

# THE LIFE OF THE NATIONAL BANK EXAMINER, 1865 TO 1950

## The People

Creating a system of national banks meant assembling a force of bank examiners to supervise them. That was just one of the start-up challenges facing the first Comptroller, Hugh McCulloch. People with banking or regulatory experience were especially sought after by McCulloch, but he and his successors also hired people with backgrounds in the law, politics, and journalism. Good penmanship and bookkeeping skills were a must.



FRANK K. PATTERSON



MELVIN ELMORE PATTERSON



CLARENCE D. SAMPLE



MILLER WEIR



SAMUEL ALFRED WELDON



HENRY ARCHER WILLIAMS



ARTHUR ORVILLER WILSON



EUGENE T. WILSON



GILES L. WILSON



S. F. WINTERS



HUGH YOUNG



JOHN F. ZERBY



## The Travel

For examiners operating outside of New York and Chicago, the travel from bank to bank—by railroad, stagecoach, or horseback—could be grueling. Examiners often had to choose between doing an exam thoroughly or doing it quickly to avoid missing the last train out of town. The automobile provided more flexibility, but meager reimbursements discouraged the use of personal vehicles for official travel. Air travel was authorized in 1940, but only if the examiner could prove that it saved the government money.



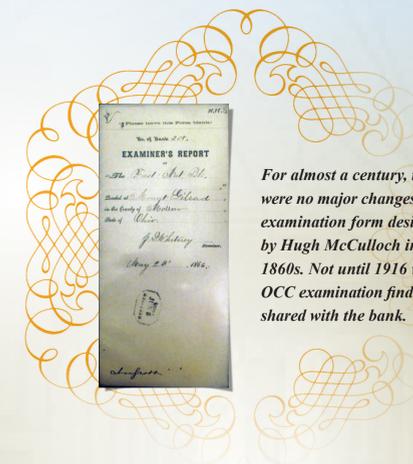
BY RAILROAD,  
STAGECOACH,  
OR HORSEBACK

## The Pay

For the OCC's first half-century, examiners were paid in the form of fees for each bank they examined, starting at \$15 for a bank with \$100,000 in capital. Under the Federal Reserve Act, the system switched to salaries, which were negotiated on an individual basis. The per diem allowance—\$2 a day, rising to \$6 by 1930—was expected to cover living expenses, provided that the examiner lived cheaply. To save money, examiners often doubled up in a tavern, rooming house, or motel offering bare-bones accommodations.



Salaries  
Fees



*For almost a century, there were no major changes to the examination form designed by Hugh McCulloch in the 1860s. Not until 1916 were OCC examination findings shared with the bank.*

## The Work

The national banking legislation left it to the examiner to decide how often the banks were examined. The most accessible institutions tended to be examined more frequently. Over time, the examination schedule was formalized to ensure national banks received the supervision warranted by their condition.

