RAILWAY MAIL SERVICE RPO ROUTES IN NEW ENGLAND

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Like New England long-haul passenger service, New England RPO routes tended to be multi-railroad. Almost all of the interline routes corresponded to one or more named trains, most often overnight runs. Most of the routings are pretty straightforward except for the multiple-railroad aspect. This often resulted in pooled equipment, and sometimes even clerks of one country working in equipment belonging to the other country.

The RPO routes I list below had remained fairly stable through the war years but eroded fairly quickly as the 1950s continued. All routes using the Rutland ended by 1953, and the B&M’s "Mogul Country" branches were sold or became freight-only by 1956. The Boston & Troy was discontinued with passenger service in 1958. Most remaining RPOs via the B&M were discontinued next year, as the railroad wound down its Boston-based mail and express terminal operation. Bangor & Aroostook RPOs ended with passenger service north of Portland in 1960, but the Maine Central continued to run mail and express service between Portland and Bangor into 1963. The last of the northern New England RPOs was the St. Albans to Springfield car on the Ambassador in early 1967. Boston & New York survived into the mid-1970s.

The basic route data is primarily from Mail By Rail by B.A. Long with W.J. Dennis, Simmons-Boardman 1951. The book also lists Highway Post Office routes and boat routes, but I’ve omitted them from the table. Car assignments and other details are drawn from photos of train consists in a wide variety of books.

ALPHABETIC LISTING OF NEW ENGLAND RPOS, CIRCA 1951

- Alburg (VT) & Boston: Rutland RR, B&M RR via Bellows Falls, VT (through to Montreal, PQ on CN).
- Bangor & Boston: Maine Central, B&M
- Belfast & Burnham (ME): Belfast & Moosehead Lake RR
- Berlin (NH) & White River Junction (VT): B&M, via Wells River, VT.
- Bingham & Lewiston (ME): Maine Central
- Boston & Albany: Boston & Albany via Worcester, Springfield MA
- Boston & Cape Cod (Hyannis, MA): New Haven (The Cape)
- Boston & New York: New Haven RR, via Providence RI, New Haven, CT
- Boston, Springfield & New York: B&A, NY,NH&H
- Boston & Troy (NY): B&M, via Fitchburg, Hoosac Tunnel
- Boston & Waterbury (CT): New Haven RR, via Willimantic, Hartford, CT
- Burlington (VT) & Troy (NY): Rutland RR, B&M via Bennington, VT
- Calais (ME) & Bangor: Maine Central
- Concord (NH) & Claremont Jct. (NH): B&M (briefly Claremont & Concord after the line was sold)
- Concord (NH) & Worcester: B&M, via Nashua, NH, Ayer, MA
- Fort Kent & Oakfield (ME): Bangor & Aroostook, via Ashland, ME
- Greenville Jct. & Bangor (ME): Bangor & Aroostook
- St. John (NB) & Montreal (PQ): Canadian Pacific, via Vanceboro, Greenville Jct., ME
- Lowell & Worcester (MA): Boston & Maine, via Ayer, MA
- Newport (VT) & Springfield (MA): Canadian Pacific, B&M, (through to Montreal, PQ on CPR)
- Portland (ME) & Boston: B&M, included branch to Intervale, NH via Dover
- Portland & Boundary Line (VT): Grand Trunk, via Island Pond, VT (through to Montreal, PQ on CNR)
- Portland & St. Johnsbury (VT): Maine Central, via Crawford Notch
- Portsmouth & Concord (NH): B&M, via Epping, NH
- Rockland & Portland (ME): Maine Central, via Brunswick, ME
- Rockport & Boston (MA): Boston & Maine, via Salem MA
- Rumford & Portland (ME): Maine Central RR, via Lewiston
- St. Albans (VT) & Boston: Central Vermont, B&M, via Concord, NH
- Van Buren & Bangor (ME): Bangor & Aroostook, Maine Central
- Vanceboro & Bangor (ME): Maine Central (connected with Canadian St. John and McAdam, NB)
- Woodsville (NH) & Boston: B&M, via Plymouth, Laconia, NH
- Woodsville & Montpelier (VT): Barre & Chelsea RR
- Worcester (MA) & Providence (RI): New Haven

I've been told that as of 1952, all but one of the daily Bangor & Boston RPOs ran via Brunswick ("Lower Road"). I don't know how it or the Portland & Boston were divided between the alternate B&M routes. The Portland & Boston could have existed to serve the Western Division (via Dover and Haverhill), given that it included a branch route from Dover to Intervale, NH. This would imply that Bangor & Boston ran via Portsmouth, NH and the Eastern Division (until the segment north of Portsmouth was abandoned in 1952).