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DEDICATION OF A POST OFFICE IN BARNARD, KANSAS

A Draft Speech Prepared According to the Instructions of
The Honorable Robert Dole

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the author or the Legislative Reference Service.

Robert W. Hess,
History and Government Division
March 17, 1961

DEDICATION OF A POST OFFICE IN BARNARD, KANSAS

It is a pleasure and an honor to appear here today at the dedication of a symbol of man's freedom and progress, and which has played an inestimable part in the growth of our country, the post office. We are so used to seeing these structures, availing ourselves of the services of this institution, and receiving its benefits, that we take it for granted. Such, I can assure you has not always been the case, for the postal service has grown with the nation, and has passed many severe tests, experimented with various methods, until today, we can say it has achieved a degree of efficiency equal to any in the world. How many of you have moved several times in the space of a few weeks, and have when arriving at your new abode, received a letter forwarded from your last place of residence? How many of you depend on the mails for news, be it personal or international, or for a check, or dreaded paying your income tax? I think we all have at one time or another shared the same or similar experiences of joy or sorrow. The mails have in every sense of the term, become the communications highway of the people. How did this come about?

The road of evolution was not easy, and many bumps and turns are visible, since the first postal centers were established in the seaport towns of early America. These were often in buildings frequented by the majority of men, a tavern or coffee house, where mail was left and picked^{up} by the captains of the ships that were the main means of travel and source of communication for the early colonists.

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Then in 1657, the Virginia Assembly passed a resolution which required all letters "shall be immediately conveyed from plantation to plantation to the place or person they are directed to under penalty of one hogshead of tobacco for each default." The first postal route established between New York and Boston in 1672, was a courier's path and later was to become the oldest part of U.S. Highway Number One, and to this day, is still a mainline of travel between the two points. This general pattern was followed elsewhere in the development of our vast continent and its resources.

The attempt by the British government to use the colonial postal system as a means of collecting additional revenue from their subjects was decidedly unpopular. It became additionally odious by the fact that these same authorities tried to censor letters sent by the more important colonial citizens, some of whom were to become the vanguard of a revolutionary movement which culminated in our successful fight for independence. Even before the ratification of our most precious document, The Constitution, the Continental Congress in addition to appropriating what little money they had for the war effort, felt it necessary to establish a line of communication between the insurgent colonies. This resulted in a line of posts between Falmouth, Maine and Savannah, Georgia, administered by a pioneer in many areas of human endeavor, Benjamin Franklin.

As we have expanded far beyond the environs of the Atlantic seaboard, so has the Post Office Department grown until today it reaches to the far corners of our great Republic, and brings joy to millions here at home as well as abroad. This is a healthy sign of

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growth, for in 1790 the postal services were restricted to letters, and only those not over a certain bulk. To handle 266,000 letters, there were 75 post offices connected by 1,875 miles of post roads, and by 1829 the brook having swelled into a stream of over fourteen million letters, carried over 115,000 miles of post roads. Today, 37,000 post offices sort 56 billion pieces of mail, ranging from the large bulky box to Aunt Emma to the paper saver who writes his letters on the back of a four cent stamp, address included! For us to say the mortality rate is far less percentage-wise than the year 1830 is amazing in the light of the huge bulk handled today. For this we are deeply indebted to the perseverance, devotion, and ingenuity of our postal service employees, whose sole objective is to serve you in the least obnoxious way possible. Another reason is that not many carriers today fall prey to marauding Indians, (unless they be under the age of six) a local highwayman, or a natural disaster. In fact the vast bulk of undeliverable mail is due to none other than the sender himself with his no address (incognito); the chicken scribbler, and the hieroglyph, who dreams of the glories of Egypt.

As we all know the motto of the United States Post Office Department is: "Neither snow, nor rain, not heat, nor gloom of night stays these couriers from swift completion of their appointed rounds." Of course there are stories to the contrary. Such a complaint may be found in the Oskloosa, //Kansas "Independent" of February 6, 1864: "Our mails may be returned in the language of

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the Kentucky constable 'Non comeatabus, up a stumpabus.' -- sometimes we get them and sometimes we don't; and this week, since last Monday, we don't. It is said that all coaches are detained above, (the town), but whether by mud or water or something else, we are not advised. As all that goes up must come down, we presume there will be a great downward movement some of these days." Or even when the mail arrived at its destination point, the human element would take over. The Buckner, Kansas, "Independent" of December 3, 1880 attests to this by the following: "On the 16th we had no mail from Kingsley on account of the slight snow storm that came up the night previous, and the delicacy of that kid glove carrier, ...the man that never has put in an appearance on any day that the weather has been inclement."

With the establishment of free rural delivery in 1893, first in West Virginia, to test its usefulness, and then rapidly expanded to all parts of the country, a new age of postal services was inaugurated. For the first time many remote areas had regular mail service to their front yard, and no longer had to ride into town and stop off at the postal station, ^{not} knowing if there was mail or not. People became aware of outside forces which could and often effected their lives, from the advertisement in the seller's catalog of a new foot balm to the news of a new Grange movement such as in the 1890's which reached the peak of popularity among the farmer who became a recognized force in national politics. It would be fair to say, that while there was and is a great deal of

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opinion against the Federal government impinging upon our freedoms, very few would argue that in this area it is good that the Constitution, in Article one, section eight specifically gives to the Congress of the United States express authority to set up and maintain a postal system. This alone is evidence of the importance this media of communication had in the eyes of the Founding Fathers in the overall scheme of establishing the basis for a healthy dynamic Republic. Postal laws restrict the use of the mails as a media for the dissemination of materials detrimental to the public interest and anything which comes to the attention of the local postmaster should be reported to higher authority. Such an instance is purported to have occurred in a community such as this, where ^ashort gentleman bounced into the local post office and angrily shouted for the postmaster, and complained of the following abuse: "I've been pestered by threatening letters and I want something done about it." Upon inquiry as to whether or not he knew who the offending party was the reply was firm and clear: "I certainly do, its them pesky income tax people." But you can't please everyone.

The coming of the cattlemen into the Barnard Territory in 1868 was the signal for others who soon followed. Here, as in many other open areas of the state, ⁱⁿthe 1870's and 1880's the new settlers caused a land boom, resulting in reckless and widespread speculation as to possible townsites. In this respect Kansas was the Florida of the 1880's. Often cities were declared as to exist on land devoid of not only people, but animals as well. The same was true of post

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offices, and more offices had only the ubiquitous prairie dog as a neighbor. This is what happens when you encourage the settling of a vast continent and try to serve a mobile populace, here today and gone tomorrow.

Such may be the case of our Post Office. The meager records indicating it was established as Minrod in May 18, 1882, had its name changed May 22, 1888 to Barnard, and has been a friend ever since.

With the speculation in a townsite resolved in favor of Barnard by the end of 1887, the Post Office Department recognized the existence of our community, and established the present station on September 20, 1888, with Isaac A. Ballard as postmaster. In the context of Kansas history, this was four years after the demise of the notorious Dalton Brothers gang as they were attempting to rob the Coffeyville Bank, and five years before the opening of the Cherokee Strip, one of the last large public land holdings to be opened for settlement in Kansas.

Barnard, being settled by 1888, was incorporated in 1904, and according to one county history had a population in 1910 of 425 individuals. The account also felt it was pertinent to mention the town had "a money order post office with one rural delivery route, which is a benefit to the entire community," as true then as it is today.

With the expansion of the means of transportation in the latter nineteenth century, and the construction of a vast highway network

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and the evolution of airmail routes in the twentieth century, we are seeing a new era in postal services. Now we may receive a letter from a dear one in Anarctica, or send a package to a son stationed in one of our far-flung outposts necessary for the defense of our freedom.

In the past, the arrival of mail was more often than not, a happy moment and perhaps one of frustration; for it might arrive at anyone of several spots in or near town, chosen at the whim of the deliverer. The Buckner Kansas "Independent," in 1880 relates such an experience: "We started out on a Monday last to get our mail. We went to a geographical center, the supposed location of the office, but it warn't thar. We went to the house of the postmaster, a distance of about a mile from the supposed location of the office, but it warn't thar. We learned, however, that Mr. Fulton had the key and that he would open the mail. The question with us then was one which bothered us considerable, that is, whether we would find Mr. Fulton at his boarding house, or whether we would find him elsewhere... We succeeded after a time to find him, and the mail was opened. This is attending to the mail with a vengeance. Sometimes it is opened one place, and sometimes another." I think it is indeed fortunate that we have such a beautiful new building to remind us of the fortunate and unfortunate postal experiences of our forefathers and the efficient and kindly manner in which this arm of our Federal government serves us all. We no longer need guess where our next mail is to be brought, it being delivered promptly to

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our very door.

What more appropriate moment could we chose to dedicate this symbol of public service than this, the Centennial year of the admission of the great state of Kansas into the Union. We will commemorate this event in many ways and forms, among them by a special postal stamp issue on May the tenth at Council Bluffs. Let us, on this the one hundred and eighty-sixth anniversary of the founding of our postal service, gratefully acknowledge its devotion to the service of all of our citizenry; too often taken for granted, and missed only when it ceases to exist. Let this office stand as a testimony to our freedom and the dissemination of knowledge to all men everywhere.

DEDICATION OF A POST OFFICE IN BARNARD, KANSAS

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regular mail service and no longer had to ride into town and stop off at the postal station, not knowing if there was mail or not. People became aware of outside forces which could, and often did, affect their lives. It would be fair to say, that while there was and is a great deal to say about the Federal government constantly impinging upon our freedoms, very few would ~~argue~~ ^{disagree} that in this area it is good the Constitution, Article one, Section eight, specifically gives Congress express authority to set up and maintain a postal system. This alone is evidence of the importance this media of communication had in the eyes of the Founding Fathers in the overall scheme of establishing the basis for a healthy dynamic Republic.

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With the expansion of means of transportation in the latter nineteenth century, construction of a vast highway network and the evolution of airmail routes in the twentieth century, we are seeing a new era in postal services.

The first air mail flight was made in 1918 between New York and Washington. The post office operated its own planes in the beginning, but began contracting this service with private carriers in 1926. It is credited with furthering night flying by insisting the mail be sent with the least possible delay. The use of air mail has mushroomed until today some 97 million ton-miles of air mail are carried annually by domestic airlines.

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As we look ahead, we are just entering a new phase in the field of transportation and communications---the missile and space age. We look to the possibility of instant transmission of mail in the near future, as I am sure many of you who are here today did on the possibility of air mail flight years ago.

We already have had a missile mail delivery. On June 8, 1959, a Regulus missile carried a historic load of 3000 letters one thousand miles from a submarine to the coast of Florida. It is not within the realm of the impossible, indeed with our technical progress today, it is not even improbable that within a short time we will have coast-to-coast mail delivery in minutes instead of hours.

I think it is indeed fortunate that we have such a beautiful new building to remind us of both the fortunate and unfortunate postal experiences of our forefathers, and the efficient and kindly manner in which this arm of our Federal government serves us all.

What more appropriate moment could we choose to dedicate this symbol of public service than this, the Centennial year of our great state into the Union.

Let us, on this the one hundred and eighty-sixth anniversary of the founding of our postal service, gratefully acknowledge its devotion to the service of all of our citizenry, too often taken for granted, and missed only when it ceases to exist.

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I would like to close by quoting the words of Charles W. Eliot which has been inscribed on the face of the central office in Washington, D.C.:

"Messenger of sympathy and love,
servant of parted friends,
consoler of the lonely,
bond of the scattered family,
enlarger of the common life,
carrier of news and knowledge,
instrument of trade and industry,
promoter of mutual acquaintance,
of peace and good will among men
and Nations."

This is what your post office means to you and all Americans.