

**STENOGRAPHER AND
TYPEWRITER IN
FEDERAL, STATE AND
MUNICIPAL SERVICE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649456703

Stenographer and Typewriter in Federal, State and Municipal Service by Various

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1912



PREFACE

AN EXPERT'S VIEWS ON THE DUTIES, ETC.

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FATHER Knickerbocker is one of the largest individual employers of stenographers and typewriters in the world, as well as one of the most generous in the matter of compensation. Compared with the total number of persons employed by the city the proportion of stenographers is not as great as in the case of small concerns; yet there are upwards of one thousand of them in the city's service, and their salaries average more than \$1,200 a year, or about \$23 a week. Three hundred of these have been appointed during the past five years.

It would be manifestly unfair, however, to the most hard-working and industrious class of city employees to attempt a comparison between their average compensation and that paid by private employers, because the city stenographers are the best available, and are necessarily so on account of the conditions attending their selection. The Constitution of the State of New York provides that all positions in the State and in its municipal sub-divisions shall, as far as practicable, be filled after an examination, which, as far as practicable, shall be competitive. The Legislature made laws providing for the creation of commissions to give effect to this provision of the Constitution, and these

commissions have in turn appointed examiners to devise methods of examination and rating, subject to the supervision of the governing body. These methods have been devised with the object of getting the best men and the best women at the head of the lists, and the heads of departments are compelled to appoint at least three out of every five who head a list. In practice the proportion is very much larger. The generous compensation attracts large numbers of competitors, and under such circumstances, when the rivalry is keen and the tests fair, the best equipped are almost invariably certain to make their way to the top. Having obtained the best material, the compensation paid by the city should be higher than that paid by private employers, and no invidious comparisons ought to be drawn from such condition.

Stenographer's Valued Service.

If there be any class of city employees that gives its time, its energy, and the result of its brains more than another, it is the stenographers. They are the right arm of the executive officers, the ready reference encyclopedias of civic information, and the real secretarial assistants and deputy heads of bureaus. In private corporations when stenographers become thus valuable, they are promoted to managerial positions; but this seldom happens in the city's service. There the stenographers remain stenographers owing to restrictions in the classification. But it is only just and natural that, when doing important executive work, they should be suitably compensated. Thus it happens that when a stenographer in a private corporation is promoted, the average compensation of all stenographers

is not increased; whereas, when a stenographer in the city's employ is promoted, the general average of salaries paid by the city to all those serving under that title is raised in consequence.

Generally speaking, there are three divisions of this class of employees: First, the copyists, who may or may not be stenographers; second, the stenographers and typewriters, and third, the court stenographers, who are not tested on their ability to use the typewriter. The first class is the lowest paid of the three, the salaries being \$600 and \$750 a year, with a few at \$900. The salaries of ordinary amanuenses employed under the title of stenographer and typewriter run from \$750 to \$1,350, with a few beginners at \$600, and a number of the most experienced receiving \$1,500, \$1,650 and \$1,800 per annum, and in a few exceptional instances, higher.

Court stenographers are employed, not only in the courts, but in boards and offices where public hearings are held and verbatim reporting is necessary. They are paid salaries ranging from \$1,800 to \$3,000, and the tests to which they are subjected are exceptionally severe, none being employed who cannot write at least one hundred and fifty words a minute.

Preference for the higher salaries in the case of ordinary stenographers is usually given to persons who have already given faithful service, so that as a rule beginners have to enter in the lower grades, at the lower salaries, and work themselves up through the various grades by promotion. This is also true of the other two classes, as it is of all city employees in the class subject to competition.

There are in practice four civil service grades for stenographers, i. e., \$600, \$1,200, \$1,800 and \$2,400 per

How Position Is Graded.

annum. But there may be three grades of salaries within each grade. This means that the lowest grade to which a stenographer is appointed is \$600, but he or she may be given three increases of salary of \$150 each by the head of a department, without examination. Promotion from one civil service grade to the next higher grade is subject to examination, which is competitive only as far as the employees of a single bureau in a certain department are concerned. This restriction makes promotion competition not at all general, as the departments are greatly broken up into bureaus, and the number of stenographers in the same grade and same bureau is generally small. The point in this is that it is much easier to gain promotion if service is faithful than to obtain an original appointment.

How to hold the examination, what tests to apply, what weights to attach to the various subjects, and what methods to adopt to make sure that the best shall receive their due merit, has occupied the attention of civil service examiners ever since the institution of the merit system. In the Federal service and elsewhere hard and fast rules have been adopted that change only after years of persistent effort to bring home to their sponsors the many injustices wrought by them. It is safe to say that no arbitrary rule ever existed that did not work some injustice. The Municipal Civil Service Commission, therefore, is always alive to the necessity for improved methods, and is ever ready to receive and accept suggestions from experts in their own particular lines, who necessarily know more about their own business than those having other

matters to occupy their attention. On that account handwriting and arithmetic have been eliminated as tests on the theory that a good stenographer is not necessarily a good arithmetician and might not even write a good hand, while a person with both these qualifications to commend him might still be unable to take rapid dictation and transcribe with reasonable accuracy.

Subjects and Weights Required.

In the last examination for court stenographer there were but two tests given, one being a general dictation, which counted sixty per cent. of the whole, and the other a special dictation, making up the other forty per cent. In the examination for stenographer and typewriter, known in business as amanuensis, five tests were applied, i. e., spelling, counting ten per cent.; typewriting, counting ten per cent.; transcription, ten per cent.; shorthand, twenty per cent., and accuracy, fifty per cent. The special significance of each title head, and the method of applying the tests, call for an explanation, which will follow:

The eligible lists of the Municipal Civil Service Commission, under the rules, remain in force for four years, unless sooner exhausted. But several examinations for a given position are likely to occur within that period. To begin with, separate lists are made up for men and women, which means a separate set of tests for the sexes. Then, if vacancies occur, in the higher grades for which no one is eligible for promotion, it is sometimes necessary to hold examinations for such higher grades, and, of course, the tests for copyists, for amanuenses and for court stenographers are separate and distinct.

The greatest competition is for the ordinary amanuensis position of stenographer and typewriter, as many as five hundred women having made application for the last examination open only to their sex. In the conduct of the examination as a preliminary the identity of every candidate is concealed by an ingeniously devised system of numbering and re-numbering of papers, so that after a paper is turned in and stamped its identity is concealed and remains concealed until after all the papers are rated. By this means all possibility of favoritism is eliminated. The spelling test was conducted on the basis of twenty words read off to all candidates, and for every misspelled word a deduction of five per cent. on that paper was made, which means an ultimate deduction of one-half of one per cent. on the whole examination.

How Dictation Is Given.

When the typewriting test was reached in the last examination, a sheet of paper containing two hundred and fifty printed words was handed to each candidate, and at a signal all began to copy the matter in front of them. Five minutes later, at a second signal, all stopped. Those who got down the entire matter correctly received one hundred per cent., and those who got one hundred and fifty words correctly got seventy per cent. Deductions, of course, were made for errors. The candidates who wrote between one hundred and fifty and two hundred and fifty words correctly were marked between seventy per cent. and one hundred per cent. on a scale depending on the number of words correctly written. The test in typewriting is given to determine how rapidly a candidate can use the machine.