

Railway Express Service on the HD&O

by Peter Ezzard



This Hudson Delaware & Ohio express box reefer is designed to carry freight in passenger trains. It is seen here in Pittsburgh being loaded for its next trip to Gilberton on train #104. *Don Kern Photo.*

Railroads were limited in the amount they could charge their customers for the shipment of various goods. If they could offer a premium service, they could charge higher rates. Combining small orders and loading them together into single cars allowed them to charge more than they could normally at the single car rate. The Railway Express Agency was jointly owned operation by participating railroad members. Premium rates could be charged for the shipment of goods between points in its network.

How might a Railway Express Operation on the HO layouts of the Model Railroad Club work? Utilizing Pittsburgh as the hub of our operations, we might send packages handled by REA to the following locations:

<u>Location</u>	<u>Daily Inbound Cars</u>	<u>Daily Outbound Cars</u>	<u>Total Cars</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Pittsburgh	6 – 10	6 – 10	12-20	
Bellefonte	0 – 1	0	0-1	
Jim Thorpe	0	0	0	Messenger car
Summit	2 – 4	1 – 3	3 - 7	
Bernardsville	0	0	0	Messenger car
Gladstone	0	0	0	Messenger car
Trenton	0	0	0	TN combine
				Connect HD&O Bernardsville
Gilberton	2 – 6	1 – 3	3 - 9	

Railway Express cars were often lettered for the road on which they primarily served. This HD&O express car is being loaded at the Pittsburgh REA facility before being shipped east. Don Kern Photo.

<u>Hoboken</u>	6 – 10	6 – 10	12-20
<u>Totals</u>	14-31	14-26	30-57

Of course, these are movements of loaded cars, and most of the cars can be used twice during an operating day. In order to model the proposed service we would need between 15 and 30 cars. We will employ a hub and spoke delivery system, with Pittsburgh serving as the base of our operations.

Think of third track as the starting point when creating our REA service. A westbound 100 series train (Pittsburgh to Gilberton) is made up with the Bellefonte, Summit and Gilberton cars. The train runs for the convenience of the Railway Express Agency, not the passengers. Its' consist would include between 4 and 11 REA cars, perhaps a mail car and a coach. All of the cars are sealed, meaning they are not worked along the route.

After the Bellefonte car is spotted at the station track, the train proceeds to Summit. The Summit cars are delivered next, and then the train proceeds to Gilberton. The passenger switch job moves the remaining cars to the REA building in Gilberton. Care must be taken along the route when setting out the cars. There should be no unnecessary jarring of the few passengers trying to sleep in the coach. One uncoupling and coupling to the coach at each stop is sufficient to do the work. And under no circumstances should the coach be used to make switching moves. Don't forget to make the safety stop a car length away from the before re-coupling to the coach!

At Gilberton the train undergoes major surgery. The passenger switch engine has been awaiting its arrival. After the passengers are safely clear of the platform, the switch engine couples to the rear of the train and pulls all of the cars away from the locomotive that brought the train to the station. The coach or coaches are placed on another station track to be used in their next assignment. The head-end cars are brought to the REA building for unloading. The locomotive that originally brought the train to Gilberton is brought to the service track to get ready for the next call to duty.

Westbound train #1__ underwent similar construction prior to its departure third trick. This train is carrying a coach, and head-end cars for Pittsburgh. At Summit it picks-up the outbounds and empties left there the previous day.

On first trick, eastbound train #1__ leaves Pittsburgh with a rider car to work the stations between Pittsburgh and Gilberton. It picks up the Bellefonte car left the previous night. This sealed car contained goods to be delivered to homes and businesses in the surrounding area. REA trucks load directly from this car. It can be thought of as a movable warehouse location. The now empty car is brought to Gilberton either for re-loading to Pittsburgh and other points, or to be returned empty to Pittsburgh on the third trick train. At Gilberton, the rider car is switched over to a local Gladstone Branch passenger train, where train #2__ will work stations along the branch during second trick. The Gladstone Branch train might even connect with a Trenton Northern combine for delivery of REA goods along its route.



Most baggage cars are not carrying passenger luggage but are used as storage for either express or mail. Don Kern photo.

Most of the REA work for stations between Pittsburgh and Gilberton is now completed for the day. The only thing left to do is to make sure we checked all of our outbound orders for the day and did an inventory of cars at each station location. REA shipped everything from chicken eggs crates to coffins, horses from stables to stage sets from theater troupes. Do we have the proper cars in the proper locations for our third

trick runs? If not, we have to make sure they are available to be spotted and loaded in time for their scheduled departures. Our first trick train can carry and spot any empties for loading between first and third trick.

Five or six passenger trains cover our REA services to stations presently modeled on our railroad. Not yet mentioned are the long-distance passenger trains between Pittsburgh and Hoboken. The remaining cars to these points do not do any work along the way. Instead they carry cars directly between these points. Of course, some of the Pittsburgh cars from Hoboken may be ultimately destined for Summit or Gilberton. The Pittsburgh passenger drill will need to hustle these cars to their final destinations. And when Hoboken and the other new towns finally come "on-line"? Some of our passenger trains will be doing a lot more switching!