

## Your Postal Podcast 49th Edition Transcript – June 2012

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**Watkins:** Welcome to Your Postal Podcast. This is Richard Watkins of U.S. Postal Service Corporate Communications. In this June twenty-twelve edition, we'll take you back in time to see how the Postal Service has been depicted on the big screen. We'll also hear what it's like to mail a package from your car at an unusual Post Office out West. Finally, we'll have our monthly roundup of postal news.

From "You've Got Mail" to "The Postman" to galloping Pony Express riders, Hollywood has found ways to incorporate the Postal Service into movies. David Rupert talks to an expert, who gives her viewing advice.

### **Top Movies with a Postal Element Segment**

**David Rupert:** You can't be around for as long as the United States Postal Service and not be a part of pop culture. From music, to television to the big screen, it seems like this American icon finds its way to pop up nearly everywhere.

As the curator of the Smithsonian National Postal Museum, Nancy Pope is saturated with all things postal. She's also a movie aficionado and has compiled a personal list of favorite movies that have a postal element. How the USPS was depicted depends on the time frame of when the movie was made.

**Nancy Pope:** The postal system in movies has gone through a bit of a trend as we look at it through the lens of what it means to us and how we interact with it.

**Rupert:** Many movies showed the mail as the central method of communication in American life.

**Pope:** Movies in the early 20s and 30s, where it is not just a part of life, but possibly *the big part* of life when you're talking about communication because not everyone still had a telephones or used them that often. So mail was so much more important to your daily life, and it's reflected in those movies.

**Rupert:** World War II changed American life, and that includes the mail.

**Pope:** And as we move into the Depression and World War II era, you have the whole, people in longer distances and people overseas. It's more an issue of what the actual mail means to me to connect to someone else.

**Rupert:** In the 60s and 70s, other communication methods became more popular, like telephones, so the postal department's role in popular culture changed as well. Many postal movies concentrate on the method of delivery.

**Pope:** When it comes to movies, you need danger. You need adventure. And really, nothing plays into that like a brand new transportation system. These are the guys that are going out in the territory that we really haven't explored before. They're the brave new world. That's always good movies.

**Rupert:** Movies depicting air mail show up three times on her Top 10 list.

**Pope:** Air mail in America really set the stage for commercial aviation. The Air Mail pilots were considered the bravest, wildest, wacky guys. They traveled every single day in conditions that other pilots would not even get near. So they were heroes at the time, but they were all pioneers and it's just a fabulous story. And that's reflected in a few movies.

**Rupert:** One of the movies Nancy likes is a backwards look at moving mail in the Wild West.

**Pope:** A serial called "Overland Mail." What it looks at is the Overland mail of the 1860s and 70s, when it was *the* only communication method available for most people. And so you have mail being – you know, if it doesn't get through, then the entire system collapses. The overland mail took not just the mail, but the people in the stagecoaches. So the focus is really more on the settling of the west, and the importance of the mail in getting people connected.

**Rupert:** Her personal favorite is a movie that centers on the Postal Inspection Service.

**Pope:** "Appointment with Danger" – it was a great movie. It's Alan Ladd as a Postal Inspector. And one of his friends is killed and there's only one witness, so our Postal Inspector has to protect her, and the only way to do that is to get involved with the gang, and infiltrate them from the inside and take them down. So he pretends to be a bad on-the-take Postal Inspector. And two of the bad, wicked gang members are Jack Webb and Harry Morgan, who become the "Dragnet" detectives just a few years later on TV.

**Rupert:** And what could be more exciting than a romance with a postal twist?

**Pope:** Cary Grant and Audrey Hepburn playing two people that meet and fall in love and there's a mail aspect to it. If you haven't seen "Charade," you have to.

**Rupert:** The number one movie on her list is an old favorite.

**Pope:** The number one movie is "Miracle On 34th Street," which came out in 1947. The movie shows not just what the Postal Service is, but what it means to us as Americans. I call it the quintessential Christmas *and* postal film. Kris Kringle actually goes to trial to defend himself and wins his case only after all these workers come in with sacks of letters addressed to Santa. And so, because all these letters are addressed to him and the Postal Service is a federal agency, that means that he *must* exist. (Laughs.)

**Rupert:** This movie fan has some advice for Hollywood's next blockbuster.

**Pope:** Anything that has Ryan Gosling and Brad Pitt in it, make them postal carriers, and I'm there!

**Watkins:** To view Nancy Pope's top 10 list, search for the Smithsonian Best Postal Movies on the web. And also be sure to add your favorite movie over at the forum at [YourPostalBlog.com](http://YourPostalBlog.com).

## **Drive-Through Post Office Segment**

**Watkins:** At most drive-throughs, you'll hear questions like, "You want fries with that?" But at a special drive-through window in Arizona, you're more likely to hear, "Would you like to add Delivery Confirmation or Insurance?" Peter Hass has the details about this unique Post Office in Arizona.

**Peter Hass:** Usually, when you hear about a "drive-through" Post Office, it's because a driver has made the unfortunate mistake of pressing the gas pedal instead of the brake while parking in front of the building. But at the Sun City West Branch near Sun City, Arizona, residents are encouraged to use the unique drive-up retail window that is open for a few hours each morning.

(Ambient sound of a car approaching and Sales & Service Associate talking with a customer.)

The north side of the Post Office has a looped drive leading up to a fast-food style window, where Susan MacDowell assists customers.

**Sales & Service Associate Susan MacDowell:** This is a retirement community. There are a lot of businesses and things, but for the most part its retirement, and I think our customers really like the personal attention that we give them. I think we have a unique opportunity with the window here to reach out to a lot of our customers that couldn't come to the counter. And they *really* seem to appreciate it, and we really like being able to do it. The services available here are the same services that are available at the window, except we cannot go get hold mail or do "Registered." We are here from 9 o'clock in the morning until noon.

**Hass:** With the Post Office situated within one of America's largest retirement communities, boasting year-round golf, residents can be seen driving up in both cars and golf carts. They all appreciate the unique service.

**Customer 1:** Well, it's very handy for me because it's quicker than going inside, by quite a bit.

**Customer 2:** I like not getting out of the car, and the wonderful people we have here. It's nice and convenient.

**MacDowell, assisting a customer at the window:** ...Two dollars and 12 cents. Do you need any stamps while you're here today? "No, I don't." There you go, we appreciate it. "OK, thank you." Have a great day! (Ambient sound of car driving away.)

## **News Roundup**

**Watkins:** And now, here's a look at recent postal headlines:

In May, the Postal Service announced plans to move ahead with consolidation of its mail processing network and a new strategy that could keep the nation's smallest Post Offices open for business, while providing a framework to return the organization to financial stability.

A modified plan to consolidate the current network of 461 mail processing locations will come in phases. The first phase of activities will result in up to 140 consolidations through February 2013. Unless the circumstances of the Postal Service change in the interim, a second and final phase of about 89 consolidations is currently scheduled to begin in February 2014.

According to Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe, the Postal Service's current plan meets USPS cost reduction goals, ensures seamless and excellent service performance throughout the implementation period, and provides adequate time for customers to adapt to the network changes. The PMG added that the Postal Service simply does not have the mail volume to justify the size of its current mail processing network.

The first phase will begin consolidating efforts this summer at nearly 50, mostly smaller, facilities. Because of the volume of high-priority mail predicted for the election and holiday mailing seasons, no consolidating activities will occur between September and December 2012.

When fully implemented, the planned consolidation activities will reduce the size of the Postal Service workforce by approximately 13,000 employees and reduce annual costs by about 1 point 2 billion dollars.

The new retail network plan, also announced in May, would keep existing Post Offices in place, but with modified retail window hours to match customer use. Access to the retail lobby and to P.O. Boxes would remain unchanged, and communities' ZIP Codes would be retained. This plan is also a multi-phased, two-year approach, with estimated annual savings of a half-billion dollars.

Thanks for listening to Your Postal Podcast. Now, we'd like to hear from you. Please click the "Comments" link on the YourPostalPodcast-dot-com webpage, or email us at YourPostalPodcast at usps-dot-com with feedback or story ideas for future shows.

And congratulations to Norine Gee, Joan Charnick and Martha Suwara, whose names were drawn at random from comments received from last month's podcast. Your letter carrier bobble heads are in the mail along with our thanks.

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