I have studied this present movement of settlers on the ground, as I have met and talked with these people, and I have seen their homes and the circumstances by which they are surrounded, as I have read their letters of inquiry, I have questioned seriously whether the agencies already at work were not fully ample to make known the opportunities and resources of the state to outside people, and whether the state could not, with the greatest advantage, give its money and the energies at its command in working out the many problems these new settlers have to face—problems which must be solved if they are to meet with success with the new kind of farming in this country. For whether they settle on the dry farm above or the irrigated farm below the ditch, there is here a new farm practice as compared to the humid districts of the east. The man who follows eastern methods, who does not handle his soil and crop according to approved dry farm methods, who does not understand fully the great importance of certain methods of practice and carry them out fully, is doomed to fail on the dry farm should a succession of dry years come.

The newcomer on the irrigated farm has also a very serious problem, especially if his means are limited. To the man with limited capital and no experience in irrigation, it is no small undertaking to work out success on an irrigated farm, even under the government projects. With an 80-acre farm he will have to raise from \$240 to \$220 in cash each year to pay for the ditch. At the same time the land has to be broken and fenced, house, barn and stables built, horses and machinery provided, and the family kept. At the same time the community needs have to be met; roads and bridges built, schools, churches and municipal buildings to be provided. The man and the community who can do all these things and do them well must

crop all that 80-acre farm, and get it to produce a maximum return.

On every irrigation project and in every dry farm community there should be a demonstration and experimental farm established for a few years in a place where the local crop problems could be studied; where the people could see how the work should be done, and from which an instructor may be sent out to show how success may be obtained. These should be temporary stations, as in a few years they would have served their purpose and then the equipment may be transferred to another place in need of such instruction.

If the state desires to increase its agricultural population, the great problem that demands attention for the next few years is to show the many people who are already here and the very many more who are certainly coming, how they may succeed under the new climatic conditions that they here must meet with. A successful, prosperous and satisfied settler is the best kind of an advertiser, whereas the failure due to improper methods of farm practice will do more to keep settlers out and to move them on than many thousands of dollars could do to bring them in.

If my observations and inquiries rightly inform me, the farm settlers are coming to Montana just as fast, if not faster, than they can be helped to a right understanding of the farm methods that are necessary to success, so that if the state has any funds to devote to the settlement of the country, it should go into helping those who are here to succeed rather than in inducing others to come. The fact that the state is taking hold of this problem will in itself be the greatest kind of an inducement to settlers to come.

F. B. LINFIELD.
State Experimental Station, January 5, 1909.

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