

EARLY CHICAGO SPECIAL DELIVERY

By Leonard Piskiewicz

After many years of collecting Chicago postal history, I began to wonder why Special Delivery covers from Chicago in the 1880s, the earliest years of the service (which began October 1, 1885) are so scarce (see Figure 1). I believe I found the answer, or a partial answer, in items that appeared in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* in the few months after Special Delivery was inaugurated. These articles were almost uniformly critical of and deprecatory toward the service, perhaps contributing to a public perception that the service was nearly useless.

The introductory story about the new service appeared in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* September 9, 1885 (p. 8):

SPECIAL DELIVERY. PROPOSED ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE SYSTEM WHICH IS SOON TO GO INTO EFFECT.

Superintendent Donovan of the carriers' department of the Post-Office is giving considerable thought to the arrangement of a system for the delivery of the specially-prepaid letters which are to be received, forwarded, and delivered by the mails after Oct. 1. One of the difficulties he naturally encounters is the want of any precedent or grounds upon which to base his calculations as to the number of messengers needed to deliver them. There is at present no class of mail matter which corresponds in any way to the letters to be delivered under the new system. Although it is surmised that many registered letters will be prepaid with the extra 10-cent stamp, the statistics of that class of letters cannot be depended upon, for the reason that registered letters are known to be the tardiest of all kinds of first-class matter, for they must often miss direct connections on account of the necessity for delay in order that they may be recorded upon the books wherever a transfer is made from the care of one person to another. The evidence that the public appreciates this delay as being incidental to the registry system is to be found in the frequent efforts of persons to send money or valuables without registering them.

Mr. Donovan says he believes the system will prove a valuable adjunct to the post-office and that its uses will be gradually appreciated by the public. Just what class will become its chief beneficiaries cannot be told at present. Whether or not the business-men will avail themselves of its advantages is not known. It is a known fact that they want their mail promptly delivered, but there is not much time lost between the arrival and deliver of a letter addressed to a merchant at his place of business within business hours.



Figure 1. Special Delivery cover postmarked Chicago JAN 23 88, to "City." Postmark shows letter "F" in canceller, indicating use by the Delivery Division of the Chicago Post Office.

Each carrier on a route makes from four to five trips per day, and complaints are infrequent. It is a singular fact that no inquiries are made in regard to the system.

Mr. Donovan states that provision will be made for a day and a night force of messengers. Although the law provides that the specially-prepaid letters may be delivered by carrier if they happen to arrive just as a carrier for the district in which the letter is to be delivered leaves, he says he expects to keep the work wholly separate and to intrust such letters only to the messengers employed for that purpose. He thinks he will begin the experiment with about fifty boys, increasing or diminishing the force afterwards as it may seem necessary. The law is so constructed that none of the boys can demand pay for the time they serve unless they deliver letters. Then they may receive as much as 80 per cent of full value of the stamps provided that sum does not amount to more [than] \$30 per month, which is the most any one of them may receive.

While this service is, of course, generally under the supervision of the Postmaster, it will be the duty of the Superintendent of Carriers to see to its practical workings. The Postmaster has now on record the names of about 300 boys who have applied for positions. The most of them are bright and intelligent, and many are the children of good

families who have never been in other employment. The facts that they are not to receive any allowances for car-fare and the prospect of hard work with an uncertainty as to the amount of wages do not discourage them in the least.

It is the belief of some of the Post-Office officials that the busiest time for the messengers will be nights and Sundays, when the carriers are not on duty.

A further report on preparations appeared in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* September 22, 1885 (p. 8):

THE POST-OFFICE.
GETTING READY TO APPLY THE
SPECIAL-DELIVERY SYSTEM

Postmaster Judd received yesterday and turned over to Superintendent-of-Carriers Donovan all the books and stationery to be used in the special-delivery service, which is to go into operation Oct. 1. It consists of record-books for the office, receipt-books to be carried by the boys when they deliver the letters, and in which a receipt must be written by every person who receives such a letter. The details of the system have been fully explained. In the published rules sent out by the department at Washington several things are apparently wanting to make it complete. First, no instructions have been given as to office management. The boys must have some one to superintend them directly who must answer to the Superintendent of Carriers for their general conduct, and the instructions do not provide for the payment of a salary to any such person or suggest the necessity for such an officer. The fact that there is at present no room available for the uses of the system is of course trifling, as the Superintendent of Construction is about to make such changes as will create an increase of available space. For the first few weeks the force will be operated from the general-delivery department. About 100 boys who have applied for situations in the service have been notified to appear today for examination, and it is probable about half of them will get places. Fifty at least will be required to start the service, and about 350 have applied. A certain portion of the force will work during the day and another at night. There will probably be two day squads and one night squad, and the boys will take it turn about, so that some will be on night duty a week or so, and then for a week or so on day duty. Mr. Donovan says he will need two foremen, and expects to receive authority to appoint them before they are needed.



Figure 2. Chicago Post Office in 1885.

The following story details the method for choosing messengers, from the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 23, 1885 (p. 8):

UNCLE SAM'S DOMAIN.
EXAMINING MESSENGERS FOR THE NEW BRANCH
OF THE POSTAL SERVICE.

Three hundred and twenty boys were examined by the Civil-Service Commissioners of the Post-Office yesterday as to their fitness as messengers for the special-delivery system to be established Oct. 1. The average appearance of the applicants was very good. The majority of them are school-boys, some being pupils of the high school. Not a few seem to be the sons of prosperous parents, and the general impression made by the entire assemblage was more than ordinarily favorable. A large number stated in the applications that they had never had any previous employment. From the large number examined it is the intention of the Postmaster to select 100 of the most efficient with which to begin the service. The examination was very simple, requiring about one hour for each class of eighty or thereabouts.

It was, nevertheless, of a nature to determine the question of their efficiency. All applicants were first required to write a letter to the Postmaster requesting the appointment desired. Then they were asked to name six of the principal banks in the city and state where situated, to give the names of ten business streets and tell the direction in which the numbers run, also to name ten of the points of interest in the city, such as the New Board of Trade, the Exposition, etc., and give the location. No appointments were made, and none will be made until the papers can be marked up and the averages made out. It will take several days to do this. The boys receiving the best averages will then receive notice to report at the office again to undergo a personal examination by Postmaster Judd, who will then select the best of the lot for the service.

The service began October 1, 1885 as scheduled, and the *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported on the opening day October 2nd (p. 8):

SPECIAL DELIVERY.

The Post-Office special-delivery system passed through its first day's experience yesterday. Reports were not received from all the sub-stations, but the forty boys employed at the Central Post-Office delivered nineteen letters in the forenoon and thirty in the afternoon, making forty-nine. This, under the rules, entitles the boys to but eight cents apiece for the day, but better results are expected for the future. It is also the purpose of the postal authorities to provide better quarters than the boys now occupy, and a room is being fitted up in the basement of the building for their benefit. For the present they are compelled to wait around in the lobby of the letter-carriers' department, which does not present the most orderly appearance, considering the fact that there are no chairs and that the boys are allowed to sit on the desks and railings.

A story the following day detailed a few problems with the system that had become apparent, from the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 3, 1885 (p. 8):

SPECIAL DELIVERY. SOME POINTS ON THE ORDER WHICH IS NOW IN EFFECT.

The Postmaster received a copy of some additional rules yesterday in reference to the methods of operating the special-delivery service. The new communication effectually settles one question—that the boys must work Sundays. The rule specifies that “letters that bear special-delivery stamps arriving at a special-delivery office between 7

a. m. and midnight of every day, including Sundays, must be immediately delivered. This applies also to drop letters except as to Sunday delivery. Drop letters deposited Sunday need not be delivered until the next day. This requirement as to delivery between 7 a. m. and midnight does not necessarily extend to the transaction of any other postal business after the usual office hours.”

If a messenger fails to deliver a special-delivery letter by reason of there being no one to receive it at the addressee's residence or place of business, it will be returned to the Post-Office, and be treated as any other ordinary parcel. The messenger is to receive pay under such circumstances the same as if the letter had been delivered. Postmasters are warned by the rules against permitting dishonest messengers to take advantage of this rule. Where a special-delivery letter is forwarded from one post-office to another on account of a change of residence it is entitled to special delivery at the last office unless an attempt has been made to deliver it at the address previously given, in which case the delivery fee will have been paid. The department does not make it a condition of the delivery of a letter by special messenger that the letter shall be addressed to street and number, but Postmasters are requested to encourage the habit of fully and carefully addressing letters as much as lies in their power. If no street and number are given the messengers examine the carrier list and city directory to see if they can be found there. If so, the letter must be delivered.

The department, says the latest communication, can make no allowance for clerk hire nor for incidental expenses.

Col. Squires says that the public does not understand that the ten-cent special-delivery postage stamp does not pay all the postage. The full postage of such letters is 12 cents—two cents for regular postage. The 10 cents is required solely to pay the expense of rapid delivery. Col. Squires also desires to have the people understand that the boys cannot wait for answers.

The number of letters delivered by boys between 7 a. m. and 6 p. m. at the Central Post-Office yesterday was forty-two. Ten letters with only a 10-cent stamp on them were received during the day.

The next day the momentum toward a negative evaluation of the system began to grow. The following was reported in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* October 4, 1885 (p. 10):

SPECIAL DELIVERY.
THE NEW SYSTEM OF LETTER-DELIVERY
NO GOOD FOR SEVERAL REASONS.

There is nothing so far to show that the special delivery of letters in the feature where its benefits were heralded the loudest-speedy transmission of letters from one part of the city to another-meets any want. There is every evidence that it will be a failure, and one does not have to go far to find the reason. It is only a half system. Elaborate official machinery might be devised for the distribution of a dollar a day to each of the citizens of Chicago, but the machinery wouldn't be worth much till some means had been found for collecting the funds to be distributed. As long as the new system provides only for delivery and not for collection its sphere is very limited, and as things ordinarily go no system of special collection can be devised. If the Post-Office Department could employ mind-readers, and thus determine just when every particular man and woman in the city wanted to send a letter in a hurry, a messenger system might be organized which would send a collector on a bee line after that letter. But till this can be done it is useless to expect any practical benefits from this new-fangled but misguided exercise of official ingenuity. As the system is at present employed to get any use out of it the man with an important message which he wants delivered promptly must take fifteen or twenty minutes tramping to the Post-Office to buy a 10-cent stamp and then deposit the letter. Meantime he could, perhaps, have hunted up the person he wished to communicate with, have called the district messenger boy, or have used the telephone. And in all these cases he could have been assured of something the Special Delivery Department makes no provision for-an answer. In any event he would be getting the worth of his money, while it is hard to see how he gets any return for the 10 cents he may be foolish enough to spend on a special-delivery stamp. The truth is the only improvement the Post-Office service is capable of in this respect would be more numerous collections and deliveries by regular carriers daily. As long as special collections are impossible it is nonsense to try to build up a special-delivery system. The ordinary way of transmitting important messages which require haste answers all requirements, and till the Post-Office Department can improve on this it should not waste its energies. As for the great mass of people, they will drop their letters in a box as usual and let them be delivered as usual. These remarks apply to the city delivery and not to letters coming from outside points with the 10-cent stamp affixed. But here, too, there is an utter lack of necessity for the system. Persons outside the city do not calculate the hour and minute when their mail will reach Chicago. The arrival of the mails is perfectly systematized under existing arrangements at the Post-Office. The hours of delivery when

the carriers start out on their rounds are fixed with special reference to the morning mails, and even under Vilas' new scheme carriers who "happen" to be starting out take any specially stamped letters for their routes. That most of this class of letters from outside points will "happen" to reach the Post-Office along with other mail matter in time to be distributed to the carriers, and no sooner, is evident. The persons who mail small letters can console themselves with the reflection that they are making gratuitous contributions to the revenues of the Post-Office Department.

The question of Sunday delivery stayed alive and within days the Postmaster General reversed his position, as reported in the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 8, 1885 (p. 8):

SPECIAL DELIVERY.

In answer to Postmaster Judd's telegram inquiring whether specially-prepaid letters are entitled to Sunday delivery, the following letter was received yesterday from the Acting Third-Assistant Postmaster-General:

The Postmaster-General directs me to say that, upon subsequent consideration, it has been deemed best to modify the previous direction of the department so as not to impose upon Postmasters the duty to request special-delivery messengers to report Sunday, nor to keep their offices open in any different manner that day from what is now provided by regulation. Postmasters will be at liberty, however, to deliver special delivery letters arriving Sundays if their business arrangements can be conveniently adapted.

In accordance with these instructions Mr. Judd has ordered the Sunday delivery of specially-prepaid letters to be discontinued.

A few reports of the level of activity with the new special delivery service were published during the first two months. The report for the first month in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* of November 5, 1885 (p. 8) began with a less than enthusiastic appraisal:

THE POST OFFICE THE FIRST MONTH OF THE SPECIAL DELIVERY NOT A BRILLIANT SUCCESS.

The first monthly report of the transactions of the special-delivery department of the Post-Office was made by the superintendent of the general delivery to the Postmaster yesterday. It covers the business of the special messengers for the month of October. The number of messengers employed was ninety-seven; number of special-delivery

letters arriving in the mails from other places, 7,483; number of special-delivery letters deposited for local delivery, 1,748; number of special prepaid letters delivered by regular messengers and substitute carriers, 8,879; number of such letters that failed to be delivered by messengers on account of the temporary absence of the persons to whom addressed and which were subsequently delivered by the regular carriers, 352. The total compensation to messengers for the work done amounts to \$738; average compensation to each messenger for the month, \$7.71; total number of trips made by messengers, 7,032; average number of letters delivered each trip by messenger, 1 26-100. The average time of delivery of letters after their arrival is put down at eighteen minutes. It has been discovered that the failure to deliver specially prepaid letters arriving Sunday does not affect the volume of such receipts. The Sunday average is 502. The number of special-delivery letters mailed to other places was 2,038. The value of special delivery stamps sold was \$1,692. The messenger-boys are not at all satisfied with their earnings, and some talk of leaving as soon as they got their pay. Better results are, however, expected this month and next, especially next month, during the holidays and the approach to them.

Statistics for the next month, November, were similar to the October, as reported in the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 5, 1885 (p. 3):

THE POST OFFICE.

NOTES.

During the month of November there were ninety-one messengers employed in the special delivery service, a total of 4,227 trips made, and 1.92 letters delivered each trip by each messenger. There were 6,945 special delivery letters received by mail 1,198 deposited in the Chicago office, 7,651 letters delivered, and 492 failed of delivery. The total compensation paid messengers was \$651—an average of \$7.15 each—and \$471 worth of special delivery stamps was sold during the month.

A question of the deliverability of postal cards by special delivery was treated by the Tribune writers with a certain negative, condescending attitude; from the *Chicago Daily Tribune* October 21, 1885 (p. 8):

A SPECIAL DELIVERY PROBLEM.

One of those busybodies who lie awake at nights thinking up things for other people to answer has submitted the question to the Post-Office authorities whether a postal-card bearing a specially prepaid

stamps prepaid stamp for immediate delivery may be delivered by special messenger. There has been no ruling by the Postmaster-General on this question, but it is believed that such ruling whenever made, will be to the effect that the service was not designed for the expedition of anything but sealed letters. It is believed that a postal-card could be made eligible to such delivery by paying the full letter postage or by pasting a one cent stamp on the face of it. At all events, it has been the custom to deliver postal-cards thus stamped when their character as cards has been spoiled by pasting on a newspaper clipping or some thing of that sort. The card in such a case is treated as a letter. It is a question how far this practice may be carried without encroaching upon the rule which forbids the use of the face of the card for any purpose other than the address. To insure delivery it is safer to use an envelope.

During the months following the start of special delivery service, the *Tribune* published a few negative letters to the editor regarding the new service, such as this example from October 13, 1885 (p. 9):

THE SPECIAL DELIVERY A FAILURE.

CHICAGO, Oct. 12—[Editor of The Tribune.]—I wish to show to the people the Democratic Administration Postmaster's way of delivering letters under the special postal-delivery system for immediate delivery. The 10-cent stamp on the letter says "secures immediate delivery." I received a letter this morning at 7:12 which in this city at 7 p. m. Saturday. The letter was directed plainly to my place of residence, and was prepaid two cents regular postage, also 10-cent special-delivery stamp, and yet was thirty-six hours in getting from the Post-Office to No. 98 De Kalb street. The facilities for buying these stamps through the country seem to be perfect, but the delivery part is worse than a fraud, and the sender has a right to expect his extra postage which he has paid has secured the delivery sooner than in the ordinary way.

Respectfully, J. F. LYON, 177 La Salle street.

[The fault is not with the Chicago Post-Office but with the department at Washington, which recently decided that there should be no Sunday deliveries of these "immediate-delivery" letters, a decision which robs the plan of a good portion of what merit it possesses.]

Two months after the system, the *Tribune* published another evaluation – again negative – from the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 29, 1885 (p. 3):

SPECIAL DELIVERY.

As in Other Cities, the System Has Proved
a Failure in Chicago.

How the Public's Money Is Taken Under False Pretenses –
No Reparation.

Further Illustrations of Blundering Post-Offices Managed
by New-Fledged Officials.

A correspondent calls attention to the fact that at the end of the first month of the special-delivery system Postmaster Judd pooled the percentage allowed the messengers for delivery, eight cents per letter, and divided it equally among the 100 boys serving as messengers. By this arrangement each lad received about \$7 no matter how many or how few letters he delivered, and this the correspondent thinks is decidedly unjust. He believes that the framer of the law and Congress intended that the pay of the messengers should average \$1 a day under the 80 per cent allowed them for their services, and he suggests that at the coming session of Congress an effort be made to so amend the law as to insure to the messengers at least \$1 a day.

The trouble is not with Mr. Judd but with the people, who will not patronize the system which is only half a system which provides for the delivery of letters and makes no sort of an arrangement for their collection. As it now exists the scheme is an absurdity. A man who desires to avail himself of the special delivery must go perhaps a mile or two to the Post-Office to buy and affix his 10-cent stamp to his letter, which is then turned over to a messenger, who may, perhaps, only have to go a few blocks to deliver it. It is so much easier and speedier to summon a district messenger and have the message delivered without the tramp to the Post-Office that the majority of people prefer to do that way. Inasmuch as the public refuses to use the special-delivery system there should be no attempt to pay the 100 messengers more money, but Mr. Judd should cut down the force till it corresponds with the demands upon the department, even if not more than six boys are required, and then they will be kept busy and make fair wages. It is evident from the records of the Post-Office that the special-delivery system as it now exists is bound to be a failure. The books of the New York office, for instance, show a remarkable decrease in the sale of the special stamps, the number purchased during the first half of November being less than half the sales for the first two weeks of October. The decrease at the Chicago Post-Office is nearly as great, and there are many other evidences that the system is growing in disfavor.

Appended to this article was another letter to the editor (again, November 29, 1885, p. 3):

A SAMPLE CASE.

Here is an illustration of how the system works:

CHICAGO, Nov. 28.—[Editor of The Tribune.]—To you the fine working of the ‘special-delivery’ stamp and the attention shown to letters which have such stamp attached by the Post-Office force, let me give you an instance which you can use if you see fit. Last Monday, Nov. 23, I took a valuable letter to the Post-Office at 2 p. m. After registering the letter I put on a special-delivery stamp so as to insure its immediate delivery at the place of destination, New Orleans. Hearing nothing in answer to the letter, which should have reached New Orleans Wednesday, I inquired at the Post-Office today for the reason. I found that the registered mail for New Orleans closed at 3 p. m., that my letter, although mailed not later than 2:15 p. m., had not been mailed that evening, but had remained until the next morning’s mail and thereby delaying the delivery forty-eight hours, since registered letters are not delivered holidays, as one of the carriers told me today. Now, it seems to me that letters having special-delivery stamps attached, especially registered letters, should receive the same attention at the office of mailing as at their destination. Also that when the regular mail closes at 7 p. m. it is not necessary to close the registered mail so much earlier that valuable letters, if they happen to be mailed within a half hour of the closing, should be delayed about fifteen hours before they leave the Post-Office.

NAT. A. MAYER.

A look at a calendar explains why the letter described was two days late in delivery: The first day lost resulted from failure to be sent in Monday’s registered mail; the second day was lost because when the letter arrived in New Orleans on Thursday, it was Thanksgiving Day, a holiday, and mail was not delivered.

Another letter further faulting the system appeared in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* January 1, 1886 (p. 6):

THE SPECIAL DELIVERY.

CHICAGO, Dec. 31.—[Editor of The Tribune.]—Wishing to reach a party through the mails, and being desirous of his receiving in the same day, I bought a special-delivery stamp, and at 4:15 p. m. placed my letter in the Post-Office. It was delivered after 8 o’clock the next morning, and it cost me 10 cents to learn that letters with the additional stamp are not delivered west of Ashland avenue or South of Twenty-

fifth street after 4 o'clock p. m. As I had never seen this announcement made public perhaps it might be news to others and worthy of space in your columns. If the system is worth anything it is worth doing well, and should include the entire city. Yours, etc., in favor of REFORM.

And yet a third letter, to the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 18, 1886 (p. 9):

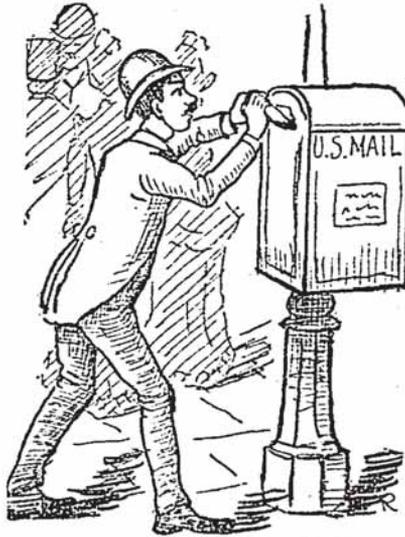
THE SPECIAL DELIVERY.

CHICAGO, Feb. 17.—[Editor of The Tribune.]—As a demonstration of the perfection of the special delivery system permit me to state the following: I mailed a letter at noon yesterday by special delivery and it was delivered at Cottage Grove, near Twenty-fifth street, less than three miles away, at 5:35 p. m. The postmarks on the front and rear told the tale—the first indicating 1 p. m. and the last 5 p. m. The mail carrier makes a round about 4 o'clock, and if the letter had been mailed in the ordinary way it would in all probability have been delivered by him, the “special service” taking an hour and a half longer. J. H.

The *Tribune* published only negative letters; no letters praising the system saw print. Finally, two months after special delivery began, the *Tribune* published an illustrated story (most of the rest of the paper did not carry pictures at that time) that was fictitious but appears to have been intended to show all that was wrong with the system and more. The following appeared in the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Sunday, November 29, 1885 (p. 27):

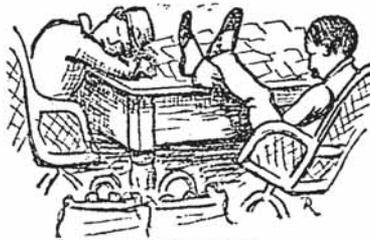
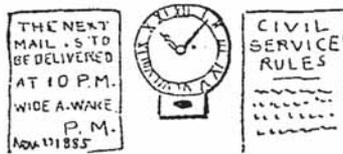
A SPECIAL-DELIVERY BOY. WILLIAM MAHONE. WHO DID HIS DUTY— A TALE FOUNDED ON FACT.

William Mahone was one of the special-delivery boys employed in the Chicago Post-Office in the year 1885. The special-delivery service had been hailed as a great thing by people who wanted letters to reach their destination in a hurry, and William Mahone was one of the smartest of the boys engaged in the work. That he comprehended the system, even at his tender age of 11 years, appears in the following tale, evidence of which will be recognized by any who have utilized the new service:



"IT WILL GO WITH A RUSH."

The above is a faithful likeness of Mr. John Smith, whose wife gave him a note to mail. It was a note inviting Mrs. Jones to accompany them to the theatre that evening. Some men forget to mail their wives' letters, carrying the letters around in their pockets until they are almost worn out and then burning them, because to mail them would be to give themselves away. But Mr. John Smith was not that sort of man. He not only mailed his wife's letter promptly, but he put a special-delivery stamp on it to insure its rapid transit. "It will go with a rush," chuckled Mr. John Smith.



ON THE ALERT.

The cut here presented shows that part of the interior of the Post-Office devoted to the special-delivery business. The clerk in charge is

represented hard at work as usual and little William Mahone, our hero, on the alert, also as usual, near him. It is William Mahone's turn to be "on deck" for the next letter. The other boys employed in the service are lying about on the floor, which is the reason they do not appear in the picture. Had they been standing at the time the picture was taken they would have shown.

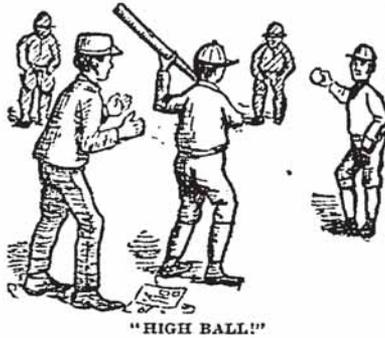


Here we have a faithful representation of the next scene in this interesting history. The clerk has been aroused by a passing brass band and is stirring up William Mahone to send him out with the letter which has come in. The expression on William's face is peculiarly striking. It is seldom you observe so thoughtful an expression on the face of a boy of only 11.



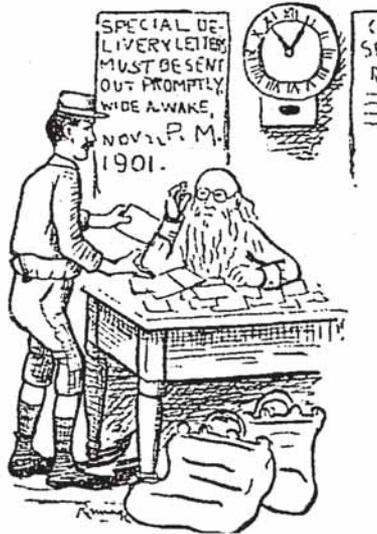
It was 7 p. m. when William Mahone started out with the letter, and, after going about a block, he concluded it was so late as to make it hardly worth while to deliver the letter that night. So, as he had 25

cents, he went to the theatre with some young friends of his and enjoyed himself very much in the gallery. But he did not lose the letter intrusted to his care. As already intimated, though so young William Mahone was a faithful public servant and would not lost a letter. It was late at night when he got home, and William went to bed at once. The picture given above shows the special-delivery boy at rest. He is dreaming happily that he had a letter with money in it to deliver, and that a bigger boy met him and robbed him and then whacked up.



It was not William Mahone's fault that, as he started from his home at a late hour the day after the one whose events have already been described, he met some young friends of his playing ball on a vacant lot. The vacant lot was the only ball-ground they had, and William Mahone was compelled to pass that way. He finally joined them in the game, but he kept his letter carefully in his pocket. William Mahone was not the sort of boy to betray a public trust. In the game, which lasted until nightfall, out young hero showed such ability that the captain of the Batterville Yellow Stockings, who was in the city and chanced to see the boys playing, immediately offered William \$23 a month to play as catcher in his club. William left with the captain for Batterville that night. Years passed. William Mahone showed great intellect, not only behind the bat but at it, and from the Batterville's passed to clubs of more note, until, in the year 1900, he was captain of the Louisville Lah-de-Dahs, a club which almost won the Southeastern championship. But William never forgot his letter nor that he was a swift delivery service messenger. He kept the letter by him faithfully.

It is now the year 1901, as will be observed from the date on the placard in the above picture. The faithful boy has returned to Chicago and it has occurred to him to deliver his letter. He has at last visited the address on the West Side, but has not found Mrs. Jones in. Mrs. Jones has, in fact, been dead for some years, but this is not William Mahone's



"NOT IN, SIR."

fault. If people will die before their letters get to them the special-delivery boys should certainly not be held responsible. William has returned to the office to report to the clerk that the person to whom the letter was addressed was not at home. It will be noticed that William's post-office uniform has become a trifle too small for him. The trousers are too far up on the legs and too far down at the waist. His jacket does not button in front and his cap will not go on his head as it should. But William must not be blamed for this. Boys will grow. The clerk, too, will be seen to have aged somewhat. He has less hair on his head and more on his chin than he had when he sent William out with that letter, and he has found the use of spectacles a comfort and convenience. If the artist could have done it he would have depicted the flush of pleasure and pride on the aged clerk's cheek upon recognizing his faithful messenger, but it is difficult to depict a flush of pleasure and pride in a plain newspaper cut. It gets marred in the stereotyping and doesn't get just the right color in the printing. It is on the clerk's face, though, all the same.

So has been told the simple but noble story of William Mahone, the special-delivery boy who could not betray a trust. William is portrayed as a little simpler and more faithful, perhaps, than are most of his class in real life, but some of them attain pretty nearly to his lofty ideal. It is a great thing-as now managed-the special-delivery service-such a convenience to the public! The wonder is that the public did without it so long!