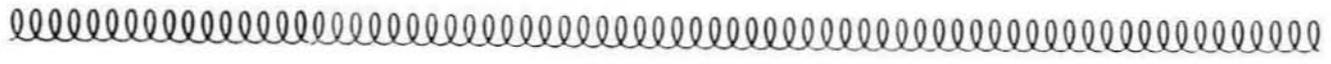




NJPH

THE JOURNAL OF
THE NEW JERSEY POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY

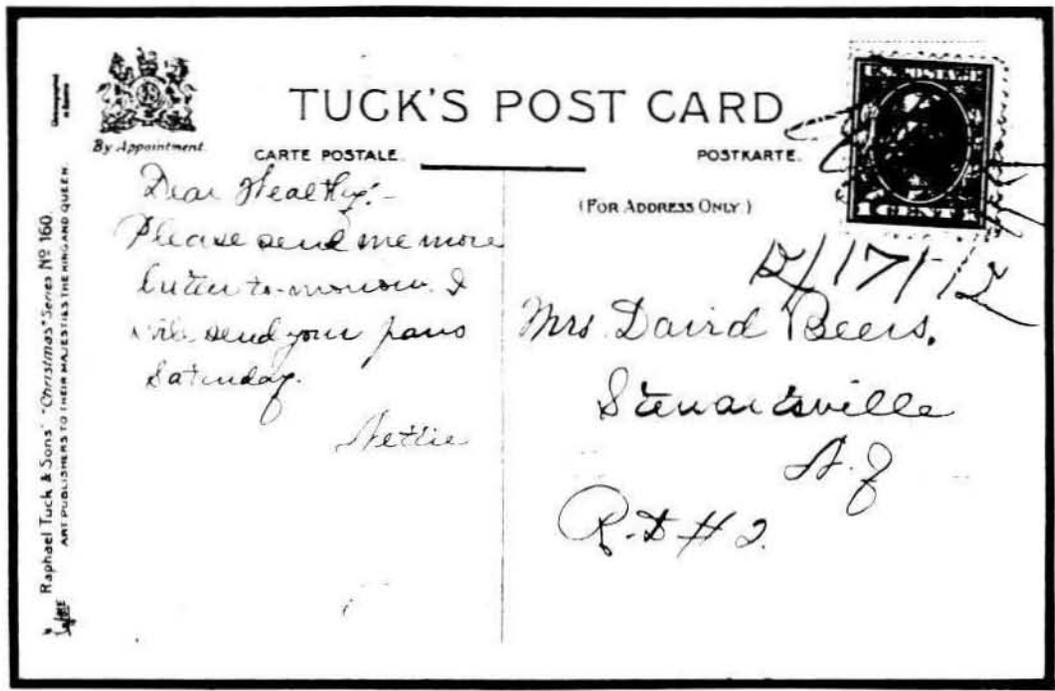
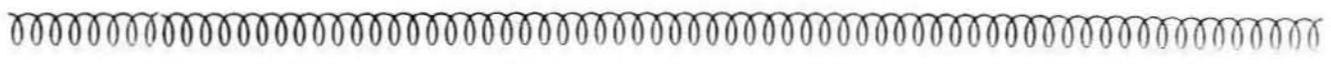
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NEW JERSEY POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY, Inc.

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 New Jersey Postal History Society Inc., 144 Hamilton Avenue, Clifton NJ 07011

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- MEMBERSHIP REPORT -

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- Harry M. Segner III, 108 Colwick Road, Cherry Hill NJ 08002

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- E. Leslie Byrnes, PO Box 318, Three Maiden Lane, Kinderhook NY 12106

CONGRATULATIONS to the following Award Winners at the recent NOJEX:

- Silver Medal - Postmarks of Camden County - Alfred McP. Perry (Psued)
- Silver-Bronze Medal - The Columbians on Foreign Mail - Gerard J. Neufeld
- Bronze Medal - Covers from Metuchen NJ 1845-1900 - James A. Moran

Please NOTE ! NJPHS will celebrate its 25th Anniversary at NOJEX 1997 on Memorial Day Weekend - Please Start NOW planning and organizing an exhibit of New Jersey Covers to be entered into the Competitive Exhibition, either single-frame (16 pages) or multiple-frames. We hope and plan for a large section of New Jersey Postal History. Other Social Activities are also now in the planning stages, along with the possibility of a major Auction of New Jersey Covers. Please consider spending a few days at the show and participating in the festive activities.

Recruit a New Member

Membership Directory

Lnate	Fname	Address	City	State	Zip
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RUZMUS	JAMES T.	1168 ROUTE 542	EGG HARBOR CITY	NJ	08215
RUTGERS UNIV.-	SPEC.COLL. & ARCHIVES	169 COLLEGE AVE	NEW BRUNSWICK	NJ	08903
SAUTTER	LEONARD G.	9 WEST 8th ST	OCEAN CITY	NJ	08226
SCHOPP	PAUL W.	223 ELM AVE	RIVERTON	NJ	08077
SCHUMACHER	PAUL	PO BOX 2411	CHERRY HILL	NJ	08034
SCHWARTZ	RICHARD	168 CHERRY LN	RIVER EDGE	NJ	07661
SELZER, DDS	FREDERICK J.	900 WEST MAIN	FREEHOLD	NJ	07729
SIEGEL	ABRAHAM	PO BOX 6603	LONG ISLAND CITY	NY	11106
SISKIN	ED	PO BOX 17	HADDONFIELD	NJ	08033
SMITH	BRANDES H.	13727 BARRYKNOLL LN	HOUSTON	TX	77079
SOMMER	MARK B.	1266 TEANECK RD-#10A	TEANECK	NJ	07656
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UNIV.OF TEXAS/DALLAS	LIBRARY SERIALS	PO BOX 830643	RICHARDSON	TX	75083
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WHITEMAN	WILLIAM H. JR.	402 NORTH HARVARD RD	GLASSBORO	NJ	08028
ZANKEL	NATHAN	PO BOX 267	NEW BRUNSWICK	NJ	08903
ZAYONI	ROBERT J.				

NEW JERSEY POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY, INC.

Annual Meeting -- NOJEX '96
Secaucus, New Jersey
May 26, 1996

The annual meeting was called to order by President Gerald Neufeld at 12:00 noon. The minutes of last year's annual meeting were read and approved. Over the last year the Society lost a total of three members. The NJPH Journal is now being published in a new format and the arrangements with the new publisher have been satisfactory. Brad Arch requests articles for publication. A donation has been made to the Society in the amount of \$588 by a donor who wishes to remain anonymous. The treasurer's report was given. As of November 30, 1995 there was a balance of \$4,054 in the Society's treasury which represents an increase of \$260 over 1994, exclusive of the \$588 donation.

President Neufeld discussed plans to celebrate the Society's 25th Anniversary in 1997 which will take place next year at NOJEX. Members of the Society are urged to participate in the exhibit -- a block of frames will be reserved for NJPHS exhibits. A special social hour is planned for Society members. Brad Arch will present a slide show and an auction with over 1,000 lots of New Jersey DPO's will be held at the show. With all of these activities, President Neufeld expressed the hope that the Society will have a good turn out. The meeting was adjourned at 12:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

ROBERT G. ROSE



CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF RURAL FREE DELIVERY



By Mary Law

New Jersey Rural Letter Carriers' Association Historian

October 1, 1996, will mark the 100th Anniversary of the RURAL FREE DELIVERY system in America. The following articles will tell the story of the beginnings and growth of this valuable service, the obstacles met and overcome, and of the continuing dedication of the rural mail carriers over these many years. As part of the U. S. Postal Service, rural mail carriers have always given friendly, reliable and efficient service. They can all be proud of their traditions and of their service to the American people during the past century.

PART I: RURAL FREE DELIVERY - ITS BEGINNINGS AND GROWTH FROM 1868 TO 1897

While Rural Free Delivery officially became a permanent service in 1896 out of Charles Town, West Virginia, the concept developed in 1868 out of Norwood, Georgia, by a man named Jerry Elliot. Following is the interesting historical account of how the RFD mail route system originated there:



***UNCLE JERRY,*
ORIGINAL RFD CARRIER?
STARTED CARRYING MAIL
IN 1868**

In 1868, the first RFD route in the U. S. was established at Norwood, Georgia, by the following named gentlemen: John H. Hall, A.S. Ray, S.E. Ray, Jerry Scott, George Parham, and W.S. Smith. This was strictly rural. The set-up was this:

The above named gentlemen hired a black man named Jerry Elliot who could not read. "Uncle Jerry" was a former slave belonging to Mercer Elliot of Warren County. After the war, he lived in a house on the plantation of George Ray's grandfather, S.E. Ray, and his brother, A.S. Ray.

On his first route, "Uncle Jerry" carried the mail to the Rays, and the families of John H. Hall, Jerry Scott, George Parham and W.S. Smith. It was strictly an arrangement between him and the families he served. In return for this service, the six families cared for him and attended to his needs.

"Uncle Jerry" stayed with E.S. Ray in a log cabin some distance from Norwood. Each morning he would rise and take breakfast at the Ray house, walk into town, cut wood for a while, then pick up the mail and deliver it over his route.

The Postmaster at Norwood arranged the mail in the order in which the above named families came. "Uncle Jerry" started out from Norwood at 11:30 o'clock in the morning on a route of five miles, delivering and collecting mail from the above named parties and returning to the post office in the afternoon after traveling a distance of ten miles.

In Norwood at the time, a young man named Tom Watson was working as a clerk in a store belonging to T.E. Massingale and studying law in his spare time. Watson became familiar with Uncle Jerry's work and it started an idea turning over in his mind.

The young store clerk later became one of Georgia's most colorful Representatives and Senators as he worked for the permanent establishment of a nation-wide free rural mail delivery system.

In 1889, President Benjamin Harrison appointed John Wanamaker as Postmaster General. Wanamaker was reported to be a man of "unlimited energy and titanic enthusiasm." Before the late 1890's, all rural Americans had to journey into town to pick up their mail at the post office. The city people had been enjoying the convenience of free mail delivery since 1863. The New York population had been increasing at such a great rate that the post office could no longer handle the number of patrons coming to pick up their mail.

But plans were in the making for a rural delivery service.

PMG Wanamaker was the FIRST to champion the idea of rural delivery, which he officially suggested in his annual report for the fiscal year 1891.

Regarding the differences in mail delivery, Wanamaker said that one writer had asked, "Why should the cities have fancy mail service and the old colonial system still prevail in the country districts?" That same question is what many farmers began to ask members of Congress in 1890. Wanamaker traveled and spoke to the Grange and Farmers' Alliance clubs throughout the country. The farmers liked the idea of not having to travel into town to the post office for their mail.

They wrote their congressmen to appropriate funds for a delivery-free experiment.

Between February 1 and September 3, 1891, Wanamaker did experiment with a rural free delivery system in 46 communities with populations ranging from 800 to 4,000. Wanamaker received many favorable comments from townspeople and postmasters of the experimental communities.

- * From Dunellen, New Jersey, Postmaster James Harold wrote, "I am pleased to state that the experimental free-delivery service is working very satisfactorily. As anticipated, ... the box rent has and no doubt will continue to fall off. This was considered secondary when the benefits to the patrons of the office were considered."
- * Postmaster William Sloat of Morrilton, Arkansas said, "The experimental free-delivery service at this office is giving entire satisfaction. The patrons of the office are delighted with it and say that they could not get along without it. To sum it all up in a nutshell, it is a perfect success here."
- * Postmaster I. Moses of Oakdale, Nebraska wrote, "The free delivery works satisfactorily, and the patrons of the office are pleased and would like to have it become permanent."



POSTMASTER GENERAL
JOHN WANAMAKER

By late 1891, the subject of rural free delivery was under discussion all over America.

Historian and author Wayne E. Fuller in his book - "R.F.D., THE CHANGING FACE OF RURAL AMERICA," wrote: "In little Grange halls across the land, Grangers met on cold, crisp nights, warmed their backs at the big stove in the main hall, smelled the coffee brewing in the kitchen and discussed the pros and cons of having their mail delivered ... They wrote and they talked, these farmers and their wives, at great length concerning the many things rural delivery would do for farm life and their words were recorded in the minutes of their meetings and in their speeches and letters."

The farmers realized for the first time that they would receive daily market quotations and would know when to sell their crops. Best of all, receiving home delivery would save them time, which to every businessman, means money. The farmer could cultivate an extra acre of corn or haul a couple of loads of hay in the time he had formerly spent going to the post office.

A person would have had to experience the feeling of being isolated, traveling muddy roads, and being snowbound in winter to know the need of seeing a new face in order to appreciate and understand what the farmer meant when he said, "Bring the post office to the farmers' doors and you will take more hay seed out of their hair, put more comfort in their homes and money in their pockets than any one thing purchased at the same expense."

National Grange Worthy Master J. H. Brigham said, "Nothing can be done which will accomplish more in the way of enlightening our people and making them content to remain in their country homes. We should press our demands for at least a fair trial of the system, not in the villages but in the country outside."

PMG Wanamaker continued to express his views as to why rural free delivery should be made permanent and should be expanded: "a new life, dignity and importance is added to the locality. I confidently look forward to the time when the extension of free delivery to the smaller towns will meet the rural delivery, and in a few years, cover the country districts with a letter carrier service, for delivery and collection both, from house to house ... It will help to settle the uninhabited portions of the land and promote the contentment of all who by means of the post will come into closer touch with kith and kin and the activities of life."

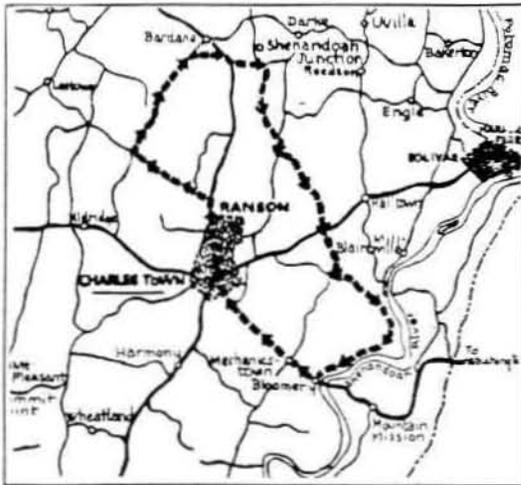
Wanamaker's term as PMG ended in 1893 without being successful in establishing a permanent Rural Free Delivery system. On the plus side, Congressman Tom Watson of Georgia, who, in 1868, had observed perhaps the nation's first unofficial rural mail carrier, "Uncle Jerry" Elliot, drafted and proposed legislation in 1893 to extend mail delivery to the farmer on a permanent basis.

On the minus side, President Grover Cleveland appointed Wilson Bissell as his Postmaster General. Much wrangling followed among members of Congress, Postmaster General Bissell and the rural public. The farmers felt they were being discriminated against. Not only did the country people have no mail delivery service, but they paid the same postage rate on their letters that city people paid. As they saw it, they were actually being taxed so that city people might have free delivery while they must still go after their mail.

Finally, on June 9, 1896, Congress appropriated \$10,000. and, together with a prior appropriation of \$30,000., made the money available authorizing rural delivery.

But Bissell refused to implement the nationwide RFD system and soon resigned the Postmaster General position.

The Cleveland Administration then appointed William L. Wilson from West Virginia, who promised to begin the long deferred rural delivery experiment.



MAP: ONE OF FIRST RURAL MAIL ROUTES
FOLLOWED WHEN R.F.D. SYSTEM WAS
INAUGURATED AT CHARLES TOWN, WV

Like his predecessor, Wilson felt the R.F.D. idea to be "impractical" but since the people continued to demand it, Wilson said that he would not stand in the way, and would "make the experiment by the best tests I can devise."

Wilson chose his hometown of Charles Town, West Virginia, and two other villages, Halltown and Uvilla, as the first sites where Rural Free Delivery would be officially tried.

In total, he selected 44 routes in 29 states. But Wilson said he had taken care "to choose territory widely divergent in physical features and in the occupation and density of its population."

On September 29, 1896, Wilson issued the following letter inaugurating R.F.D.:

"The success of the experiment of Rural Free Delivery of mail, now being tried in the vicinity of Uvilla, West Virginia, will depend largely upon the speed and promptness with which the letter carriers will make deliveries to the patrons on their routes. This will be insured if patrons erect at the roadside boxes in which carriers may deposit mail as they pass. The time otherwise consumed by letter carriers in

reaching residences some distance back from the main roads will thus be saved, the service rendered efficient and its cost limited to a reasonable figure. It is to be hoped that the Department will receive the cooperation of those who will be benefitted by R.F.D. in order that it may be able to satisfactorily demonstrate by this test the usefulness of the new service."

Although not experimental in the sense that PMG Wanamaker's was in 1891, the first experimental R.F.D. service was begun on October 1, 1896, simultaneously on the three routes in West Virginia chosen by PMG Wilson.

In the first week, patrons received 214 letters, 290 newspapers, 33 postal cards and two packages - and sent 18 letters and two packages.

Only nine months later, on June 30, 1897, R.F.D. service had grown to 82 routes. These came out of 43 post offices in 29 states.



EARLY RURAL CARRIER POSING WITH HIS CUSTOMERS

New Jersey did not see Rural Free Delivery routes established during this "experimental period" but four routes were set up in fiscal year 1898: Three were started in Moorestown on June 5 and one in Riverton on June 13.

The 44 "widely-divergent" routes selected for the experiment by PMG Wilson were located in 29 states. They are listed (**next page**) in order of their establishment.

The development of the R.F.D. system was important to the development of farm areas. For the first time, the farmer could receive his newspaper daily by mail. The system led to parcel post service and the development of great mail order firms. But that came later.

Rural delivery brought farm families food, tobacco, dry goods, drugs and all manner of goods that were otherwise difficult to get. And in the process, it helped merchants such as Sears, Roebuck and Company - which went into the mail order business in 1888 - grow and prosper. In 1897 (after a single year of limited rural delivery service), Sears boasted of selling four suits and a watch every minute, a buggy every 10 minutes, and a revolver every two minutes.

Newspaper publishers welcomed a service that put their product within reach of nearly every rural family in the nation. Farmers eagerly subscribed to these publications for general news and market quotations essential to their work.

When the Post Office Department had to turn down hundreds of petitions for the popular new service because of poor roadways, local governments got involved. In one county in Indiana, for example, local people chipped in \$2,600 of their own money to grade and gravel a road so they could qualify for rural delivery. Thus, another by-product of the service was expansion of the nation's road and highway system.

LIST OF 44 ROUTES IN 29 STATES SELECTED FOR EXPERIMENT BY PMG WILLIAM WILSON

In 1896:

- October 6 - Charles Town, Hallsboro & Uvilla, West Virginia
- October 15 - Hartsville & Hope, Indiana
Collinsville, Darrrtown, Elba & Somerville, Ohio
Westminster, Maryland
Cairo, Missouri
- October 19 - Clarksville, Arkansas
- October 22 - Palmyra, Virginia
- October 23 - China Grove, North Carolina
- October 26 - Bonner Springs, Kansas
- November 1 - Thibodeaux, Louisiana
- November 2 - Bernardstown & Greenfield, Massachusetts
- November 7 - Tecumseh, Nebraska
- November 10 - Loveland, Colorado
Morning Sun, Iowa
- November 16 - Sun Prairie, Iowa
- November 23 - Gorham, Maine

- Naples, Maine
- Sabago Lake, Maine
- Orange, Massachusetts
- November 24 - New Stanton, Pennsylvania
Ruffsdale, Pennsylvania
Tempe, Arizona
- November 25 - North Deering, Maine
- December 1 - South Deerfield, Massachusetts
- December 3 - Climax, Michigan
- December 7 - Opelika, Alabama
Brunswick, Maine
- December 8 - Quitman, Georgia
- December 10 - Auburn, Illinois
- December 21 - Grand Isle, Vermont
Lancaster, Pennsylvania

In 1897:

- January 1 - Farmington, Minnesota
Allenaville, Kentucky
Atoka, Tennessee
- February 1 - Campbell, California
- April 1 - North Yakima, Washington



IN TROUBLE: A PROBLEM IN THE EARLY RURAL DELIVERY DAYS WAS GETTING STUCK IN "DEEP" WATER OR MUD

RFD was an instant success. James Bruns, Smithsonian U.S. postal history curator, says "R.F.D. dramatically changed the very nature of rural life in this country. Within a few years, it significantly diminished the isolation of the farm families because they had mail and newspapers every day. It encouraged better roads because without passable roads, one condition for getting and keeping a mail route, there was no mail service. And it increased the land value of the farms."

The importance of the mail carrier was recognized in the early days of rural delivery. There were "few branches of the public service - the successful operation of which - is so dependent on the personality of the employee," a 1911 Civil Service Commission report said.

Two men who were responsible for nurturing and building the basic structure of the present-day RFD system were Perry Heath, President William McKinley's new First Assistant Postmaster General, and Heath's subordinate, August Machen., Superintendent of Free Delivery. Under their guidance, the nation's first county-wide RFD service began in Carroll County, MD, upon which the rest of the nation's rural routes were modeled.

This County R.F.D. service began nine months after the original rural routes on June 30, 1897. It developed rapidly until it covered 990 counties.

There's a story which claims this new service squealed into existence:

"The nation's first county-wide rural free delivery service sprang to life with a squeal in 1899 when a Carroll, MD, resident inaugurated it with the mailing of a greased pig. Edwin W. Shriver, the carrier who made the first-day run, slapped 42-cents postage on the pig's rump at the urging of a farmer who wanted his gift delivered to a friend three miles down the road."

Though all traces of that "first-day cover" soon vanished, the legend lives on and residents cherish their ancestors' historic role in developing rural delivery service."

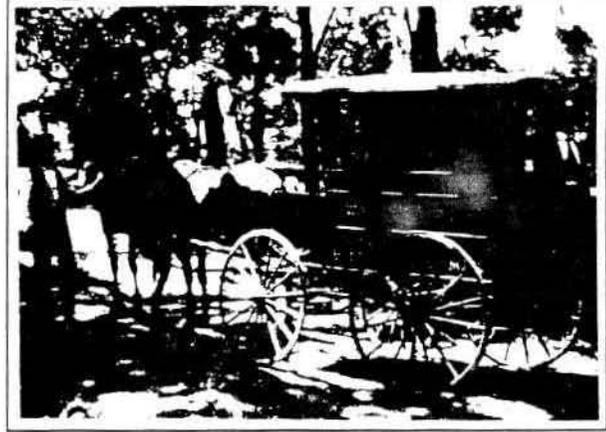


MARYLAND - WESTMINSTER RURAL POSTAL WAGON ROUTE CARRIER DELIVERING MAIL

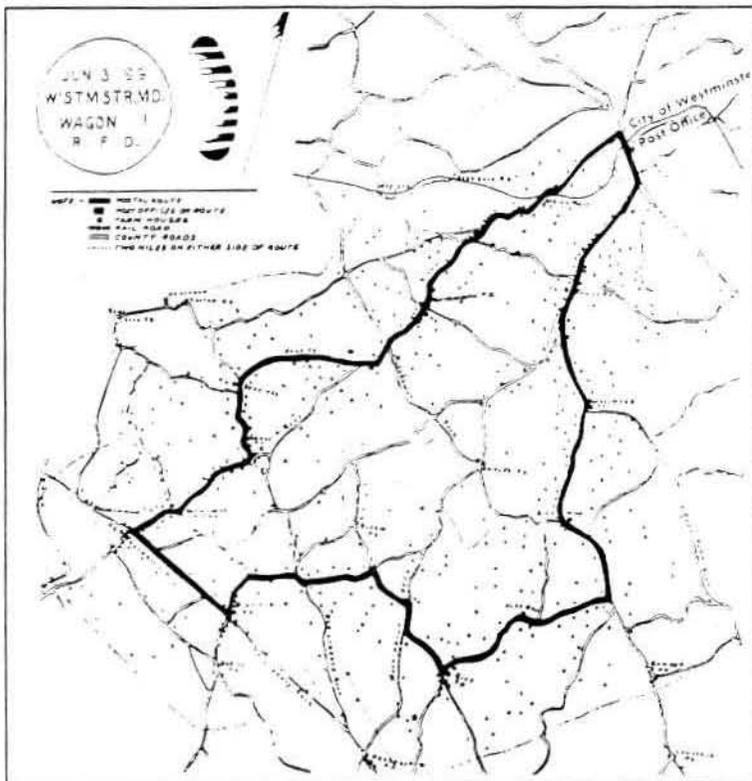
Carroll County residents were served by "post offices on wheels."

"The horse-drawn wagons, actually called Postal Wagons, were 12 feet long, painted blue with black trimming, and their running gear was yellow with red stripes.

Inside were counters, drawers and letter boxes - - 16 large ones in the back and 42 small ones in the front.



RFD POSTAL WAGON C READY TO DELIVER THE U.S. MAIL



The map on the right is of the route of Wagon I, the FIRST "Post office on wheels." It made its first trip on April 3, 1899 from Westminster in Carroll County, Maryland, to provide mail collection and delivery service to 12 rural communities daily.

The inset with the map is the first type of R.F.D. marking used in Maryland on that route.

REFERENCES:

- N.R.E.C.A. newspaper (9/26/81)
by Ruthann Saenger
- Postal Life Magazine (1982)
by Barbara Moldauer
- Smithsonian News Service (1986)
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An interesting description concerning the beginning of rural mail service was written by Wayne Fuller in his comprehensive and colorful study, RFD, THE CHANGING FACE OF RURAL AMERICA.

He wrote: "There were no Indians to fight along the rural routes and no Pony Express riders to race across the prairies. Mostly there were only muddy country roads and eager farmers, cranks, politicians, and fourth-class postmasters to provide what drama there was. And yet the establishment of the farmers' free delivery service was not without its epic proportions. More money was spent, more men employed, and more paperwork done to lay out the rural delivery system than to establish any single extension of the postal service."

PART II: RURAL FREE DELIVERY - ITS GROWTH FROM 1896 TO 1913

In this article, we will return to 1896 when Rural Free Delivery began:

The first five rural routes emanating from Jefferson County, West Virginia averaged 20 miles. These people were appointed as the first rural carriers: Harry C. Gibson Charles Town, route # 1; Frank Young, Charles Town, route # 2; John W. Lucas, Charles Town, route # 3; Keyes Strider, Halltown, route # 1; and Melvin T. Strider, Uvilla, route # 1.

The five original carriers traveled their 20-mile routes on horseback, bicycle or horse and buggy. In comparison, by the early 1980's, rural carriers daily traveled 2,309,313 miles in 4-wheel jeeps or right-hand drive cars along one of the 36,102 rural routes throughout the country.

The first carriers, while serving their routes, did meet with some opposition. One farmer, skeptical over the reliability of the service, remarked: "How am I going to know they'll ever git to the post office or that some'n won't come along an' take the stamps off'n 'em? No, siree, Harry, the old way's good enough for me, as long as I'm a plain farmer!" However, those who did appreciate the service, soon outnumbered the "die-hards."

Following the success of the experimental delivery service, additional routes were begun in 29 more states. These ran through regions where the roads were good to pleasant and where there were not roads at all.

Routes were laid out in Arizona through farmers' fields and orchards and in Kansas along the Missouri River over roads so hilly, that as one man put it, a 40-acre farm had 160 acres of cultivable land. One route lay along a bayou in Louisiana and three routes ran through a county in Kentucky that had no roads or maps and had never been divided into townships.

Before Postmaster General William Wilson had planned and established nearly all of the pioneer routes, he said that his purpose was "to locate them where weather, road and population conditions varied as much as possible, and for this reason, routes were planted in communities (with) no roads, where the population was sparse and where the people were not interested in having free delivery."

In the closing of Wilson's administration, he did nothing to encourage the development of the experiment. But during the summer of 1897, letters were pouring into Washington from farmers along the pioneer routes, explaining how much it meant to them to have their mail delivered and telling the Department to continue the experiment.

Congress responded by appropriating \$50,000 to continue the service. The plan was supported by the new Postmaster General, James A. Gary, who was appointed in 1897 by President William McKinley.

Postmaster General Gary's Annual Report in 1897 gives a detailed and glowing account of the RFD experiment. He said:

"In the experimental extension of free delivery to the rural districts some interesting results have been obtained. This service, commenced in 1896, has been carried on for a year over selected routes in 29 states under such varying conditions as to give the experiment the fairest and fullest test. Congress placed \$40,000 at the disposal of the Department for this purpose in the fiscal year 1896-97, and provided \$50,000 for a continuation of the experiment during the present fiscal year. It would be difficult to point to any like expenditure of public money which has been more generously appreciated by the people, or which has conferred greater benefits in proportion to the amount expended."

"The response from each community in which rural delivery has been introduced is that, rather than have it discontinued after once experiencing its benefits, most of the people served would willingly defray the cost themselves, either by paying the salaries of the carriers or by submitting to an increase of postage for rural delivery."

"The advantages of being able to receive a daily newspaper, so as to keep in touch with the news of the world and with the condition of the markets which regulate the price of their products, and the enhancement of comfort in having the mails collected and delivered daily at their homes instead of having to ride or walk in all inclemencies of weather to the nearest post office or railway station, have been appreciated, and many expressions of gratitude have reached the Department from the beneficiaries of this system."

"Another noticeable fact is the loyal service of the carriers employed in the rural districts. Though receiving a maximum pay of but \$300 a year and furnishing their own means of conveyance, many of those men ride 20 or 30 miles a day in all kinds of weather, over every description of road, and often across farms where there are no roads at all, with cheerful alacrity."

"The farmers themselves facilitate the service as much possible by placing boxes at convenient points for the reception of mail. In every instance, the introduction of the service has resulted in an increase of the amount of mail matter handled. There is no doubt of the desire wherever the system has been tried that it should be made permanent."

"There is equally no doubt in my mind that, as stated in the report of the Committee on Post-Offices and Post-Roads of the 54th Congress, the continuance of rural postal delivery will elevate the standard of intelligence and promote the welfare of the people."

"It has unquestionably proved itself a potent factor in the attainment of what should be one of the chief aims of our Government, the granting of the best possible postal facilities to the farmer and his family, who have, in the past, and not without good cause perhaps, thought that the Government did not consider them entitled to improved service, while the residents of cities and towns, with infinitely more comforts in everyday life, are given every blessing that the Department can bestow."

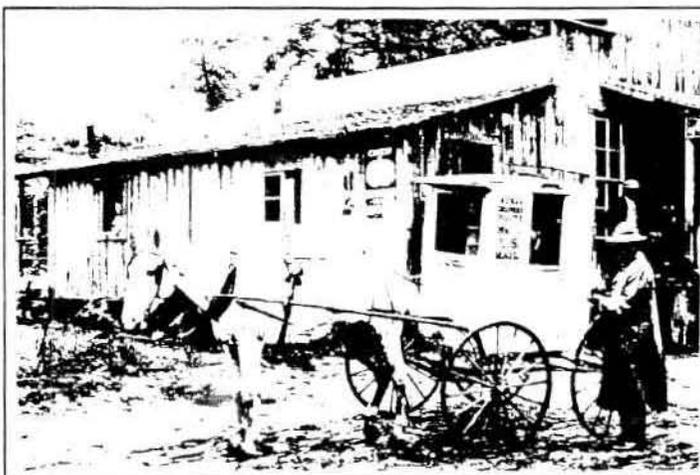
Descriptions of delivery conditions in various states and patrons' reactions to RFD can be found in the 1897 Annual Post-Office Report of the Postmaster General:

ARIZONA: Tempe, in the center of the productive irrigated lands of the Salt River Valley, Maricopa County, Arizona, was made the test station for rural free delivery in that Territory. The chosen route extended two miles west of Tempe, eight miles south, and six miles east, taking in practically the whole country between Tempe and the Mormon settlement of Mesa. It covered 38 square miles and served about 450 persons. Two carriers each rode 30 miles a day through farms and fruit orchards, which were described by the local land boomers as presenting "a perpetual vision of beauty ... and where there is a constant succession of crops, blossoms, buds, and ripening fruit appearing simultaneously on the same tree."

"The service has proved to be an absolute success in every respect. Rather than be deprived of the great benefits they have received from it, the patrons say they would willingly defray the expense themselves. The only opposition has come from the saloon keepers of Tempe, who claim that their revenues from the farming community have been affected very materially since it has been made no longer necessary for them to come to town to get their mail, a fact which is gratifying to the moral element of the community."

One patron wrote: "This short letter is an attempt to give utterance to our appreciation of the free mail delivery. There is no loss of time after the mail arrives at Tempe before it is delivered carefully and kindly. Not only the loss of time in going for the mail each day, but also the worry and anxiety are thus saved. Our only fear is that the service will be discontinued."

Another had this to say: "I am more than ever proud of being an American citizen, and gratefully appreciate the benefit the farmers of Tempe are receiving from the rural delivery system. I live three and a half miles from the Tempe post office, and have been sick for a week past, yet my mail is brought to my door every morning, except Sunday I hope the Government is satisfied that the experiment is a grand success, for I assure you that we "hayseeds" (as we are sometimes dubbed) are more than pleased with the system. It looks as if "Uncle Sam" had at last turned his eye in our direction, and had determined to help the farmer."



DELIVERING THE MAIL - AROUND 1897

VERMONT: Free rural delivery was established in Vermont December, 1896, under rather novel conditions, in the township of Grand Isle, embracing a good share of one of the large islands of Lake Champlain. It has a population of about 800, covers an area of about 25 square miles, and is noted for the abundance of its agricultural products.

Two carrier routes take in the entire township and render possible the discontinuance of the post-offices at Adams and Pearl, and the star route service between Adams and Grand Isle, thus materially lessening the cost of the delivery. The service appears to give great satisfaction to the community served, but has elicited some protests against the abolition of the unnecessary post offices and star route.

PENNSYLVANIA: The counties of Lancaster and Westmoreland were selected for rural free delivery in Pennsylvania. Widely different conditions prevail in the two counties. The routes in Lancaster County run through a rich farming country, with an intelligent population, largely of German descent, and with good roads. In Westmoreland County, the conditions are hard, the rural population is scattered, the country is very rough, and the roads are bad.

The two routes started in Lancaster County begin at Lancaster City and include the territory embraced within the service of six minor post towns. Lancaster County is rich in post-offices, there being nearly 150 fourth-class offices within its limits, a large proportion of which, together with several star routes, might be dispensed with if free delivery in a permanent form were extended over the whole county. The area covered by the present routes is about 30 square miles, with from 16 to 20 miles of daily travel for each carrier. One route extends from Lancaster to Kready, Mountville, Windom, and back to Lancaster; the other to Bausman, Millersville, Letort, and back to Lancaster. The service was popular from the start and soon resulted in a large increase in the number of letters and newspapers carried.

Two starting points were established in Westmoreland County, one at Ruffsdale, the other at New Stanton. The Ruffsdale carrier includes within his delivery the offices at Mendon, Walts Mill, and Hunkers. The New Stanton carrier's route takes in . . . Cribbs, Target, Darragh, and Madison.

Within a very short time after the establishment of the service, the number of pieces of mail carried doubled.

Early in 1898, the Department announced that if any group of farmers wanted a rural mail route, they had only to petition their congressmen for it. If the PMG approved their request, the Department would establish the route. The farmers were asked to send along with their petitions, descriptions of their community and their roads. When word passed around among the farmers that all they had to do to have their mail delivered to their farms was to sign a petition, the rush was on and every new route established brought a demand for a dozen or so more.

Rural Free Delivery expanded, but only out of a continuing struggle between the changing philosophies adopted by the different Postmaster Generals, who either thought the service should break-even and those who viewed it primarily as a service. As Rural Free Delivery became more widespread, many roads were built and improved in rural areas, linking up communities. Subsequently, the home delivery of weekly and daily newspapers was possible.

From A SHORT HISTORY OF THE MAIL SERVICE by Carl H. Scheele, we discover that the Department's RFD policy was very successful, as was reported in 1899:

"It (Rural Free Delivery) is now in successful operation from 630 distributing points, scattered among 40 states and one Territory (the only States unrepresented in the list were Idaho, Mississippi, Montana, and Wyoming), giving service to 452,735 people, at an average annual cost of 66 cents per capita."

"The benefits . . . may be summarized as follows: increased postal receipts, enhancement of the value of farm lands, improved means of travel, some hundreds of miles of country roads, especially in the Western States, having been graded specifically in order to obtain rural free delivery. Higher educational influences, broader circulation of the means of public intelligence, and closer daily contact with the great world of activity extended to the homes of heretofore isolated rural communities."

Did you think that rural mail carriers only delivered the mail? From an article entitled "CARRIERS FORECAST WEATHER," we find that they also had other duties.

The question is: A few generations ago, without the technology that we have today, how did people know whether it would be cloudy or clear, rainy or snowy?

The answer is: If they lived in town, they could inquire at the post office, but if they were ordinary country dwellers, they waited to ask the mailman.

From 1900 to 1904, rural mailmen carried on the work of acting meteorologists of the day. In a sense they were the first weathermen of the nation, for as they delivered the rural mail, they gave out weather information from the Department of Agriculture.

Although it is uncertain when definite participation between the Post Office Department and the Weather Bureau began, up to that time, there were no weather reports except the official ones issued in Washington, DC, at the Department of Agriculture.

Mark Twain is supposed to have made the comment that "everyone talks about the weather but nobody does anything about it." This was not the case with the country mail carriers.

The farmers wanted to know when to plant their crops or to harvest them. In fact, their livelihood depended on how well they could interpret the many moods of the weather. But all they had to go by was the old Farmer's Almanac, or the signs they had learned down through the years for trying to predict fair or stormy weather.

Long before the age of the Wright Brothers and airplane travel, or before the Model-T cars, people were down to earth, limited to the facilities of the horse and buggy era, so they were greatly interested when they noticed a sign on the front of the mailman's buggy or car, telling them in simple terms what was usually obvious anyway, that it was a fair day, or that rain was likely to fall.

Rural Free Delivery was spreading rapidly over the nation. Rural mail carriers were usually the only means of contact rural people had with the federal government, or with the outside world in general. Country people came to look upon the friendly mailman as the source of information on a number of subjects. "I'll wait and ask the mailman," they would say. Now they asked him concerning the weather.

So it was very natural when, in 1900, it became the practice of rural carriers to put signs on their vehicles, showing the weather predictions. Oftentimes, they slipped notices on the weather in the mailboxes. Some used horns and whistles to notify the farmers of their approach.



In his 1902 report, the Secretary of Agriculture, James Wilson, wrote:

"... urges the desirability of extending the distribution of daily forecasts coextensively with the rural free delivery routes. Of the 10,000 rural free delivery routes existing August 1, 1902, it has been found possible to serve only 1,000. To make the distribution coextensive with the RFD would cost about \$100,000."

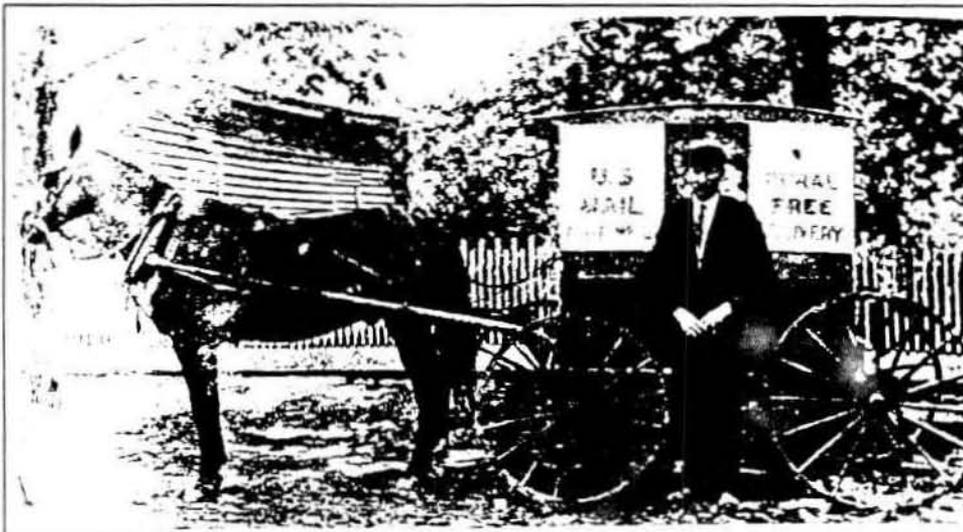
"But," he concluded: "There is nothing too good for the patrons along the RFD routes."

The POST OFFICE GUIDE OF 1902 stated: "The Weather Bureau finds the RFD service has one of the best mediums to make its service as far reaching as possible. It is the desire of the Post Office Department that postmasters and carriers at RFD offices co-operate in the distribution of weather forecasts which should be treated as their official mail matter."

At first, official Weather Bureau white slips were used. The days forecast, received by telegram or messenger, was stamped on by the logo-type method. Then from 1902-1903, bunting flags were used but proved unsatisfactory since they became useless in wet weather. Metal flags were ruled out because they were too heavy for use on the light-weight RFD wagons.

By this time though, new methods were being used, such as printing weather maps, placing forecasts in newspapers, and transmitting weather warnings by telephone. The time was coming when rural mail carriers were no longer needed as weathermen.

The methods now used for issuing weather forecasts are a far cry from the humble beginning of weather service dating back to 1872, and followed by the white cards distributed by the postmasters to the rural mail carriers in the early 1900's to put on the dashboards of their wagons and buggies.



Early rural mail carrier poses with his RFD wagon around 1905. His wagon might have been homemade as many were at the turn of the century. (Note misspelling of "route")

By August 1, 1900, the postmarking of mail on all rural routes was required. Compact hand-cancelers and ink pads were supplied to rural carriers. At first, each route in some counties had a separate number, indicated by the numeral appearing in the cancellation but a revision of the numbering system about 1906, the use of automobiles by RFD carriers, and the consolidation of certain routes, nullified the purpose of many "numeral" cancelers.

Even though the Department, in 1903, had ceased issuing the canceling devices, some clerks and postmasters purchased RFD cancelers privately to "advertise" the new service.

An automobile was used experimentally for rural delivery as early as 1902 at Adrian, Michigan, and in 1906, the Department gave permission for rural carriers to use their automobiles. Most rural carriers continued using the early one-horse, completely "postal" equipped RFD wagon (which cost \$45.) The change from horse and wagon to the automobile not only helped in the improvement of highways but also paralleled development of better automobile equipment, which, in turn, resulted in a decrease in the cost of automobiles. For example, in 1906, a Model-T sold for \$850, but by 1914, a new Model-T was priced at \$500. These changes were also related to salary increases for the rural carriers.

Possibly knowing the value of the rural mail carriers, an executive order dated February 1, 1902, placed them under the Civil Service. Authorization to appoint substitute rural carriers came on April 21, 1902. Four years later, on June 26, 1906, through an Act of Congress regular rural carriers were authorized to have 15 days of annual leave with pay.

The National Rural Letter Carriers' Association was organized in 1903. When the rural carriers across the nation met and organized in Chicago, Illinois, that year, their needs focused around improving road conditions and salaries on which they could work and live. Even now the NRLCA continues to seek to improve methods used by rural mail carriers, to cooperate with the U. S. Postal Service and the public for the good of the service, to promote a fraternal spirit among its members, and to benefit their labor conditions.

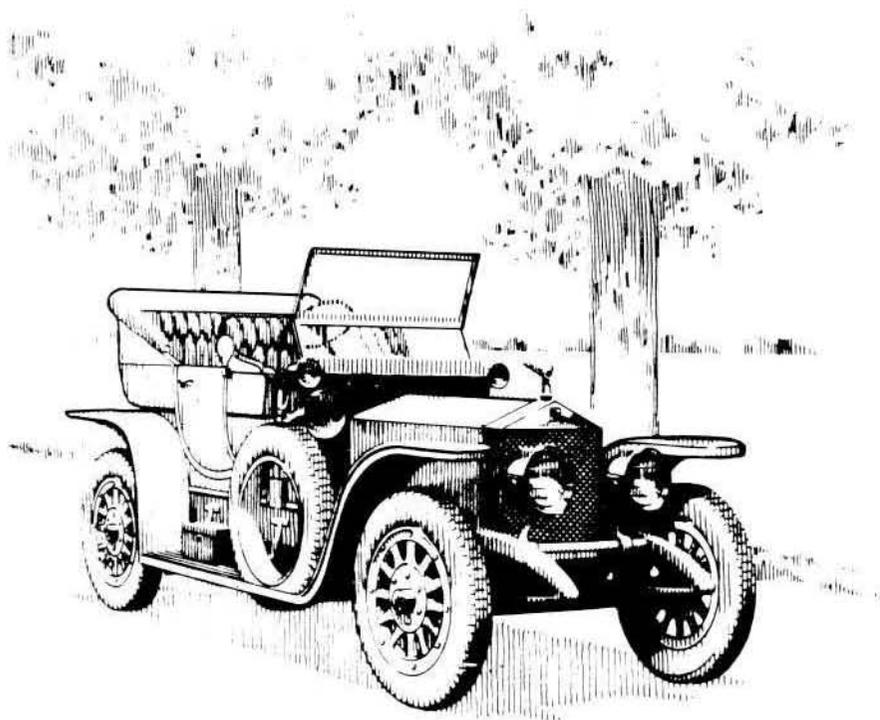
On August 24, 1912, a general domestic parcel post service was established, and went into operation on January 1, 1913. The mail order business thrived following this. While the express and freight service had stopped at the local depot, there was now little need for the farmer to worry about receiving his parcels. Instead of paying high express charges after an inconvenient trip to town, the Rural Free Delivery carrier became the dependable link between merchant and farmer at the lowest possible cost.



PARCEL POST STAMP WITH RURAL CARRIER
ISSUED IN 1912-13

REFERENCES:

The National Rural Letter Carrier (9/26/81) by Ruthann Saenger
The National Rural Letter Carrier (4/11/81) by Gwendolyn M. Aaberg
(first published in the Fox River Patriot newspaper in Princeton, WI)
"RFD, The Changing Face of Rural America" by Wayne E. Fuller
"A Short History of the Mail Service" by Carl H. Scheele
Photos from the N.R.L.C.A. magazine (4/81 and 8/86)



"Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their completed rounds?" This oft-quoted saying is inscribed on the front of the General Post Office in New York City and other post offices such as the new, large Rio Grande Post Office in Cape May County, NJ).

Carl Scheele, in his book, *A SHORT HISTORY OF THE MAIL SERVICE*, explains the origin of this quotation:

"The Persians learned . . . administration from their Assyrian predecessors. They re-established and perfected efficient postal communications along the old trade routes . . ."

"Herodotus described the system: 'Nothing mortal travels so fast as these messengers . . . along the whole line of road there are men stationed with horse, in number equal to the number of days which the journey takes . . . these men will not be hindered from accomplishing at their best speed the distance which they have to go, either by snow, or rain, or heat, or by darkness of night.'"

PART III: RURAL FREE DELIVERY - ITS GROWTH, GAINS AND EFFECTS FROM 1900 TO 1934

Once again, it is necessary to return to earlier years, in order to discuss additional duties of rural carriers and to compare the decline of post offices, the increase in rural free delivery routes, and the carriers' pay scale and routes. Much of this information concerning rural free delivery is found in the Annual Miscellaneous Reports of the Postmaster Generals.

In the report issued in 1900, we learn that during the period from December, 1899, to November 1900, 439 star routes and mail messenger services were discontinued or curtailed, and that upon the basis of the contractors' awards, the service discontinued or curtailed, as superseded by rural free delivery, would have cost the United States \$59,279.47 for one year. A break-down of these routes shows that two star routes in New Jersey were discontinued with a savings of \$163.40.

According to the report, on April 12, 1900, an important step toward increasing the efficiency of the rural free delivery service was taken by the issuance of regulations by the Third Assistant Postmaster General, giving rural carriers "the same power to receive and register letters, as well as to deliver registered letters, as is (already) exercised by the carriers of free delivery cities. As the law requires registered letters to be delivered personally to the addressees, rural carriers in such cases deviate from their usual custom and deliver letters at the houses instead of dropping them into roadside boxes."

He also wrote "at present rural carriers are only authorized to receipt for applications for money orders and no authority is vested in them to issue money orders except in the postal wagon county service. It is anticipated that their usefulness in this direction will soon be extended."

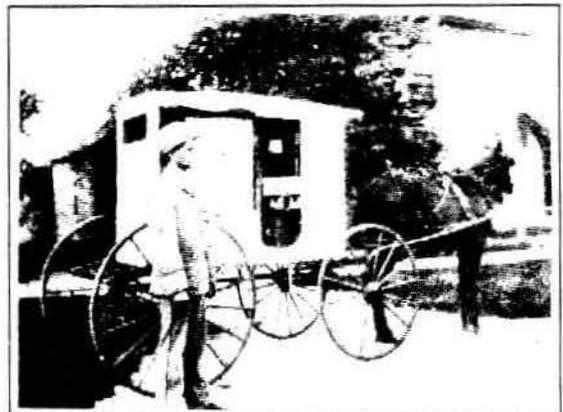
The report continued: By Order No. 875 of the PMG, issued July 26, 1900, postage on drop letters on rural free delivery routes was established at two cents per ounce, and rural carriers were authorized and required to cancel stamps on all letters collected by them, whether intended for delivery on the routes or to be mailed from the collecting office. In the latter case, postmasters were instructed to "back stamp" the letters turned in by the rural carriers.

The authority to deliver drop letters on their routes at city rates for drop-letter postage has added greatly to the local convenience of rural free delivery.

It was soon discovered that rural carrier routes radiating from the larger offices rendered some fourth-class post offices and the Star Routes which served them, rather useless. The number of post offices continued to increase until 1901, the peak year, when 76,945 were reported. Thereafter, the number of post offices began a steady decline, dropping to 68,131 in 1905, and in 1915, there were 38,813 post offices left.

Because of the establishment of rural delivery service, many thousands of fourth class post offices were discontinued by 1915. This represented a saving to the Post Office Department of approximately \$1,613,040 per annum. At the same time, a savings of \$3,482,670 was realized through discontinued star route service.

But, between 1900 and 1915, the number of rural routes increased from 1,259 to 43,877. Money appropriated and spent during these years showed that rural mail delivery was a reasonable and money-saving service.



MODEL RFD EQUIPMENT IN THE EARLY 1900'S

In 1900, \$450,000 were appropriated and the annual cost was \$420,433. Ten years later, in 1910, the appropriation was \$37,260,000 with a \$36,914,769 annual cost, and five years after that, in 1915, an appropriation of \$53,000,000 and an annual cost of \$50,000,000 equaled a \$3,000,000 savings for the post office.

These boxes show the maximum salaries of rural carriers and the growth of their routes using figures from 1897 to 1915:

YEAR	ROUTES	MILES
1897	412	1,843
1898	153	2,960
1899	412	8,929
1900	1,259	28,685
1903	15,119	332,618
1910	41,079	950,000
1915	43,877	1,067,674

AUGUST	1, 1897:	\$ 300.
JULY	1, 1898:	\$ 400.
JULY	1, 1900:	\$ 500.
MAR.	1, 1902:	\$ 600.
JULY	1, 1904:	\$ 720.
JULY	1, 1907:	\$ 900.
JULY	1, 1911:	\$ 1000.
SEPT.	30, 1912:	\$ 1100.
JULY	1, 1914:	\$ 1200.

One question which had received serious consideration in the preliminary stages of establishing R.F.D. was the "character of the boxes which should be required to be put up by the patrons of rural free delivery." Early on, it had been suggested that it would be good policy for the Department to "adopt some uniform style of mail box for the rural free delivery service, with two compartments, one for collection and one for delivery with one master key for the carrier to open the collection compartments of all the boxes, and a separate key for the delivery compartment to be furnished to each patron of the delivery, these boxes to be put up and kept in repair by the Post Office Department ..."

No action was taken by Congress upon this recommendation and the "designation of boxes suitable for rural free delivery has been remanded to some extent to the discretion of the special agents charged with the establishment of the service."

Discussed at length in this 1900 PMG report was the "difficulty as to the punishment of persons who wantonly or maliciously molest boxes put up for the rural free delivery service." It was determined that "such actions were covered in Section 1424 of the Postal Laws and Regulations, which provides penalties for any person who shall willfully or maliciously injure, deface, or destroy any mail matter deposited in any letter box, pillar box, or other receptacle established by authority of the Postmaster General."

Finally, in 1915, assistance was given the rural carriers in servicing the roadside boxes which were produced in every shape or size imaginable when PMG Albert Bursen approved the now-familiar tunnel-shaped box with its flag and snap-latch door as the standard rural letter-box. The new design, by Roy Joroleman of the Department, was initially approved for boxes in two sizes.

The PMG report of 1900 has detailed charts with many statistics of rural free delivery routes nationwide. Of 11 pages listed, there were only ten New Jersey RFD reports with a total of 12 routes:

POST OFFICE	COUNTY	WHEN ESTABL.	POPULATION SERVED	AREA, SQ.MILES	NO. OF CARRIERS	LENGTH OF ROUTE	PIECES OF MAIL DEL. & COLL. FISCAL YEAR 1899-1900
CHATHAM	MORRIS	11/01/1898	1,375	21	1	21	33,865
DELAWARE	WARREN	08/01/1899	470	12	1	20	30,977
MARLTON	BURLINGTON	12/01/1898	580	10	1	16	55,731
MOORESTOWN	BURLINGTON	07/06/1898	1,680	40	3	54	184,584
MOORESTOWN	BURLINGTON	04/03/1899	500	10	1	22	
MOUNT LAUREL	BURLINGTON	01/01/1899	490	19	1	23	32,833
NEWTON	SUSSEX	05/01/1900	700	20	1	25	4,640
PALMYRA	WAYNE	12/01/1898	545	6	1	14	47,709
RIVERTON	BURLINGTON	06/13/1898	715	6	1	15	61,253
RIVERTON	BURLINGTON	03/01/1900	900	14	1	18	

A supplemental list of RFD services gives an additional table (next page) showing new services started. It includes a four month period in 1900: July 1 to November 1. The statement discloses that 1,338 new or additional routes were installed nation-wide, supplying 922,397 persons.

New Jersey is listed with 12 new RFD routes:

POST OFFICE	COUNTY	WHEN ESTABLISHED	POPULATION SERVED	AREA, SQ. MILES	NO. OF CARRIERS	LENGTH OF ROUTE
BURLINGTON	BURLINGTON	10/01/1900	2,024	51	3	60
CAMDEN	CAMDEN	10/01/1900	769	21	1	23
MARLTON	BURLINGTON	10/15/1900	486	15	1	20
MEDFORD	BURLINGTON	11/01/1900	2,113	57	4	83
PHILLIPSBURG	WARREN	10/15/1900	508	15	1	18
PITTSWOWN	HUNTERDON	11/01/1900	660	19	1	22
STEWARTSVILLE	WARREN	11/01/1900	618	18	1	23

FROM THE FEBRUARY, 1903, (National) R.F.D. NEWS: In his news column, the editor wrote "I am having troubles of my own and other people's too. The inspector was with me recently and condemned four boxes, so I have some disgruntled patrons. I go it horseback. My horse fell down one day and threw me about ten feet into a mud-hole, but I am thankful I came out without a scratch. Rural Carriers are immune against weather and bumps."

Here are a few interesting articles (concerning New Jersey) in the same newspaper:

PERSONAL MENTION COLUMN: R. E. Packer, No. 1, Thorofare, NJ, has a 19 mile route which takes him four hours to make his 60 boxes.

RURAL FREE DELIVERY CARRIERS APPOINTED DURING MARCH, 1903:

Sussex	Nelson Van Dine	RFD #1
Stewartsville	Jesse W. Oberly	RFD #1
Vineland	Charles E. James	RFD #2

PERSONAL MENTION COLUMN: George W. Tucker, Riverton, had a narrow escape from death at the Taylor's Lane crossing. The post office moved lately into new quarters and the change caused some delay in his starting upon his route. This slight hitch brought him at Taylor's Crossing a little late, just as the westbound train rolled into the station with the train from Riverton flying eastward only a few hundred yards down the track. He had completed his delivery at Taylor's and turned his horse south to cross the track. He waited for the westbound train to pull out of the station and then started across. He drove right in front of the eastbound flyer. There was a terrible crash and the horse was cut from the shafts as clean as a knife, carried 35 yards and mashed to an unrecognizable mass. The wagon was swung around against the engine and the side tore off, but when the train had passed and the dilapidated vehicle fell on its side, Mr. Tucker slid to the ground without a scratch.



RURAL FREE DELIVERY CARRIER IN 1916, THREE YEARS AFTER A DOMESTIC PARCEL POST SERVICE WAS PUT INTO OPERATION

A general domestic parcel post service was established in 1912, and went into effect in 1913. But of course, rural carriers were already carrying regular packages. A 1903 article in the R.F.D. NEWS advised:

"Carriers should have a card of rates for carrying parcels. This should be given patrons and should never be deviated from. W. F. Flandt, # 2, Kewanee, Wisconsin has the following rates:

Small parcels delivered to my wagon to be left in a box - - - -	.05
Large parcels delivered to my wagon to be left in a box - - - -	.10
Large (which I must go after) - - - -	.20
Small (which I must go after) - - - -	.10
Packages weighing over 50 lbs. - - - -	.25
Medicines, per bottle - - - - -	.15
Laundry, for round trip - - - - -	.10

But with the passing of the general domestic parcel post service, the handling of parcels became more standardized.

When rural carriers were given permission in 1906 to use their automobiles to deliver the mail, it was soon realized that many more miles could be served by them than previously.

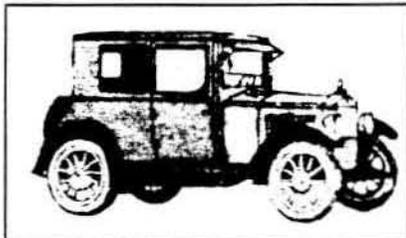
In A SHORT HISTORY OF THE MAIL SERVICE, Carl Scheele tells us that in 1915, officials of the Department began an extensive program of consolidating and lengthening RFD routes. Within a year, 939 routes were eliminated. Layoffs, difficulties in maintaining adequate service over the lengthened "motorized" routes in bad weather (most of the roads were dirt roads), and other problems created by the reorganized rural free delivery system led Congress to pass an act in 1916 which stipulated that horse routes were to be 24 miles in length and auto routes 50 miles. Extensions, where necessary, were strictly limited. Furthermore, new auto routes were to be established only on receipt of a petition signed by the majority of heads of families along the proposed motorized route.

Also in 1916, Congress passed a uniform Workmen's Compensation Act for all Federal employees with amendments authorized in 1919.

The Civil Service Retirement System was established on August 21, 1920 with employee contributions set at 2½ percent. This was changed six years later. On July 1, 1926, the annuity computation formula was revised and increased employee contributions to 3½ percent. In 1930, Public Law 71-279, once again, revised the annuity computation formula and added optional retirement and high-5 average. It also provided disability retirement after five years.

The "SERVICE WITH A SMILE" slogan was adopted in 1921 during the 25th anniversary year of rural free delivery.

In 1922, sick leave with pay was authorized, and in 1923, Christmas became a holiday for rural carriers. The Ladies Auxiliary - now called Auxiliary - was organized in 1924.



THIS 1922 ESSEX STARTED THE "CLOSED CAR" TREND, A GOOD VEHICLE FOR KEEPING THE MAIL DRY

The following story was in the WISCONSIN RURAL LETTER CARRIER newspaper in 1990, and recounts the author's "adventures" in a blizzard during (probably) 1930. How do your experiences with the snow and blizzards during the Winter of 1996 compare?

NOTHING STOPS THE MAIL by Andrew P. Thomas

"Neither rain, nor sleet, nor dark of night will keep the postman from his appointed rounds." That promise was not always easy to keep in the days before plowed roads and modern vehicles. In a story written by Andrew Thomas, he recalls some of his days as a rural mail carrier. Thomas retired as a rural carrier in 1957, but in his 34 years (at the job) he gathered enough memories to last a lifetime.

"I started carrying mail on January 2, 1924, at age 21, on a 29 mile rural mail route with horse and sleigh at \$1,735.27 per year. We had to furnish all equipment necessary to deliver the mail. I bought two horses, a one-horse sleigh, a buggy and a car."

"Closed roads were no excuse (to not deliver the mail). When roads were drifted too deep to get through, we drove through the fields. Nobody drove a car during the winter. Seems like the Wisconsin winters 60 years ago were much harder than today. When snow was deep and going was tough, it took all day to make the route. Sometimes it was dark when I got back to the office. You had to use common sense on how to drive your horse. It was not a machine you could crowd."

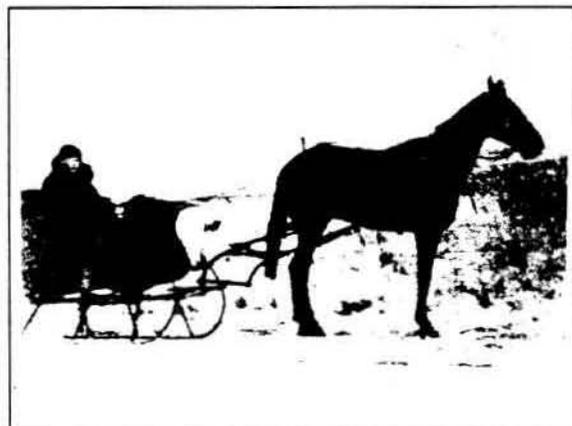
"I had some hazardous days in winter during blizzards. One day, a snow storm started in the morning, but by afternoon it turned into a howling blizzard. Snow drifts were piling up fast in the roads. I wore a bear fur coat, inherited from my uncle, and always carried a shovel along."

"Near the top of a hill, my horse kept going slower and slower, and finally stopped. It was like a white-out, and I couldn't see ahead of the horse. The snow was so deep, it was hard to get to the front of my horse. He was in snow up to his neck and could not take another step."

"For every shovel I shoveled, one drifted back, so I was not making much headway."

"Because I was late, one man called his neighbor to see if I had passed his place. When the neighbor said that I had passed quite some time ago, they decided they should look for me. It was like a miracle when I saw them."

"We shoveled a path from the horse to the field, unhitched the horse and led him to the field, and went back to get the sleigh. We then hitched the horse back to the sleigh."



WINTER RURAL MAIL CARRIER EQUIPMENT IN WISCONSIN: HORSE AND SLEIGH

Going back to Mayville, my horse was so exhausted I thought he wouldn't make it."
"At the time, I called it just another bad trip. Later, I realized I was in a trap, and without help, was in serious trouble, especially since the blizzard continued.
Even though some winters were plain hell, delivering mail in summer was a real pleasure."

In the 1920's, the railroad still transported the greatest volume of mail between cities and in 1924, reached their peak in carrying mail more than 586 million miles. And the rural free delivery service was still undergoing orderly development and extension. In 1920, the rural carriers' salary was increased to \$1,800.

In 1925, RFD service operated on 45,189 routes and reached an estimated 30,348,900 individuals. In the same year, Village Delivery Service for towns of 2,500 or more in population or annual gross postal receipts of \$5,000 was in operation in 817 villages, and City Delivery Service was performed in 2,401 cities. These services were also being expanded.

The first equipment maintenance allowance, at the rate of four cents per mile, was authorized on January 1, 1925. This brought salaries and equipment allowances for rural carriers to an established level providing an annual compensation of \$1,263 for a 15-mile route and \$2,600 for a 36-mile route. The four cent rate stayed in effect for nine and a half years but was raised to five cents per mile on July 1, 1934.

In 1931, after an unbroken rise in annual revenues since 1916, the Great Depression caught up with the Post Office Department. Revenues began to plunge and the deficit seemed more serious.

A reduction in the Railroad Post Office personnel force in the early 1930's was followed by an increase in the first class letter rate. Slowly, after 1934, there was a general recovery.

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R.F.D. NEWS of February, 1903

"A Short Story of the Mail Service" by Carl H. Scheele

"Nothing Stops the Mail" by Andrew P. Thomas (Wisconsin Rural Letter Carrier newspaper (1990)

"A History of Our Progress" - National Rural Letter Carriers' Association



In 1709, New Jersey established a postal service, placing its posts under the supervision of Andrew Hamilton who had been appointed by Thomas Neale as Deputy Postmaster General in America (but under England). King William III, in 1692, had given Neale the authority to establish an inter-colonial postal system in America; in effect, it was a postal monopoly.

Trenton, New Jersey, received its first posts in 1734, as a result of New York southerly route being altered. All these events were a prelude to the time when, in 1753, Benjamin Franklin and William Hunter were named joint Deputy Postmaster Generals of the colonies, and in 1775, Franklin was appointed the first Postmaster General under the Continental Congress.

PART IV: RURAL FREE DELIVERY SERVICE FROM THE DEPRESSION YEARS TO 1971

During the 1920's, the steady growth of rural free delivery routes across the country provided a vital link of rural communities with each other and with villages and cities. Labor conditions improved, along with the roads which often had been dirt and mud-holes. Along with better roads came improved vehicles and improved service to the public.

Rural carriers enjoyed a special bond with their customers which enabled them to render "friendly, reliable and efficient" service, and this continues up to the present time.

The following was taken from a 1986 issue of the MICHIGAN RURAL CARRIER newspaper (Mary Bielik, editor) and it's just as relevant today as then:

"In our rural areas there is nothing more typically American than the term Rural Free Delivery and its carrier, the mailperson. He or she is the bond between the city and the country, brings news from loved ones and the news of the day, is an up-to-date salesman through delivering catalogs, and has given advice on all questions."

"The mail must go through. That has been the goal that all rural mail carriers strive to reach in spite of rain, snow, mud or flood. That goal has been attained by going on foot, horse, car, jeep and even by boat. In some emergencies, the airplane has been used."

"These are the rural mail carriers who serve in the rural areas. He or she is a traveling post office, has been called an Ambassador, a Postmaster, a Diplomat."

"After all these years of rural service, we are so accustomed to its convenience that we accept the carrier largely as a matter of course. So dependable is the carrier that many of the patrons even set their clocks by his or her coming and going. They take the carriers' daily routine automatically, as a part of our modern era."

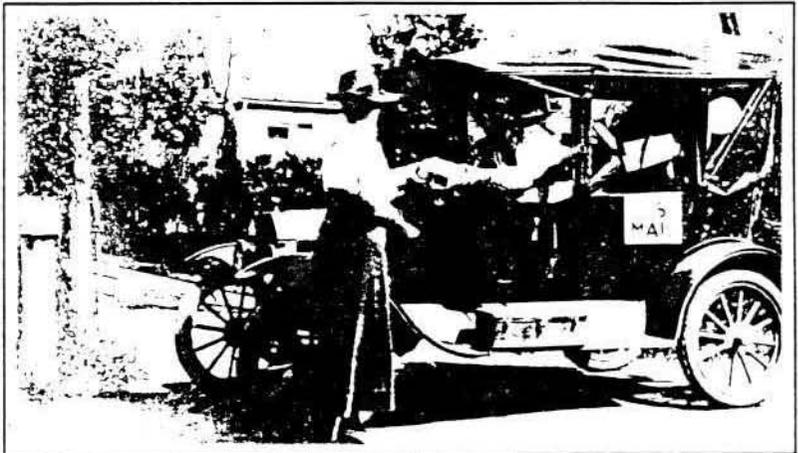
"In a sense, however, the rural carrier is a direct descendant of those intrepid men of colonial days, who delivered the mail at terrific odds. Those early post riders were men as 'tough as rawhide, who knew the ways of the Indian and the mysteries of woodcraft' who oftentimes traveled on footpaths only wide enough for a single horse, and had to blaze their own trails."

"Better roads and gasoline-powered vehicles have enormously improved rural free delivery. The length of routes has nearly doubled. In 1948, rural delivery routes (in Michigan) covered more than 55,000 miles - about 60 percent of the state's entire mileage of rural roads. Routes were being consolidated and service improved."

"The old gives way to the new. Many changes are fast approaching for the mail carriers throughout the country. These changes will affect their lives and the way they pursue their careers as rural carriers. The rural carriers of today must be fully aware and ready to heed the call, take time to read every available document, attend meetings, and never let up in the relentless effort to stay informed as to each and every change occurring within the craft and in the Postal Service."

"And so history continues to march on."

"Former Postmaster General John A. Gronouski (1963-1965) once said, 'there will always be a need for men and women in the Post Office Department; machines cannot run themselves, neither can robots go from door to door delivering the city mail or depositing it in rural boxes along the country lanes. Machines are destined to become the servants but not the masters of postal workers, including rural carriers.'"



**RURAL FREE DELIVERY PUT COUNTRY PEOPLE
IN TOUCH WITH THE WORLD AND ITS GOODS**



An earlier article in this series told about how rural carriers gave out weather information to their country patrons as they went around their routes. Now we discover that in 1946, the 50th anniversary year of Rural Free Delivery, rural carriers in southern Michigan were asked by the Game Division to count pheasants on their routes for two weeks in Spring, Summer and Winter.

They also assisted in reporting crops. However, according to the article, those "doggone" hog reports sometimes proved to be a bit too much!

Eventually, when writing about the history of any subject, the interesting stories and "long ago" history catches up to the less exciting

facts and figures of the more modern era. So it is with Rural Free Delivery, and we now deal with some of them.

In his book, "A SHORT HISTORY OF THE MAIL SERVICE," author Carl H. Scheele, had a chart which showed the growth of the Postal Service, 1945-1965, which "brings home" to the reader how huge the service really is. The following charts are inserted here for those of you who are interested in numbers (and history).

<u>YEARS</u>	<u># OF EMPLOYEES (INCLUDING PART-TIME)</u>	<u># OF PIECES OF MAIL HANDLED</u>	<u>REVENUES</u>	<u>EXPENDITURES</u>
1945	435,955	37,912,067,000	1,314,240,132	1,145,002,246
1950	500,578	45,063,737,000	1,677,486,967	2,222,949,000
1955	511,613	55,233,564,000	2,349,476,528	2,712,150,214
1960	562,868	63,674,604,000	3,276,818,433	3,873,952,908
1965	595,512	71,873,166,000	4,483,389,834	5,274,828,260

During the same time frame (1945 - 1965), two mail services went down drastically. The RAILWAY MAIL went from 528 routes to only 190, and POWERBOAT MAIL went from 146 routes to 76. POST OFFICE CONTRACT HIGHWAY and STAR ROUTE services reduced more moderately. The Contract Routes began at zero in 1945, increased to 16 in 1950, 126 in 1955 and reached an all time high in 1960 with 170 but then declined to 147 routes in 1965. The Star Route service routes had ups and downs with 11,260 in '45, 11,597 in '50, 11,306 in '55, 10,291 in '60, and 11,877 in '65.

CITY DELIVERY increased during those 20 years while RURAL DELIVERY held its own, more or less. Although Rural Delivery routes decreased, the total mileage increased.

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>CITY DELIVERY</u>		<u>RURAL DELIVERY</u>	
	<u>NUMBER OF CITIES</u>	<u>NUMBER OF CARRIERS</u>	<u>NUMBER OF ROUTES</u>	<u>TOTAL MILEAGE</u>
1945	3,884	57,993	32,106	1,435,059
1950	4,632	90,189	32,619	1,486,775
1955	5,032	91,418	32,076	1,544,704
1960	5,652	109,749	31,379	1,768,476
1965	6,091	132,522	31,135	1,890,253

The booklet "A HISTORY OF OUR PROGRESS," by the NATIONAL RURAL LETTER CARRIERS' ASSOCIATION, lists many milestones of progress during the busy years following World War II. Between the 50th and 75th anniversary years - 1946 to 1971 - progress was made between the NATIONAL RURAL LETTER CARRIERS' ASSOCIATION and the U. S. POSTAL SERVICE as the Association lived up to its founding purposes: to improve the methods used by rural mail carriers, to cooperate with the postal service and the public for the good of the service, to promote a fraternal spirit among its members, and to benefit their condition of labor.

1940's Salary & Equipment Maintenance Allowance: Rural carriers were granted a \$400. salary increase in 1946. A year prior to that (1945), the 1943 temporary equipment maintenance allowance of six cents per mile, was made permanent. A \$450. salary increase was put in effect in 1948, along with a temporary increase in E.M.A. of one cent per mile for a two year period. Later that year, a seven cents per mile E.M.A. was made permanent. In 1949, rural carriers were granted a salary increase of \$120., and the E.M.A. went to eight cents per mile.

1940's Leave & Holidays: In 1944, rural carriers were granted pay for earned and unused annual leave upon separation from the service, and in 1947, they were authorized absence on Saturdays

without charge to leave or loss of compensation, when they fall within a period of leave in which there are at least five otherwise chargeable days (four if a holiday is in the period). 1940's Retirement Laws: Five actions were implemented concerning retirement. In 1942, all employees were placed in 70-year age group for mandatory retirement, lowered optional retirement ages, provided deferred annuity rights after five years service, and increased employee contributions to five percent. Retirement credit for military service was allowed beginning in 1945. Disability and survivor benefits were acted on in 1946, 1948 and 1949. Also, employee contributions were increased to six percent in 1948.



YEARS AGO, RURAL CARRIERS HAD PLENTY OF PARCEL POST TO DELIVER ON THE DAY BEFORE CHRISTMAS - THESE WERE IN VIRGINIA

Salary & Equipment Maintenance Allowance in the 1950's: Salary increases were granted in 1951, 1955 and 1958, and EMA increases became effective in 1951 and 1958. In 1956, payment of equipment allowance for all required deviations was secured.

Leave & Holidays in the 1950's: Graduated annual leave was provided in 1951, and in 1957, leave of absence to rural carriers for holidays granted by Executive Order was provided. Reporting of leave balance on the rural carrier Certificates of Service was begun in 1958, and a Holiday Bill, passed in 1959, assured equity for rural carriers who are on leave during a full week when a holiday falls on Saturday by providing that such carriers will receive both Friday and Saturday without charge to leave or loss of compensation.

Retirement Laws in the 1950's: It was a busy time for retirement laws during this decade. In 1950, a new order of precedence for lump sum death payments was provided, and in 1952, temporary increases to retired employees and survivors on the annuity roll was implemented and those increases were made permanent in 1954 with another annuity increase in 1955. A law in 1956 liberalized the eligibility requirements and computation formula; and also required matching agency contributions and increased employee contribution to 6 1/2 percent. Another law in 1958 allowed employees to withdraw their voluntary contributions.

As might be expected, each decade saw the passing of more laws concerning postal employees, including rural carriers, than in the previous one.

1960's Salary & Equipment Maintenance Allowances: During the next ten years, there were continued salary and EMA increases. Also, in 1961, salary protection was given to postal employees who were reduced in salary standing, and in 1962, liberalized heavy duty provisions were provided and limitations of 43 hours pay per week were removed. A new Heavy Duty Compensation Schedule for carriers serving heavily patronized routes was begun, granting a type of overtime. The Waiver of Claims Law was implemented in 1968.

1960's Leave & Holidays: Leave Benefits for substitute carriers serving a route during the absence of a regular carrier was secured in 1967. The 1968 Monday Holiday Law (effective in 1971) provided: an additional holiday (Columbus Day). Other Mon. holidays to be observed were Washington's birthday - 3rd Mon. in Feb., Memorial Day - last Monday in May, and Veteran's Day - 4th Mon. in Oct. The "Compassionate Leave Law" was begun in 1968.

1960's Retirement Laws: The 1960's saw MUCH activity in passing and adjusting retirement laws - 14 of them in one decade. All were important but the main ones involved adjustments in the way annuities and benefits were collected and dispersed, annuity increases and survivor annuitants. And, in 1969, liberalization and improved financing of the CIVIL SERVICE RETIREMENT SYSTEM which included seven liberalizations and four financing improvements.

A Federal Employee Health Benefit Act in 1959 established a Federal health program as of July, 1960, and was amended in 1964. In 1966, the Government contribution in health insurance premiums was increased. In 1968, the NATIONAL RURAL LETTER CARRIER ASSOCIATION offered a Health Insurance Plan to substitute rural carriers under an Associate Plan.

The Federal Group Life Insurance Program was established in 1954 and was amended in 1969. In 1967, the program was liberalized which gave a minimum of \$10,000 of life insurance for all employees plus an optional \$10,000 of insurance protection available to all employees.

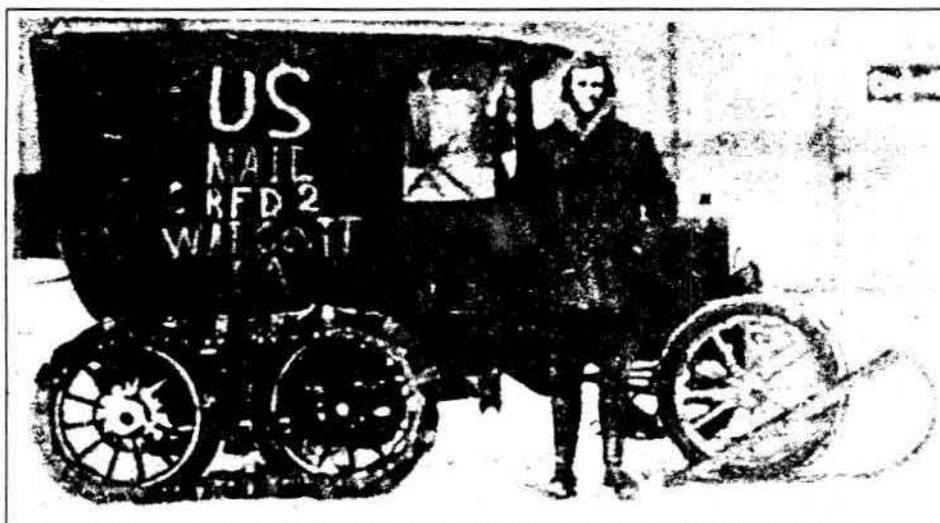
In 1968, the N.R.L.C.-A. offered a Life Insurance Plan to members and substitutes. (Under terms of the 1973 National Agreement, effective July 20, 1974, the Employer assumed full cost of the standard life insurance coverage).

Under the Postal Reorganization Act of 1970, the NATIONAL RURAL LETTER CARRIERS' ASSOCIATION became a union, and as such, began negotiating its National Agreements directly with the U. S. POSTAL SERVICE rather than with Congress. Thus, the first negotiated National Agreement became effective on July 20, 1971, about nine weeks before the 75th anniversary of Rural Free Delivery which began on October 1, 1971.

There have been hundreds of other laws and implementations over the years which concern Rural Free Delivery and its carriers which would be nearly impossible to relate here. For anyone who really wants to read through the next 25 years of this information, it can be found in the booklet "A History of Our Progress."



Unbelievable as it seems today, decades ago it was necessary to obtain permission from the Post Office Department in Washington, DC, to operate a car on the rural routes. The ability to deliver mail by autos was questioned because of the condition of the roads, which were in no shape for an automobile. Mechanized rural mail service had many obstacles; it was on trial for its life.



THE CATERPILLAR SNOWMOBILE

In photo at left, Rudolph P. Bluedorn, rural carrier of Walcott, Iowa, is shown with his caterpillar snowmobile. He and his father, R.O. Bluedorn, built it by using a worm drive rear axle from a Ford TT truck and a Chevrolet 490 sliding gear transmission. The track (or web) was made by cutting sections of rubber tires about six inches long and riveting them to steel side plates which formed the chain on each side of the web. They also fabricated an oil pump from a Moon car (Continental Motor) to the motor of the Model T Ford.

Postmaster General Albert S. Burlison (1913-1921) declared in his annual report, that the revisions and auto service were completely justifiable. Patrons wrote to their Congressmen and Senators frantically, and a great advancement was made, the car won out over the horse. The automotive age was here.

The evolution of the modern car and the improvement of country roads were vital factors in the development of the rural mail service. From Indian paths and the animal trails, often called "traces" which meant "beaten paths" - to the early roads was an evolutionary process. Without good roads, rural mail delivery, as well as other vital services of rural life, would disappear, for roads are the life-links of communication.

In 1986, Mary Bielick, editor of the MICHIGAN RURAL CARRIER newspaper, gave some thoughts appropriate for concluding this chapter: "To the country people, the rural carrier and his/her faithful service are still the human touch that unites the then and now with the unfolding paths of the future. So, men and women of the mails, every day of the year, every hour of the day, America salutes you. With your faithfulness, your courage and devotion, nothing can ever be the matter with us that wouldn't right itself."

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A Short Story of the Mail Service by Carl H. Scheele
Iowa Rural Carrier newspaper (1986) - Caterpillar Snowmobile
Missouri Rural Carrier newspaper (1986) - Service With A Smile illustration
Postal Life magazine (1992) - photos: woman receiving RFD mail & RFD carriers w/ Christmas parcels
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"In my judgment, the most important thing that we need to preserve in this country is the Postal Service. There is no other service like it any place in the world. I am as dedicated, and I think the Post Office and Civil Service is as dedicated, as any individuals could possibly be in preserving the Postal Service and making certain that it is not privatized. It is a service that ought to be given to the American people."

"The Postal Service would not be the gem that it is ... if it were not for people like you. Rural carriers are highly regarded and highly respected throughout this country."
Congressman Frank Horton (R-NY) - 1989 National Convention of Rural Letter Carriers, Buffalo, NY

PART V: RURAL FREE DELIVERY - ITS CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE 1970's TO THE 1990's

The following story was written in 1986 (the 90th anniversary of RFD) by Linda St. Thomas of the Smithsonian News Service:

Mail delivery, like everything else in rural America, has changed over the years. Four-wheel-drive vehicles have replaced horse-drawn wagons, millions of miles of farm-to-market dirt roads have been paved and regulation "U.S. Mail" boxes have replaced the tomato cans and soapboxes once used to hold the mail.

For a while, as suburban developments sprouted around the country, it looked as if Rural Free Delivery might go the way of the horse and buggy. Indeed, after World War II, rural mail service began to decline, reaching a low point in 1966.

But today, rural delivery is once again growing as the non-metropolitan population of the United States increases. In the past five years, rural service has expanded to more than 41,000 routes compared to nearly 37,000 in 1981. More than 17.5 million households in rural and suburban regions of every state depend on a rural carrier for their daily mail.

"Many people associate RFD with farmlands where the houses are five miles apart, but many rural routes today are a mix of everything from high-rise office buildings to mom-and-pop farms," says Robert West of the U.S. Postal Service's rural delivery division. *"Rather than open new post offices, it is sometimes less expensive to add routes and hire rural carriers who are paid on a scale based on route length, mail volume and number of boxes."* City carriers, on the other hand, are paid an hourly wage.

But mapping out new routes is a complex task, coordinated by local postmasters and officials at the more than 200 Postal Service centers located around the country. In Texas alone, there are more than 2,300 rural routes, including the longest one in the U. S. - 174 miles in George West, Texas. But the routes alone don't mean much without dependable carriers.

The traditions of rural carriers goes back to 1896 when The first RURAL FREE DELIVERY routes were begun in Charles Town, WV. Door-to-door mail delivery had begun in the cities as early as 1863, but farmers had to go to the nearest post office, often miles away, to pick up their mail and newspapers. In a world without telephones, radios, television or automobiles, the mail was a farm family's vital link with the world.

RFD was an instant success. According to the plan, farmers in groups of 100 could petition their congressman for mail service. If the congressman approved the request, the Post Office Department set up a new route. Soon, there was a mad rush for service; in 1931 alone, more than 9,000 routes were established.

Rural carriers are not always easy to spot. They drive their own cars, not the familiar red, white and blue Postal Service vehicles, and they do not wear uniforms. Yet, from their cars, they provide customers with the same services as does a post office - selling stamps, registering mail and handling parcels.

By all reports, carriers were among the most respected members of farming communities. They wrote and read letters for illiterate patrons, ran errands, did odd jobs and helped out in crises. In the eyes of some farmers, there was nothing the mailman couldn't do. One rural carrier, who must have been considered omniscient by his patrons, found this note in a mailbox on his route: "I'm leaving for Texas, so please send my mail there."



SOMETIMES PEOPLE CHAT WITH THE RURAL CARRIER AT THE MAILBOX

The daily routine of the rural carriers actually has changed little over the decades. They still arrive at their "head out" post offices in the early hours of the morning, sort or "case" the mail and begin routes averaging 400 mailboxes spread out over some 60 miles. They still operate a "post office on wheels" and yet manage to find a few minutes to chat with patrons along the way.



CASING THE MAIL BEGINS THE RURAL CARRIERS' DAY

The typical full-time rural carrier of today arrives at the post office about 6:30 a.m. to begin sorting the mail by name and box number which takes three to four hours. He "straps out" or ties the mail in groups, about 25 households per bundle. The bundles are loaded in sequential order in his 4-wheel-drive car. Then he is ready to begin his route, stopping at individual boxers or clusters of mailboxes.

Sometimes people meet the carrier at the mailbox, but more often than not, it's a solitary job. People do come out to the mailbox to chat but not as much as they did, say, 10 years ago. They have to get back to work, and the carrier has to finish the route.

To get through the routes and save time, carriers have developed a few tricks of the trade to make their work easier. They shop for cars and jeeps that can take abusive stop-and-go driving. They arrange the bundles of mail in their cars in the order of delivery. And they use a one-handed

maneuver to hold mail and simultaneously open the mailbox door.

Today's rural carriers still have a special rapport with their patrons that is often missed with city carriers. "Rural carriers almost become members of the families on the route," says Tom Griffith, a second-generation rural carrier and (then) president of the NATIONAL RURAL CARRIERS' ASSOCIATION. "They know the family members by name and they watch the kids grow up. It's a special kind of link, especially in rural communities."

The carriers' dedication to their profession and to the families they serve is itself a time-honored tradition. It is obvious whenever they chat at a mailbox - on their own time - or lend a helping hand. In fact, in years past, many a rural carrier would run his entire route on Dec. 25, at no pay, to deliver packages for farm children on Christmas Day.

During the early 1980's, the United States Postal Service began implementing a (new) way for rural mail patrons to receive their mail - **cluster boxes**. Cluster box mail delivery is also known as Neighborhood Delivery and Collection Box Unit (NDCBU). It is defined as a large, pedestal-mounted box which contains several locked mailboxes for the delivery of mail. It is installed as a free-standing unit which serves a number of separate households or businesses whereby its patrons must walk from their homes or businesses to the box.

While anticipating that this would be a money-saving change, the Postal Service actually ended up with what they "paid for."

Each of the units were made, not only of inferior material, but were too small to accommodate newspapers or even medium-sized parcels or bulky items. In the winter, the locks used in the unit froze. Additionally, it was inconvenient, if not hazardous, for the elderly or handicapped to get to the units each day.

Part of the reason for the cluster box idea was that, as rural America's population continued to grow, so did a Federal Government Service which helped bind its communities together - Rural Mail Delivery. Begun in 1896, one result was that many roads were built and improved in rural areas, linking up communities. Subsequently, the home delivery of weekly and daily newspapers was made possible.

The original rural carriers traveled on horseback, bicycle or horse and buggy. In the 1970's and 1980's, rural carriers daily travel nearly two and a half million miles using 4-wheel drive jeeps or right-hand drive cars along one of the more than 37,000 rural routes throughout the country.



THIS GROUPING OF MAIL BOXES IS A FORERUNNER OF THE LATER NDCBU'S

As the nation's population shifted to rural areas in the 1970's, rural delivery grew from serving over 10 million American families in 1970 to over 15 million in 1980. For the first time in 160 years, rural areas and small towns were growing at a faster rate than metropolitan areas, according to a study conducted by U. S. News & World Report. Population statistics of the U. S. Department of Commerce revealed that non-metropolitan areas increased from 53.2 million people in 1970 to 61.4 million in 1980.

In a statement issued by the (then) president of the NATIONAL RURAL LETTER CARRIERS' ASSOCIATION, Wilbur S. Wood said, "The installation of cluster mailbox units defeats the purpose of this service (rural delivery), especially for the elderly and handicapped. Walking down a country road to one of these units may often be hazardous and virtually impossible for these folks."

Americans moving from suburban and urban areas to rural communities, often do not realize that along with country living comes a different type of mail service. Rural Free Delivery is unique because the rural letter carriers operate as a "Post-Office-on-Wheels," rendering all those services provided at a local post office.

Specifically, rural carriers accept money order applications, sell stamps, as well as affix them to a letter. They can register, certify and insure mail. And they not only deliver letters and parcels, but also pick up letters and parcels to be mailed.

In addition to providing a variety of postal services, over the years rural carriers make the effort and take the responsibility to help out their patrons in a personal way.

According to Mr. Wood, "quite often, rural carriers have been known to save their patrons' lives. If a patron's mail accumulates, it tells the carrier that the patron may be seriously ill or suffered a stroke and is collapsed on the floor. In such cases, the rural carrier has been known to call a hospital and then provide first-aid until medical assistance arrives."

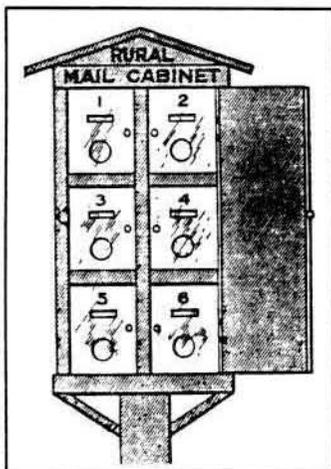
Wood added that a rural carrier may voluntarily and routinely deliver groceries after the completion of his route to a blind, elderly or handicapped customer who lives alone and cannot get to the store. To the children on the route, the carrier is "Santa Claus" when he gives them candy as he delivers their mail. And to all of the patrons, the rural carrier renders that legendary "Service With a Smile."

Such Good Samaritan actions simply reflect the wholesome country value of living by "The Golden Rule." A genuine love for people and a desire to meet their needs has enkindled the spirit of Rural Free Delivery ever since its inception.

While the mode of transportation has changed, Rural Delivery continues to save time for rural residents, which means money, as they do not have to make the trip into town to pick up their mail.

"The convenience of the patron picking up mail at the end of his driveway will be eliminated when cluster boxes are put up," Mr. Wood explained. "The cluster box also does not allow much room for newspapers and other bulky items which may be delivered. In the winter, the lock box may become frozen. Also, inclement weather would deter a customer from venturing out to get his mail if he had to walk further than his curb."

The Postal Service clarified its position on the installation of cluster boxes. They said, "... in new delivery areas, centralized delivery is only one of two options offered to builders, developers and new customers. Curblin delivery service, which has been offered for many years, is and will remain available as an alternative to centralized delivery in new developments."



A CALIFORNIA MAIL CABINET

In 1984, the NATIONAL RURAL LETTER CARRIER newspaper had an interesting article entitled "... AND WE THOUGHT IT CAME OUT OF L'ENFANT PLAZA":

Lo and Behold, if they didn't have cluster boxes in Grandpa's day! We discovered that going through old editions of this newspaper is a walk through history. Look at what we found in the April 1905 issue.

They called it "A California Mail Cabinet." Well, the poet said that a rose by any other name is still a rose.

It's a cluster box!

If history truly repeats itself, it will go away as it did when it was proposed by Mr. Edward G. Guyot of Sonoma, CA, 79 years ago.

Mr. Guyot's cabinet, however, would be a lot more acceptable than its flimsy ancestry being erected today. The individual boxes he designed were 9 inches wide, 11 inches high and 20 inches deep.

There was a door, the entire cabinet was of 1-inch pine boards covered with heavy tin or galvanized sheet iron, and it came in blue or green.

There may still be some around, they were built to last."

The implementation of the cluster boxes was an important issue with the USPS and many of these units were put up although it never reached the magnitude that they had anticipated. But there is also the possibility that the cluster box issue will become, once again, a theory for the USPS to use in their quest to "save money."

Automating the mail - - who would ever have thought that such technology would be developed to move the mail. Back in 1896, pioneers of Rural Delivery were satisfied to travel via horseback or horse and buggy so that the mail could be delivered to the homes of each rural customer.

The establishment of Rural Delivery in Charles Town, West Virginia on October 1, 1896, with the steady growth of rural routes across the country, provided that vital "linking up" of rural communities with the "outside world."

Conditions of labor and the early carriers were not always the best, particularly the roads which often were just sheer passages of mud holes. When a carrier looks back over time, the craft truly has come a long way in its development. As transportation modes have changed, so too have rural carriers adapted them to meet their service needs - - whether it be the use of a right-hand drive jeep, Subaru Legacy or Grumman Long Life Vehicle.

True, automation is changing the complexion of the intricacies of the delivery system. But the bottom line of the service remains at sustaining the personal contact which rural carriers have with their customers and the special rapport which they enjoy to render their legendary "friendly, reliable and efficient" service.

When outsiders inquire about Rural Delivery, they are usually amazed at the unique aspect of rural carriers operating as a "post office on wheels." And they are further amazed at the longevity of such service.



1922 DELIVERY VEHICLE OF CHOICE IN MI

For more than a quarter of a century, there has been disagreement of who should provide the rural route vehicle.

In 1965, the P.O.D. made a concerted effort to provide leased vehicles for rural carriers. At that time, providing one's own vehicle was a cherished right. It enabled the carrier to equip that vehicle to his own satisfaction and to provide the type of vehicle best suited to that particular route.

That strong feeling has subsided somewhat among some carriers today as the USPS provides more postal vehicles.

Once the Postal Reorganization Act was enacted and the collective bargaining process began, providing one's own vehicle became more difficult to defend.



RURAL CARRIERS TODAY CHOOSE A MORE MODERN VEHICLE TO DELIVER THE MAIL

By 1975, it was necessary to agree to limited use of USPS-owned vehicles on Special Equipment Maintenance Allowance routes.

Actually, there wasn't much interest by the Postal Service to furnish vehicles for rural carriers until recently. A provision in the 1995-1999 Agreement allows a rural carrier on any route to request that an employer-provided vehicle be assigned to the route, and the Postal Service may provide such a vehicle if they want to.

The creation of the "L" route in the 1981 National Agreement (contract between the N.R.L.C.A. and the U.S.P.S.) was closely related to the cost effectiveness of rural free delivery. The USPS turned its attention to finding a way to make the rural routes in the high density areas more cost effective.

In the late 1970's and early 1980's, there were numerous attempts in the field to convert rural delivery territory to city delivery. Using questionable statistics, some rural routes could be shown to be less cost effective than city delivery in the suburbs.

During negotiations, the USPS and the NRLCA agreed to create a new type of route to be known as an "L" route, with less generous time standards for those routes having 12 boxes or less per mile.

Fort Lee-Palisades Station
Freehold
Garfield
Garwood
Gillette
Hackensack
Hackettstown
Hamilton Square
Hammonton
Hampden
Hanover
Harrison
Hazlet
Hightstown
Hillsdale
Hoboken
Irvington
Iselin
Jersey City
Jersey City-3
Jutland
Kearny
Kenilworth
Kenvil
Kinnelon
Lake Hiawatha
Lake Hopatcong
Lavalette
Lincroft
Linden
Linwood
Livingston
Lodi
Long Branch-Elberon Station
Madison
Magnolia
Manasquan
Maplewood
Martinsville
Mays Landing
Menlo Park
Metuchen
Middletown
Millburn
Millington
Millville
Monroeville
Montclair
Montvale
Moorestown
Morristown
Mount Freedom
Netcong
New Providence
Newark-13
Newark-4 (Same As North Station)
Newark-40

Normandy Beach
North Bergen
Ocean Gate
Old Bridge
Orange
Palmyra
Park Ridge
Parlin
Passaic
Paterson
Perth Amboy
Phillipsburg
Pine Beach
Pitman
Plainfield
Pomona
Princeton
Rahway
Raritan
Red Bank
Ridgefield Park
Riverton
Robbinsville
Rochelle Park
Roebbling
Roosevelt
Roseland
Rutherford
Saddle River
Sayreville
Scotch Plains
Sea Girt
Seabrook
Seaside Heights
Seaside Park
Secaucus
Somers Point
South Amboy
South Orange
South River
Spring Lake
Stirling
Succasunna
Toms River
Trenton
Union City
Vauxhall
Ventnor City
Vineland
Washington (May 30 Pre-date)
Wayne
West New York
Westfield
Westwood
Wharton
Wildwood
Windsor
Yardville

STATEMENT OF DIFFERENCES.

INFORMING POSTMASTER OF BALANCE DUE THE UNITED STATES.

ER

Treasury Department,

Should any reply be necessary, please
 note above initials.

OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR FOR THE POST-OFFICE DEPARTMENT,

THE POSTMASTER,

Washington, D. C., DEC 15 1910

Sandbrook
New Jersey.

SIR:

SEP 30 10

Your postal account as audited to _____ shows a balance due the United States of \$ 1.40, which you are directed to charge in your quarterly postal account, and include in your deposit of postal funds for the present quarter.

Failure to comply with above instructions will be reported to the Postmaster General for his action. The cause of above balance is shown in the following statement, the articles corresponding with those of the same letter or number on your quarterly account.

ART.	CLAIMED BY POSTMASTER.	AS AUDITED.	DIFFERENCES.		REMARKS.
			DUE U. S.	DUE P. M.	
A					
B					
C					
D					
4	<i>800</i>	<i>140</i>	<i>140</i>		<i>Box-rents.</i>
BALANCE DUE THE U. S.					

Hereafter all postal and money order accounts must be rendered on the new blank forms. See November Postal Guide.

Hereafter the use of card, form 4115, notification of no balance, will be discontinued.

Read carefully and comply with instructions at the head of this statement.

Respectfully,

AUDITOR FOR THE POST-OFFICE DEPARTMENT.

J.M.

2-3156

CLASSIFIED ADS:

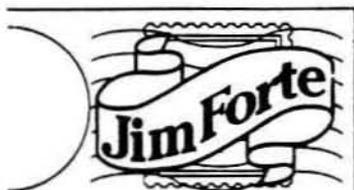
WANTED: ELLIS ISLAND NY Covers - with Postmarks of Independent PO 1893-1894, or NYC Station 1894-1954; Corner Cards (Return Addresses); Censorship Markings (I.N.S. or Justice Department, etc.)
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