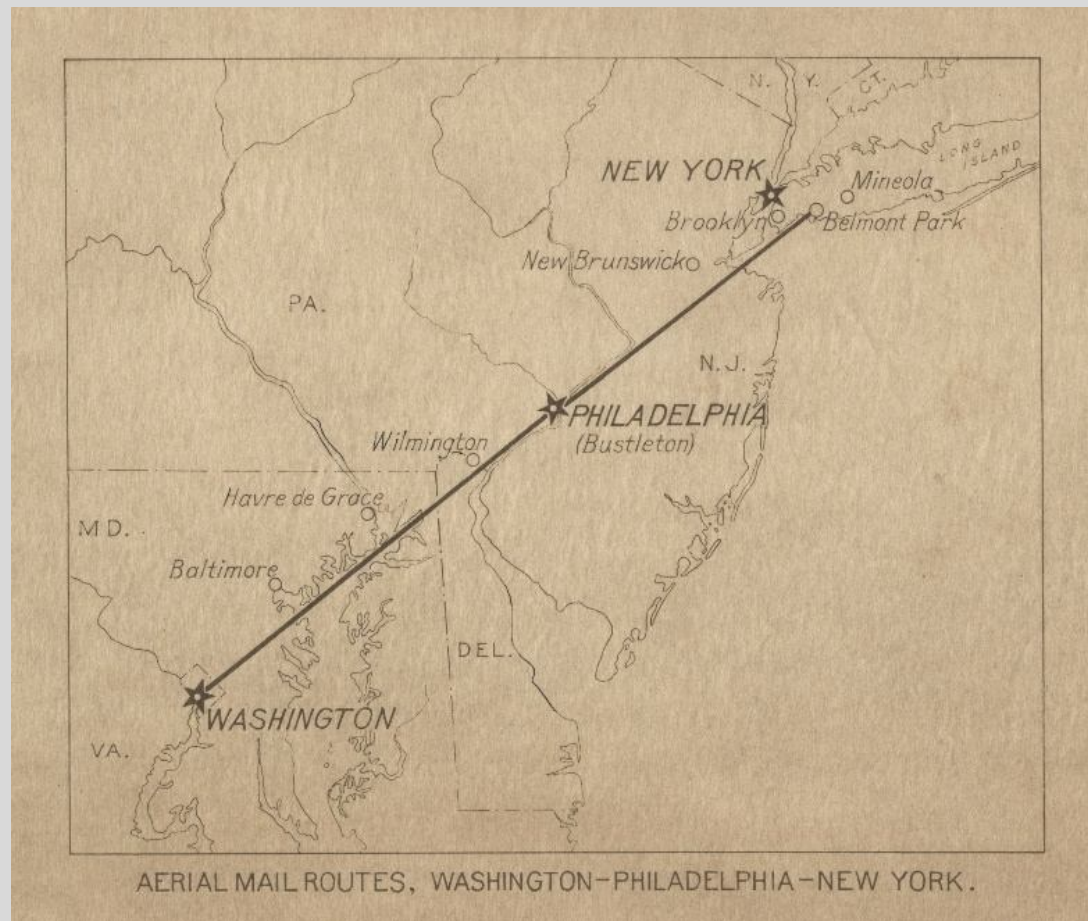
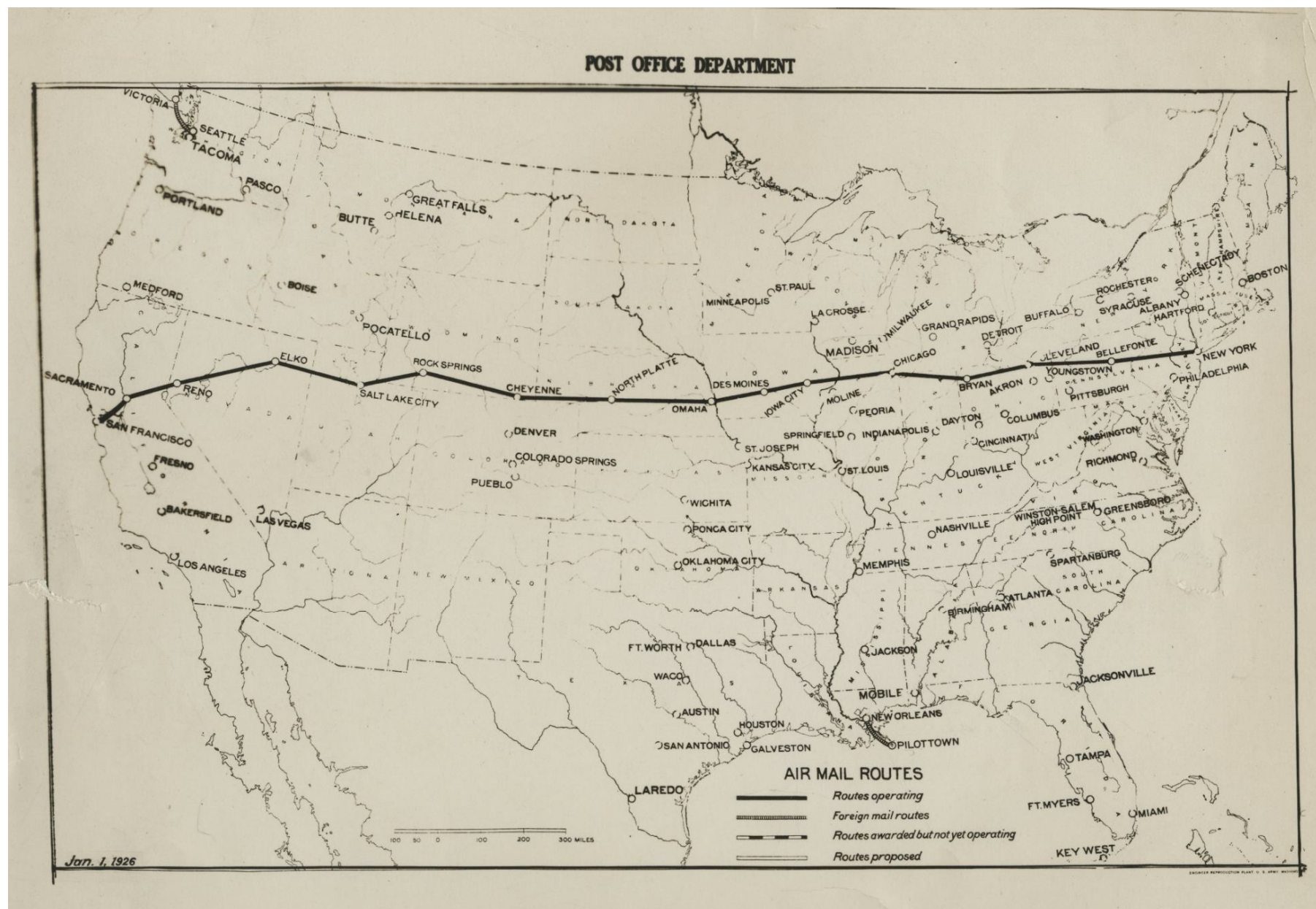


Airmail Route Maps, 1918–1955



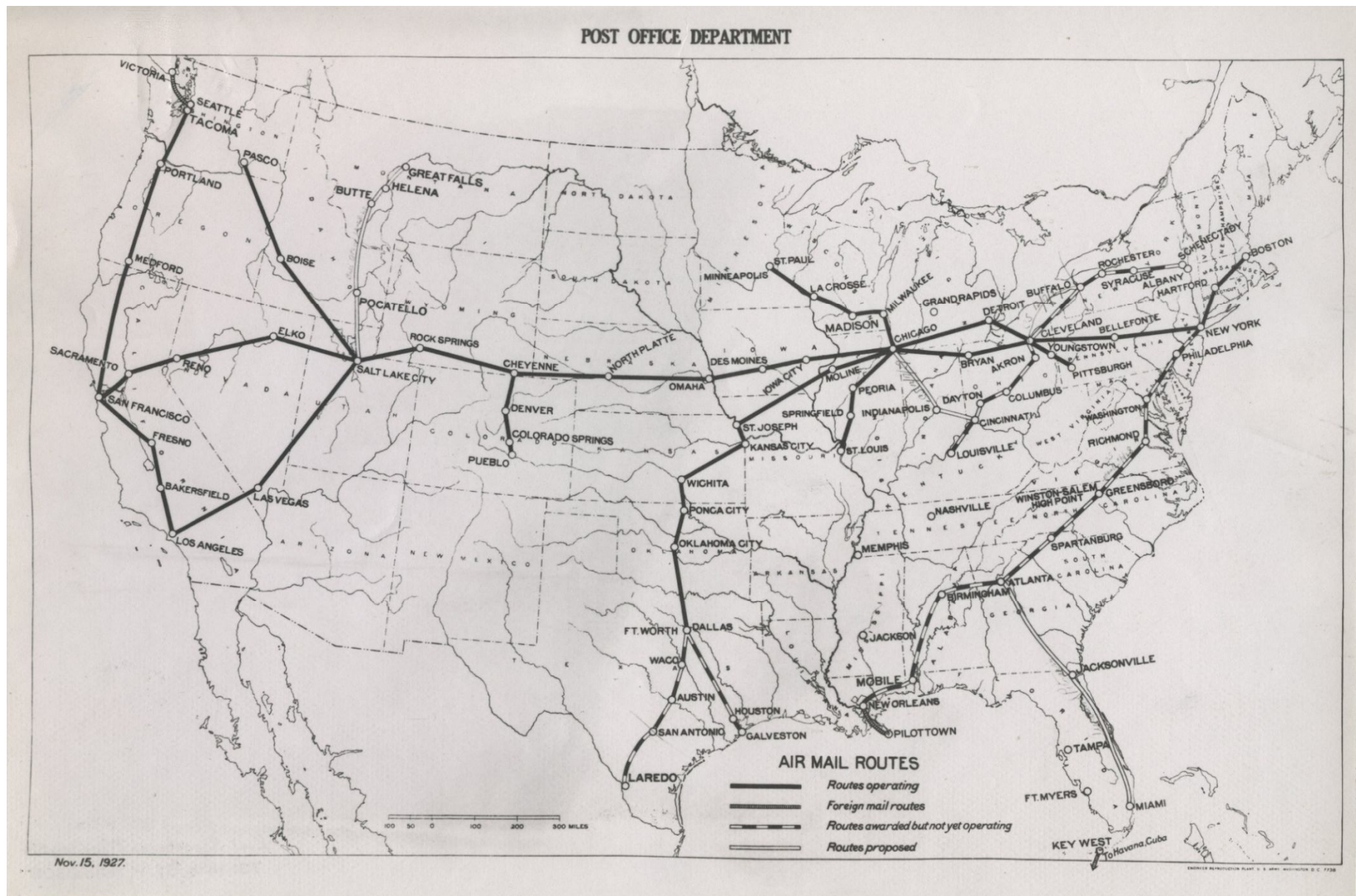
Airmail route, 1918

The first regularly scheduled airmail route connected New York and Washington, D.C., via Philadelphia, from May 15, 1918, to May 31, 1921. The Post Office Department operated the 218-mile route to demonstrate that mail transportation by airplane was possible on a regular schedule in all kinds of weather.



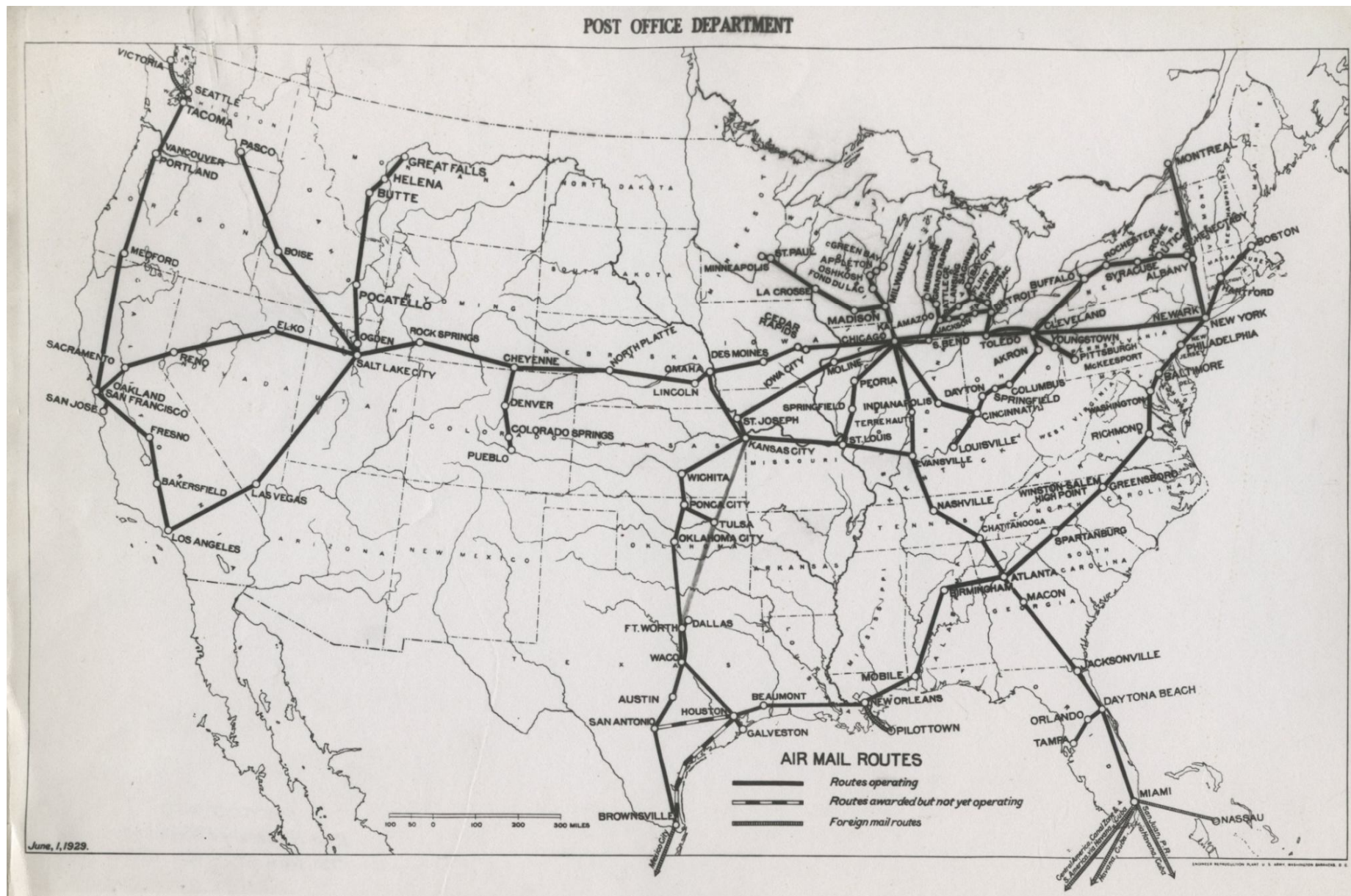
Airmail routes, January 1, 1926

A 2,680-mile long transcontinental airmail route linking New York with San Francisco was completed in 1920. Initially, mail was flown by day and carried on trains at night. One coast-to-coast trip took about 3 ½ days, which was nearly a day quicker than the all-rail time. Regular service with night flying began in 1924, reducing the trip to about 33 hours. Airmail routes from Seattle to Victoria, British Columbia, and from New Orleans to Pilottown, Louisiana, were foreign airmail routes, operated under contract — they expedited mail delivery to foreign-bound steamships.



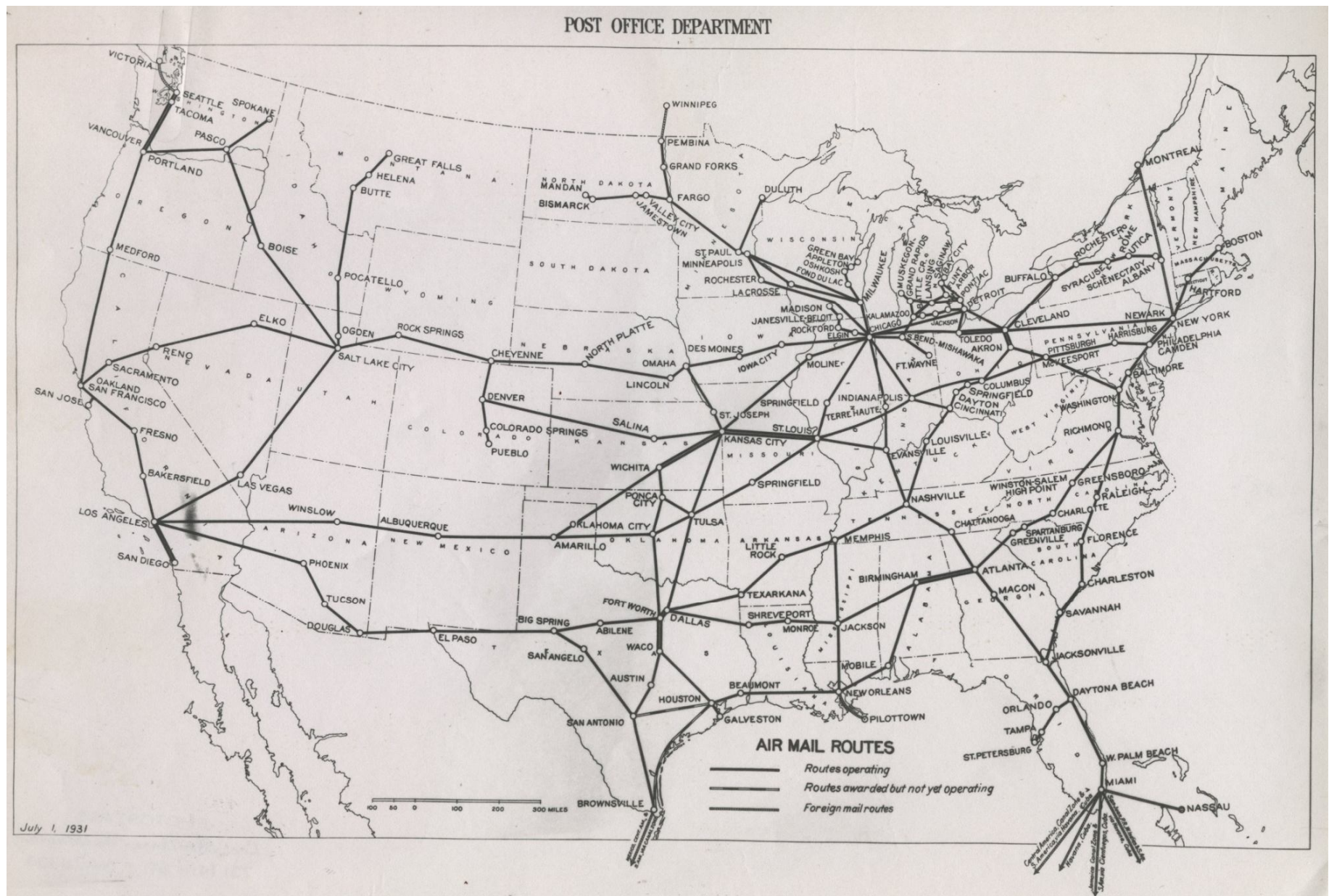
Airmail routes, November 15, 1927

The first branch lines off the New York–San Francisco transcontinental route opened in February 1926. These branches or “feeder” routes were operated under contract. Post Office Department personnel continued to operate the transcontinental route until July 1, 1927 (west of Chicago) and September 1, 1927 (east of Chicago), when the service was turned over to contractors. A foreign airmail route linked Key West, Florida, with Havana, Cuba, from 1920 to 1923 and again from 1927 to 1928.



Airmail routes, June 1, 1929

The airmail network continued to expand in the late 1920s, with over 14,400 miles of route established by June 1929. Congress authorized long-term contracts for foreign airmail service in March 1928; in October 1928, Foreign Air Mail Route 1 began regular service between New York and Montreal. Beginning in 1929, foreign airmail routes linked Brownsville, Texas, with Mexico City; and Miami with cities in Central and South America and the Caribbean.

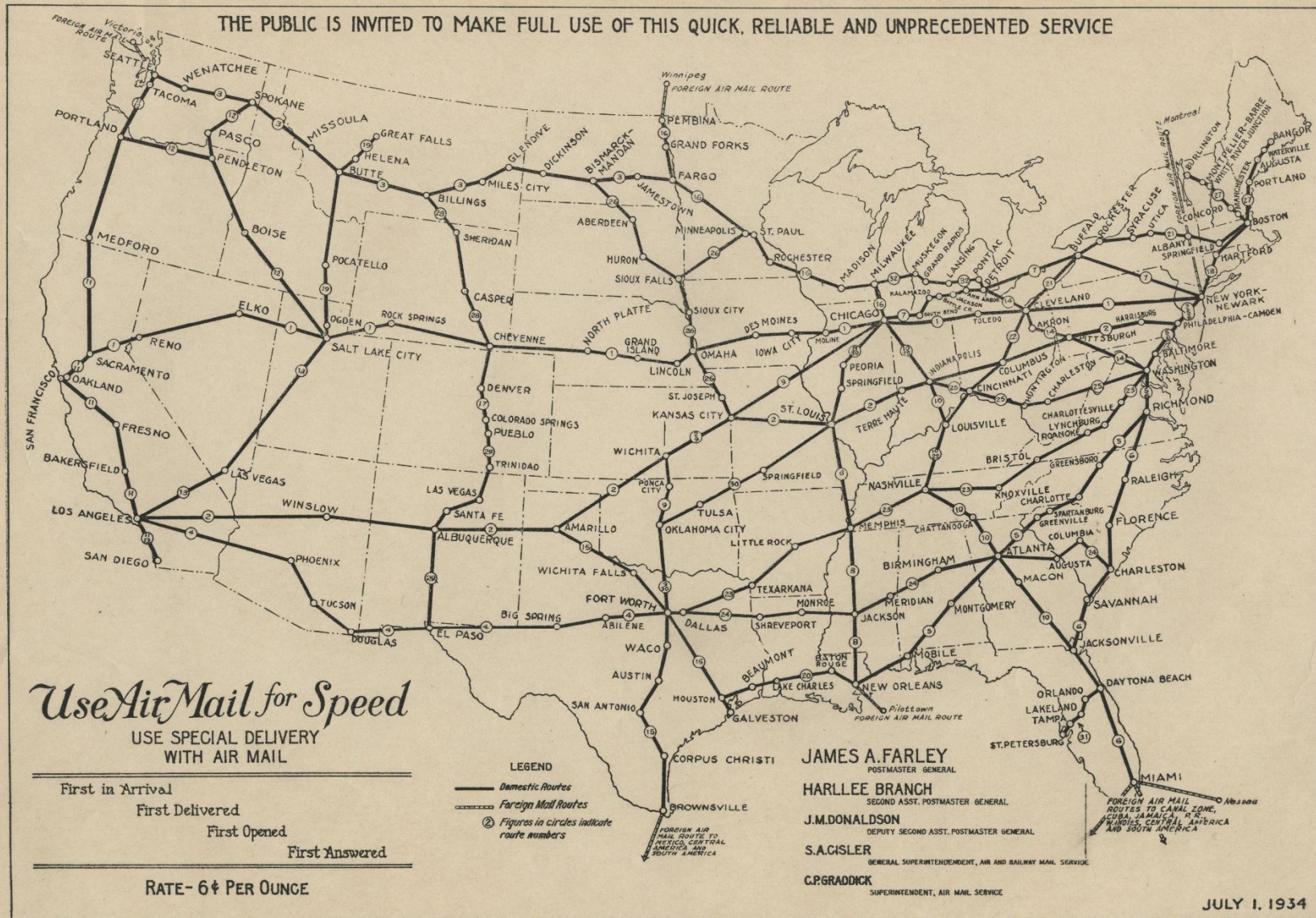


Airmail routes, July 1, 1931

Two new transcontinental routes were established in 1931, from Atlanta to Los Angeles, and from New York to Los Angeles. The Post Office Department encouraged passenger transportation — all but two airmail routes carried passengers in addition to mail. Carriers were paid more to transport mail if they used larger aircraft capable of carrying more passengers.

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT'S NEW AIR MAIL SYSTEM

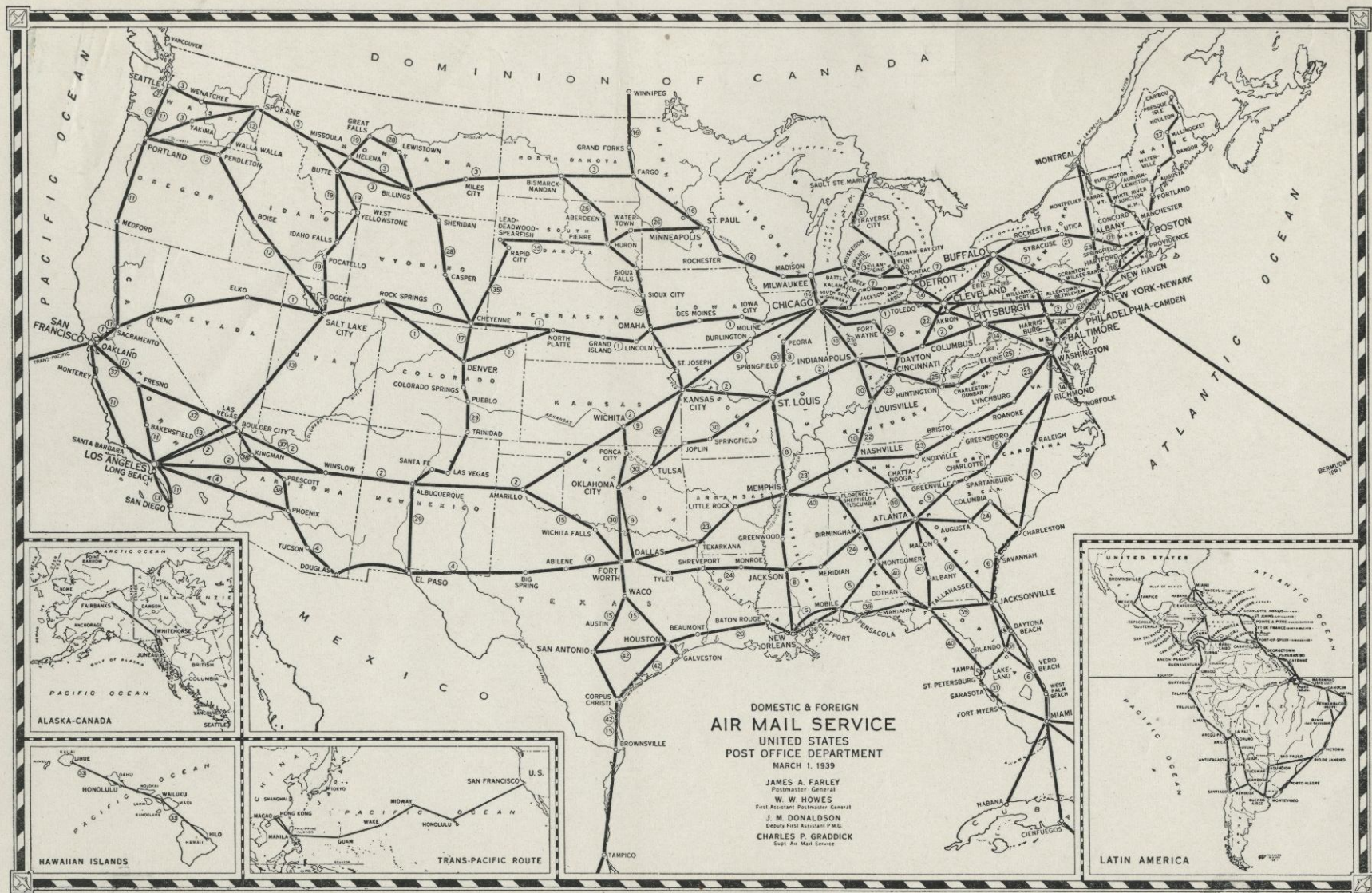
THE PUBLIC IS INVITED TO MAKE FULL USE OF THIS QUICK, RELIABLE AND UNPRECEDENTED SERVICE



Chicago P O-Job 6-21-6-20-34-63500-Emerg.

Airmail routes, July 1, 1934

On February 9, 1934, Postmaster General James Farley canceled all domestic airmail contracts following a political scandal. For several months the Army flew the mail, at the direction of President Roosevelt. New airmail contracts were signed with domestic carriers in April and May 1934, for more service at less cost. Extra pay for offering passenger service was discontinued.



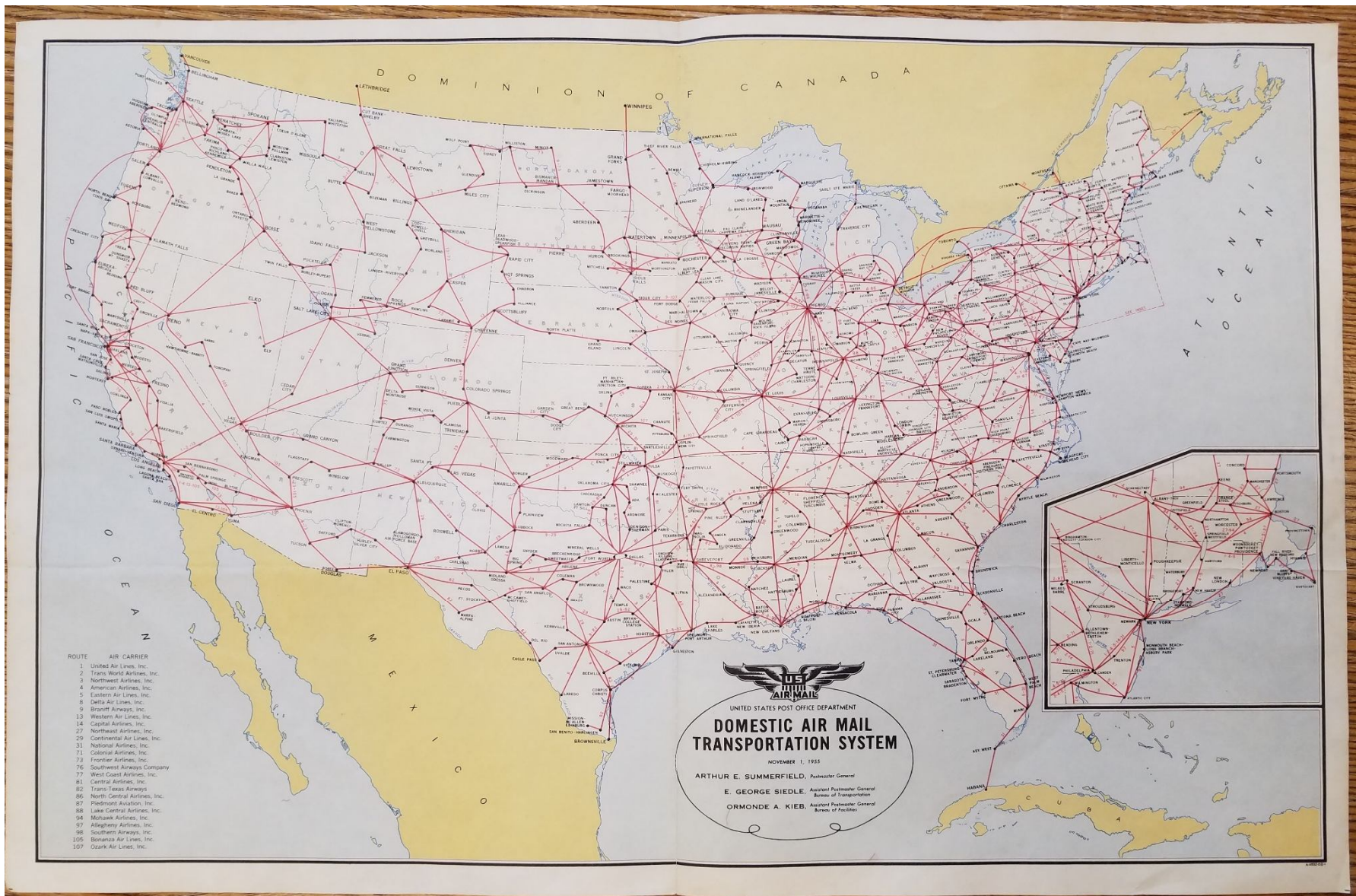
Airmail routes, March 1, 1939

In 1939, there were 37,080 miles in the domestic airmail network. Transpacific routes linked San Francisco with the Philippines via Hawaii, Midway, Wake and Guam, beginning in 1935; service was extended to Hong Kong in 1937. A few months after this map was drawn, new transatlantic routes linked New York with Europe.



Airmail routes, September 1, 1946

In 1946, there were 57,377 miles in the domestic airmail network and foreign airmail routes circled the globe.



Airmail routes, November 1, 1955

In 1953, the Post Office Department began transporting ordinary letters by air experimentally on a space-available basis between select cities. Two decades later, air transportation had become so commonplace that in 1975 the Postal Service announced that all domestic First-Class Mail would start receiving the same service as airmail. Airmail as a special service was officially discontinued in 1977.