

Mr. McKay focused on a 1979 cover (exhibit #13) from a mailbag carried aboard American Airlines Flight 444, which made an emergency landing after a mail bomb attack. It was later discovered that the mail bomb was the work of "Unabomber" Ted Kaczynski and could have destroyed the Boeing 727 had it worked correctly.



The cover displayed was recovered by authorities on November 16, 1979 was a metered (14 November) from Madison WI bound for Fairfax VA document. At the time of the incident on 15 November, AA Flight 444, a Boeing 727 was in route from Chicago IL to Washington DC when an internal explosion caused the plane to make an emergency landing.

The base story: *American Airlines Flight 444 was a Boeing 727 flying from Chicago to Washington DC, which on November 15, 1979 was attacked by the Unabomber. The bomb planted in the cargo hold failed to detonate, but gave off large quantities of smoke, and twelve (of 78) passengers/crew had to be treated afterwards for smoke inhalation. It was later determined that the bomb was powerful enough to have destroyed the aircraft had it worked correctly. Though this was not the first Unabomber attack, but it was the attack which allowed the FBI investigation into the Unabomber, as airliner bombing is a federal crime.*

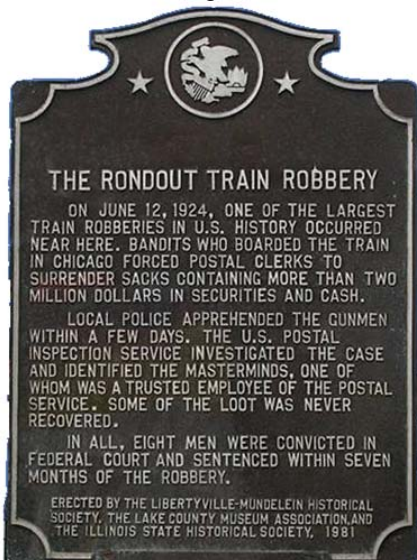
On the completion of the case, the evidence/damaged cover was returned to the Post office and completed its interrupted journey in a sealed plastic bag. It was finally delivered to the addressee with a terse note of explanation of its delay.

This cover was later obtained by Dr. Berlin and along with 18 other historically interesting covers on the topic were assembled into this very interesting exhibit.

Dr. Berlin is now working on a mail robbery exhibit. We can wonder if the Rondout mail train robbery of 12 June 1924 by the Newton Boy's has any covers of record suitable for his mail robbery cover project.

**The Great Rondout Train Robbery.** It was midday on June 12, 1924. when the four Newton boys (fresh from a successful run of just over 80 bank heists to their credit), along with two local Chicago gangsters, a Chicago racketeer, and a postal inspector robbed a mail train at Rondout, IL. The heist was for a mere three million dollars (\$33M – today) – then, and maybe today after inflation, the largest train robbery in history.

This historical event started with the boarding the mail train in Chicago by just two men; a crooked Postal Inspector, William J. Fahy and Willis Newton. They then forced the train to stop at Rondout and demanded that the mail sacks that contained about three million dollars in cash and securities be thrown from the train. They enforced their demands by randomly firing bullets and tear gas into the mail car.



It was here an unplanned event occurred. In the excitement of the robbery, brother Willie "Doc" Newton was wounded in the leg by a stray bullet.

The gang then proceeded to then load the cash along with the hurt Willie into a waiting car and fled towards Libertyville and later into Chicago ... however, while they were loading the injured Newton brother, a witness heard someone call him "Willie," which gave the police a lead on the identity of the outlaws.

Four days later, the police received a tip that a wounded man was being cared for in a far-north side Chicago house. They followed up this lead and the gang's plans quickly went downhill from there as Doc, Willis and Joe Newton were arrested. Brother Jess though, had somehow avoided capture and set off towards home (Texas) with about \$35,000 in cash from the robbery.

Freedom for Jess was short lived, as he was later caught in Mexico by a federal agent.

In the end, the entire gang was caught, found guilty and locked away in Ft Leavenworth.