

THE PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD SYSTEM

Broad Street Station
PHILADELPHIA, PA.

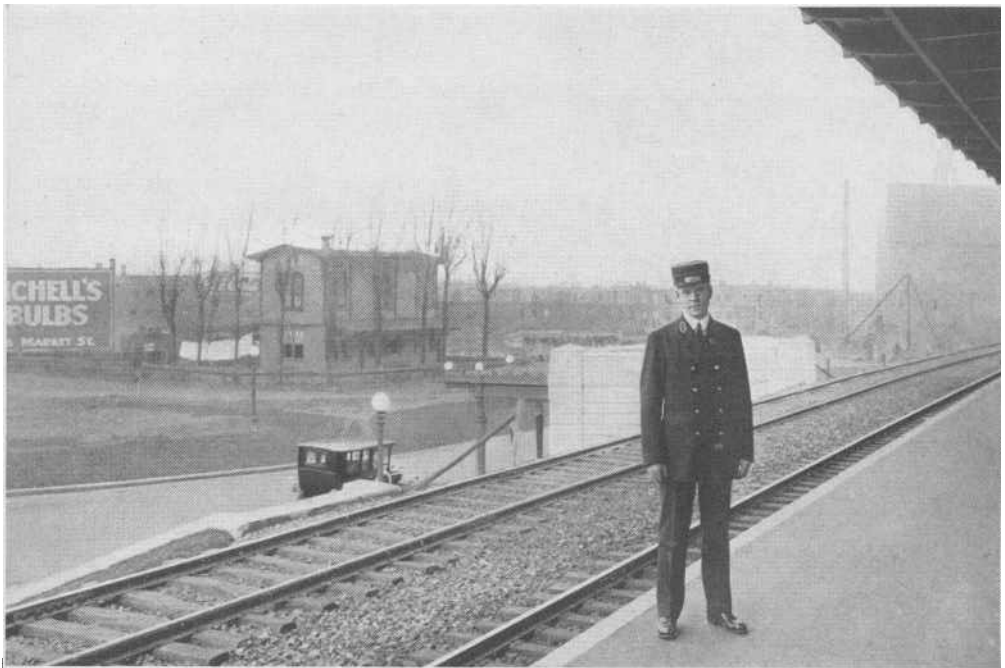
December 3, 1913

Pennsylvania Station
PITTSBURGH, PA.

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A Case Where Courtesy Made a Friend

“Life is not so short that there is not always time for courtesy.”—*Emerson.*



C. A. COOK, A COURTEOUS EMPLOYE

Mr. Cook is an usher at the North Philadelphia Station. His thoughtful treatment of passengers makes friends for himself and the Company.

The Pennsylvania Railroad is endeavoring to instill into all of its employes principles of courtesy and politeness, and in view of that it is gratifying to give publicity to the following letter about C. A. Cook, an Usher on the west-bound platform of North Philadelphia Station. This letter was addressed to the General Manager by one of the principal

officers of the United Railways & Electric Company of Baltimore :

“While I know that you are a very busy man like all transportation men, I am quite sure you will be glad to hear a word of praise for one of your employes whom I have noticed, especially as so many of the traveling public are quick to find fault and condemn.

"Coming from Atlantic City I often change at North Philadelphia, catching the 6.38 P. M. train (Southern Railway). For the past two or three years I have been particularly attracted by the attention which your train dispatcher at this station shows your patrons. He not only seems to have the arrival and departure of every train at his finger's end, but he seems to anticipate the movement of every patron who comes out on the platform, and in all of my experience I do not believe I have ever seen a man who

studies the interests of his Company more closely in an endeavor to please its patrons. I have forgotten the man's name, although I did ask him once. He is about 35 years of age, smooth face and wears glasses. My observation of the man leads me to believe that he would make a faithful man in any position which he has the ability to fill. I may add that he knows nothing of this letter, and I am only writing it because my observation of the man has been such as to merit commendation."

What One Agent Says About Courtesy

D. M. Wendle, Agent at Watson-town, Pa., for the Northern Central Railway—a part of the Pennsylvania Railroad System — recently read the following paper on "Courtesy" before a meeting of the Agents of the Williamsport and Susquehanna Divisions.

To one in a public position courtesy has become an absolutely necessary characteristic; the public expects courteous treatment regardless of the manner passengers exhibit toward employes. Common courtesy is required of any man who meets the public in any capacity.

A few days ago Mr. Fry, our worthy chairman, called at my office and asked me to prepare a paper on courtesy for the next Agents' meeting. Mr. Fry could have ordered me to prepare a paper, but instead he made a very courteous request, showing that, although vested with authority, his attitude toward those under him is always most courteous.

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My experience has always been that

it is just as easy to request as to command, even though one has the authority to command, and I have found that I have no trouble getting my work done when I request people to do things.

Every employe, whether he holds a high position or an humble one, should have some aim in life, some ambition to step higher in the service. Having set a mark to attain, the employe, of course, must study himself to overcome his weakness, and develop his talents. One of the weak points of human nature is temper. All persons should make an effort to overcome this weakness, for temper will very often cause railroad employes to be discourteous to those they consider unreasonable in their demands and requests. We should consider courtesy on our part as a necessary factor that will render less disagreeable the annoyances we meet every day.

In every community we are called upon to serve some who think they are in duty bound to make things rather unpleasant for those serving the public, whether it be in the ticket or freight office or baggage room, or as conductor, brakeman, station master,

The prosperity of every institution patronized by the public is absolutely dependent upon the good will of the individuals who comprise the public.

gateman, warehouseman or agent. On the railroad these are the men who come in contact with the public. They are expected to overlook annoyances, or, better still, to meet them with a smile, and, though seriously tried, to return courtesy for discourtesy. This will win the battle, for people who are discourteous at times will be quick to notice the difference between courteous and discourteous treatment.

The railroads, and especially the Pennsylvania Railroad, is giving more attention from year to year to seeing to it that their employes are courteous to the patrons of the road. There is a reason for this. Some years past, when cut rates were in effect, competition was conducted on that line. At the present time their principal assets for business are time in movement of freight and accommodation and courtesy in the treatment of patrons.

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At this point permit me to refer to some instances which have come to my notice. A passenger stepped up to a ticket window and asked the night clerk how the train was running. The clerk, with his feet resting on the desk, replied in a tone of voice none too smooth, "The train is fifteen minutes late." Now, even if this clerk did not have any work to do until after the passenger train had passed the station, it would have looked much better to the passenger had he had his feet on the floor instead of on the desk. It would also have been more courteous to the passenger, as the clerk was not doing any work, had he stepped to the window and, in a polite way, advised the passenger about the train.

How often it happens that clerks who have other work to do besides selling tickets (such as carrying United States mail and working in the freight office) will not arrive

at the ticket office until within a few minutes of train time. I can cite one case where the clerk did not arrive at the station until about three minutes before train time, and the passengers, wanting to take the train, asked him to sell them tickets. The clerk told them that it was too near train time to sell tickets. This was not the fault of the passengers who *were* there in time, but of the clerk. Had this clerk made an effort to open his office instead of standing outside and talking to hangers-on, the passengers would have been better served. This was another case of a night clerk neglecting his work on account of having a night position. Such men do not receive many promotions.

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When passengers ask for information they do not do so for the sake of asking questions, and while the inquiries may at times seem very trivial to us, they may be of great importance to them, and their requests should be met with courtesy, not with a look such as I have seen come over the face of the one questioned, as much as to say, "Why you poor soul, why do you ask such silly questions?"

Then, again, often you hear a clerk, in answering a passenger who has purchased a ticket and has asked to have his baggage checked, instead of saying in a courteous way, "You will find the baggage room on the other side of the building," say in a harsh manner, "Go to the baggage room." These discourteous ways are more noticeable with new men, who, owing to the fact of their newness, have the idea that they must be very important in their ways.

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There is a great opportunity for courtesy among conductors, trainmen and station masters, for even after passengers have their tickets, if they have not traveled to any

Common courtesy is the business of every man who meets the public, in any capacity, be it ever so humble.

extent, they are more or less nervous. When the passengers, old or young, rich or poor, ask for information regarding a train, they should be answered in a courteous way; they should all receive the same courteous treatment; they all pay the same good American money.

The other day a traveling man, while talking to me, said he was pleased to note there had been a great improvement in the courteous ways of employes on the railroad in the last few years. He said in times past, when a man was dressed in a uniform with brass buttons on his coat you could

hardly receive a civil answer from him.

In giving these references to the faults to which human nature is heir, it is not our intention to overlook the fact that the Pennsylvania Railroad employes are, as a rule, courteous; but with the great number of men the Pennsylvania Railroad employs, it would be impossible not to have some cases of discourtesy crop out; but we should always keep in mind, as agents, and impress those for whose actions we are responsible, that courtesy is nothing more than politeness combined with kindness.

The Information Clerk

—From the Pittsburgh "Gazette-Times"

One of the patient and courteous men who stand behind the information window of the Pennsylvania Railroad Station is George Grayburn, an employe who always wears a smile, but never laughs. Or if he does it is when he is off duty, for although Mr. Grayburn works in the funniest department of the railroad—that of answering the multitudinous questions of the traveling public—he affirms that he is past that stage where the foolish question moves his risible emotions.

Not very long ago a woman asked Mr. Grayburn where she could find an employe of the Pennsylvania whose name she had forgotten. She knew neither his address nor the department in which he worked, nor could she describe him, but she did know that he had married a woman from Mercer, Pa. That was the only mark of identification she had, and yet she was quite taken

aback that the information bureau did not know the man.

A man one day wanted to know where John Phillips lived. "We do not know him," was the information's reply. "What, don't know John Phillips? Why he has lived in this town 20 years! I thought everybody knew him." Another man desired to know the name of a man whom he said lived near the Schenley Hotel and sold oil.

"It seems that the public not only expects us to know everything," said Mr. Grayburn, "but they seem to think we run the whole railroad and can get anything in the world for them. Recently a woman ordered me to telegraph to Cincinnati, Ohio, to hold a train on another line so as to be sure she would catch it. She had an hour to wait after our train arrived in Cincinnati, but she said to tell the other line to be sure and see that her train did not leave without her."

The management of the Pennsylvania Railroad seeks to have courtesy practiced by every employe. Only recently the Company placed in the hands of each employe who comes in contact with the public a booklet intended to inculcate "Courtesy" ideals.