Steamboat and RR Depot at Newport, RI.
Colored engraving by J.P. Newell, after 1864.
Photograph by John Hopf.
Newport Historical Society Collection.

Giorgi: From the Notes of Edward P. Fagan
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I am the last male office worker of the N.E.S.S.Co. Newport Division. I am now 82 years old and I am pretty sure I am the last of the office force as all the youngest girls were five to six years older than me. There may be two or three female clerks living.

I started as a messenger boy in 1920. A messenger went to the Post Office three times a day to pick up the mail, and stopped at the railroad depot for more company mail. Every morning I would deliver mail to the crews of the laid-up boats, and the company mail, work orders, etc., to the Shops. The baggage masters at the depot were Charles Brice and Arthur Sherman. Dennis O’Brien was the ticket agent.

I believe Francis Canole was one of the last Messenger Boys. He retired from the Newport Police Department and passed away in 1983.

I went on to become Port Steward for the Line. The Port Steward’s department was to complete inventories of all the boats. When the boats were laid up for overhauls or going back on the lines the steward and mates would check minor repairs such as stateroom paint, peekholes, and furniture. We would also check the life saving equipment, such as the life boats, life preservers, and oars. The steward would inventory the linen, silverware, dishes, and kitchenware, while the mates were in charge of the horse stalls, lines, mates’ gear, life rings, fire pails, and so on.

Linens going to laundry, such as white woolen blankets and white linen, were all sent to New York. Every so often all the silverware from the boats was sent to Reed and Barton of Taunton, Massachusetts. This was a day’s run in an old chain drive truck. All the boats were scrubbed inside and outside before being painted.

Many a time we would take a streetcar on Washington Square and go to New Bedford, checking out with the steward and mates. After so many years of service a person was allowed passes on other railroads or steamers. I did get to Asheville, North Carolina, on a vacation once.

Edward Patrick Fagan died in November of 1985 at the age of 82 years. These notes were written in that year. After working for the N.E.S.S.Co. he was a self-employed contractor for many years until building and operating the former Fagan Pharmacy on West Main Road in Middletown.