



# SHOW ME <sup>1</sup> GAZETTE

Winter, 2004

## Inside this issue:

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| Show Me the News     | 1 |
| St. Louis Stamp Expo | 1 |
| St. Louis Pneumatic  | 2 |
| St. Louis Streetcar  | 4 |
| Medicine Revenue     | 5 |
| Prairie Missouri     | 6 |
| Who 'Ya Gonna Call   | 6 |

## Special points of interest:

- Beginning in this issue is a series on St. Louis Pneumatic Mail
- Streetcar Cancels
- Cool Covers

## Show Me the News

**H**aven't been getting newsletters very often? We have all wondered the same thing.

Here is the new plan. My name is Alan Barasch and I plan to issue the Show Me Gazette twice a year concentrating on Eastern Missouri postal history. Scott will still put out issues of the Gazette a couple times a year but concentrate on Western Missouri. We will divide up stories that pertain to other areas.

I got into this thing quite by accident. When the Missouri Postal History Society was forming, I was relatively new to Missouri but agreed to help out. At random, I picked McDonald County in SW Missouri as my specialty. I had spent time there when I lived in Rogers, Arkansas.

## St. Louis Stamp Expo 2004

This year, the Expo is February 20-22 at the Renaissance Hotel at Lambert-St. Louis International Airport.

The theme of the show is the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair.

The Germany Philatelic Society and the Poster Stamp Society are having

their conventions in conjunction with the show. There is also a regional meeting of the Scandinavian Collectors Society.

The Missouri Postal History Society holds its semi-annual meeting on Saturday, February 21st during the show.

In the past few years, I have developed the website for the Society that is at <http://www.mophil.org/mopohissoc.stm>. If you haven't looked it over, it deserves a glance. Much of the information is based on Robert Schultz' book, The Post Offices of Missouri 1804-1980.

Inside my first issue, we have a couple articles from David Semsrott on Prairie Missouri Problems and Illegal Use of a Medicine Revenue Stamp. David Straight starts a series on the pneumatic posts of St. Louis. Gary Hendren introduces us to the Street Car Mails.

## Credits

In the December issue, a number of bylines were omitted. The "Missouri's Platte Purchase Counties" article was contributed by Mike Nickel.



## St. Louis Pneumatic Tube Mail

By David L. Straight

St. Louis was the fifth, and final, American city to install a postal pneumatic tube. There is only a single recorded cover, Figure 1, having a St. Louis postal marking showing pneumatic service -- a 1910 post card of the American Falls in winter mailed from Niagara Falls, Ontario to St. Louis. The stains and missing stamp suggest that a canister became stuck in the tube while the card was in transit beneath the streets of St. Louis, allowing oily water to leak in. The St. Louis Post Office applied the two line purple handstamp, "Received through Pneumatic Tubes in bad order. No. 2"

Pneumatic mail transmission operates on the principle that air pressure seeks to reach equilibrium. A metal canister, holding the mail, with a leather collar providing a snug fit to the inside diameter of the tube, will be propelled through a tube if there is a difference in air pressure between the two ends of the canister. Using a system of pumps and fans, the canister can either be pushed forward with a column of air, or pulled forward, if the air in front of it has been exhausted.

The first pneumatic dispatch of messages was 1853 in London.

Responding to complaints from stock traders about the delay as messengers carried their news, tips, and instructions from the central telegraph office, J. Latimer Clark ran a 1½ inch diameter, 225 yard pneumatic tube from the Telegraph Office to the Stock Exchange. Clark's success led to the construction of similar arrangements in Berlin (1865),



Paris (1866), and New York (1877). In Europe, where the same ministry handled both the post and the telegraph, it was an easy transition for the network of

*The first pneumatic dispatch of messages was 1853 in London.*

tubes that distributed telegrams to begin also handling mail. The first pneumatic system built to serve both postal and telegraph traffic opened in Vienna in 1875. Berlin extended their pneumatic system, the Rohrpost, to accept

letters in 1876 and Paris soon followed in 1879.

Following a study of the European systems, Postmaster General John Wanamaker recommended that the U.S. Post Office utilize pneumatic technology to improve mail distribution in the largest cities. The first U.S. trial was 1893 in Philadelphia. Boston and New York followed in 1897;

with the Tube to Brooklyn opening in 1898. The Chicago Tube Stations opened in 1904, followed by St. Louis in 1905. As late as 1915 some of the systems were still being expanded. In a wartime economy measure, Congress cut Post Office funding in 1918, closing the Pneumatic Tubes.

Congested streets and intense lobbying reopened service in New York in 1922, and Boston in 1926. Rather than upgrade the aging equipment, Boston was closed in 1950, and New York in 1953.

Unlike European pneumatic systems that provided rapid service for individual messages, the American pneumatic postal tubes were built with larger canisters and used only for the distribution and collection of mail. Besides connecting the central Post Office with major railroad stations, the tubes distributed

St Louis was the smallest and least congested city to have pneumatic service; the volume of mail never approached that of the other cities. The Post Office appropriation bill of April 21, 1902 called for

3.16 miles of double tube to be built in St. Louis. One line was to run between the Postal Annex, 18th & Clark Streets behind



Union Station, and the General Post Office (today the Old Post Office on 9th Street); the second from the General Post Office to the Relay Depot in East St. Louis. During construction the routing of mail trains into St. Louis changed such that it was no longer important to have a pneumatic connection at the Relay Depot and that line was stopped at the Bridge Station, on the west end of Eads Bridge. As built the pneumatic system in St. Louis ran 1.85 miles: .55 miles on the Bridge Station line and 1.3 miles on the Postal Annex line. There are conflicting reports as to when service began in St. Louis. A 1908 report to Congress listed St. Louis as being in operation on October 1, 1905; while a 1916 report states that service commenced on July 1, 1907.

The 1908 report to Congress, *Investigations as to Pneumatic-Tube Service for the Mails*, provides some interesting statistics for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1908. The St. Louis Pneumatic Tube Company, a subsidiary of

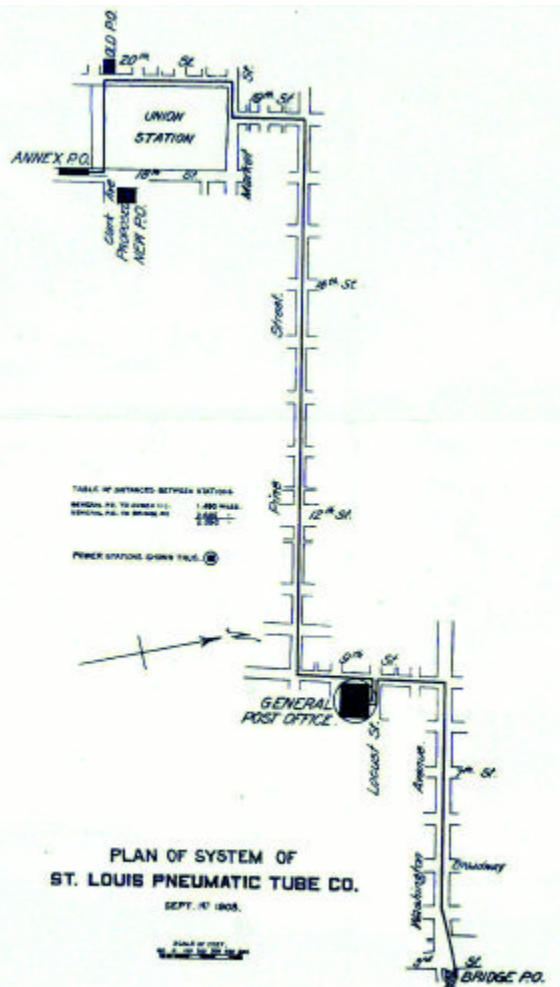
the American Pneumatic Service Company, in Boston, was paid \$54,821.15 for the operation of the tubes. The pneumatic system averaged 461,836 letters leaving the city and 197,651 incoming letters daily.

Hours of operation between the General Post Office and Annex station were 4:00 am to midnight six days a week and on Sunday 7-11:00 am and 4:30-8:30 pm.

While only 26% of the tube capacity is utilized during most of its 20 hours of daily operation, between 7-9:00 am when two or more railway mail trains arrived at the same time the volume of mail was beyond the capacity of the tube. Mail was delayed 15-20 minutes arriving at the General Post Office. The Bridge Station line operated 6:00 am to 7:00 pm daily and 7-11:00 am on Sundays. This line was utilized at about 4% of capacity.

While the automobile was not a factor when pneumatic tube service began, by 1908 the Post Office reported that at high volume times mail between the train station and the main post office was better transported by car. A 1916 report recommended that contracts not be renewed for any cities except New York and Brooklyn.

While an integral part of these cities, there are few collectable pneumatic covers, except from Chicago. Although any cover, postmarked or received in these cities during the correct years, is highly likely to have received pneumatic service, most of this mail received no cancellation or receiving mark to indicate pneumatic dispatch. Only Chicago made regular and extensive use of tube station cancellations. In St. Louis, like the other cities, the only covers absolutely certain to have been carried by the pneumatic tube system are those acci-



dentally damaged and receiving an auxiliary marking to indicate the source of the damage.

## Illegal Use of Civil War Medicine Revenue Stamp, St. Louis, MO 1881

By David Semsrott

Illegal use of the S. Mansfield & Co. 1 cent blue proprietary medicine revenue stamp RS174d to pay regular postage. Saint Louis, Mo. 1881 circular date stamp & duplex grid star killer ties revenue stamp to local address in St. Louis, Missouri.

Total issue of the S. Mansfield & Co. 1 cent stamp was 1,399,500 for silk, pink and watermarked papers.

The costs from the Civil War upon the Federal Treasury resulted in Congress passing the Revenue Act of 1862 which taxed medicines and other items.



Proprietary medicine & other manufactures were permitted to have revenue stamp designs made for their private use & at their own expense which are know as Private

### Who Ya Gonna Call?

#### Who Gets Show-Me

This issue is going out to a lot of people that may or may not have ever paid dues. It is going to anyone who has requested information through the website in the last year.

#### Membership Dues

Dues for 2004 are \$10.00. Make your checks payable to Scott Couch, Treasurer and send to Scott's address listed elsewhere on this page.

### Contributing Articles

Articles that deal with the Eastern half of Missouri should be sent by email to Alan Barasch at alan@mophil.org. Attach scans in GIF or JPG format. The article may be text, Word, or RTF. Write him with questions about submissions.

Alan's deadlines are January 15th and July 15th to coincide with the two major shows in St. Louis.

Articles that treat the Western half of Missouri should be sent to Scott Couch. His email is changing soon, so write to him snail mail for instructions.

### Inquiries

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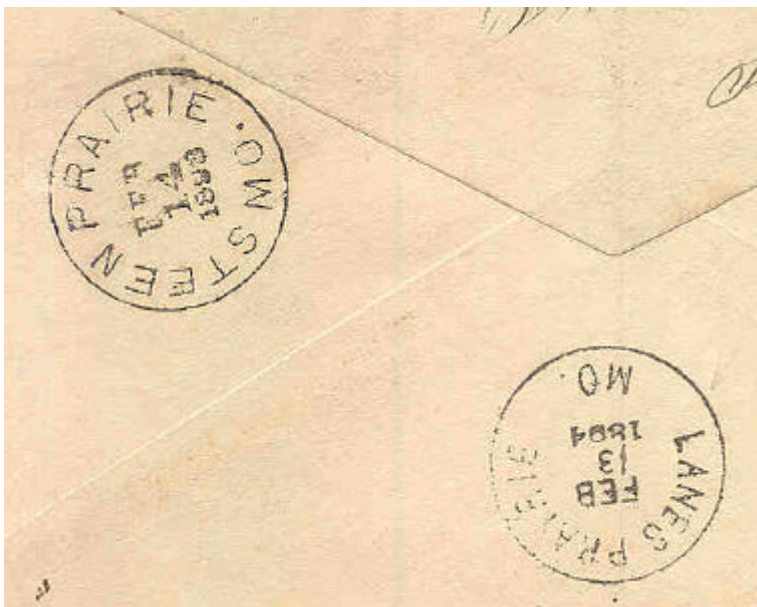
## Prairie Missouri Problems

By David Semsrott

New Orleans, La. 1894 machine cancel ties 2 cent Columbian entire to Steens Prairie, Missouri.

Maries County, Mo. established in 1855 from Osage & Pulaski Counties, had two Prairie post offices, Lanes Prairie and Steen(s) Prairie which were only a few miles apart.

The New Orleans cover arrived in Lanes Prairie



in error 5 days in later but the postmaster forgot to add the correct day date to the post office circle date hand stamp and inked in the "1" by hand to make Feb. 13, 1894. Assuming Lanes Prairie actually received the envelope first, it was sent on to Steen Prairie, the correct address. This time the postmaster had the correct day date but the entire Year was wrong, 1893.

Lanes Prairie: 1851-1914

Steen Prairie: 1860-1912

# Missouri Postal History Society

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We're on the web at:

<http://www.mophil.org/mopohissoc.stm>

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## Earliest Known St. Louis Streetcar Cancel

By Gary Hendren

St. Louis was the first city to set up experimental street car routes in August and September, 1891 with actual service beginning in October of the same year.

The success of the St. Louis experiment prompted the Postmaster General to set up similar systems in other cities. As the system developed, each street car was responsible for collecting, sorting, postmarking, and distributing mail along the various routes.

The name of the route along with a trip number was included in

the cancel. The last known cancel was in November, 1915; a run of almost 25 years.



This is the earliest known streetcar cancel.