

## RURAL MAIL DELIVERY

The Marvelous Growth and Popularity of the System.

**U**P to the present time there has been nothing in the history of the postal service of the United States," says the annual report of the first assistant postmaster-general, "so remarkable as the growth of the rural free delivery system." The daily delivery of mail at the farmer's door, by the Federal Government, is no longer an experiment. In the words of the report, the system has now "to be dealt with as an established agency of progress, awaiting only the action of the Congress to determine how rapidly it shall be developed." The current month finds rural free delivery of mail in successful operation from 383 distributing points radiating over forty States and one Territory, while other districts from Maine to Texas are anxiously waiting for those regular visits from Uncle Sam which mean so much in a variety of ways.



RURAL CARRIER, BOWLING GREEN, OHIO. (Twenty degrees below zero.)

This country is learning that ethical considerations like these are most intensely practical, and that a study of such problems is what the country needs for a truly larger growth. But figures are deduced in the report to convince those to whom figures are the only tangible evidence. So the report sets forth that whenever the system has been started properly, it has been followed by these results:

Increased postal receipts. More letters are written and received. More newspapers and magazines are subscribed for. So marked is this advancement that many rural routes already pay for themselves by the additional business they bring.

Enhancement of the value of farm lands reached by rural free delivery. This increase in value has been estimated at as high as \$5 an acre in some States. A moderate estimate is from \$2 to \$3 an acre.

Better prices obtained for farm products, the producers being brought into daily touch with the state of the markets, and thus being enabled to take advantage of information heretofore unattainable.

In the communities where it has been tried free delivery is considered the greatest boon that the Government ever has conferred on them. One Missouri farmer has calculated

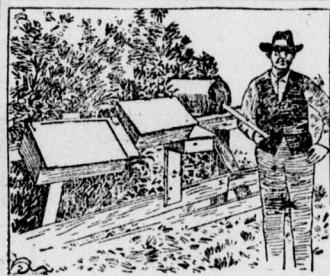


A SCENE NEAR LAFAYETTE, IND.

that in the last fifteen years he has driven 12,000 miles going to and from the postoffice to get his mail—all travel that is saved to him by the free delivery system.

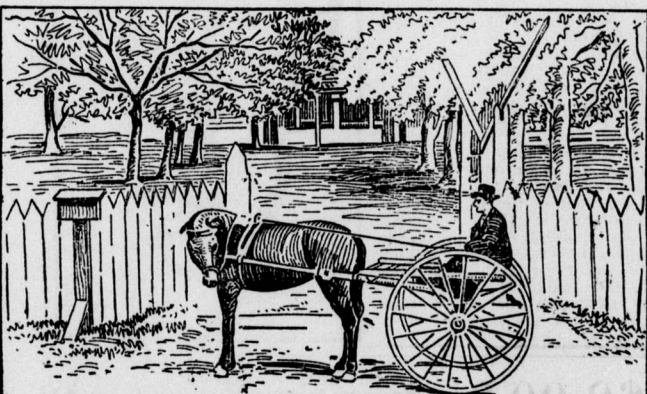
In the last report of the First Assistant Postmaster-General there are some striking illustrations.

There is, for example, a scene at a country store, twelve miles from Lafayette, Ind., from which point three rural letter carriers start daily, each making a circuitous drive of twenty-five miles or more, without passing over the same road twice. At the particular point photographed four cross roads meet, and twenty or more families, most of them living half a mile from the store, have each put up an individual letter box of galvanized iron, lettered with the name of the person for whom it is intended.



RURAL DELIVERY MAIL BOXES IN VICTORIA, ILL.

Into this box the carrier, whose hour of arrival is known, and scarcely varies ten minutes, winter or summer, drops the letters and daily papers for each family, and collects in return their mails which are deposited in a Government collection box, placed in position at the same spot. The farmer's children, or such idle hands as he can spare, gather up the mail and



DELIVERING MAIL TO SUGAR PLANTERS IN LOUISIANA



DELIVERING MAIL IN ARIZONA

A general improvement of the condition of the roads traversed by the rural carrier. In the Western States especially the construction of good roads has been a prerequisite to the establishment of rural free delivery service. In one county in Indiana a special agent reports that the farmers spent over \$2600 to grade and gravel a road to obtain rural free delivery.

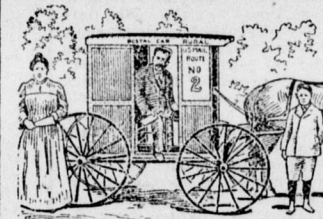
carry it to the house, and the farmer is thus spared a drive of twelve miles to the postoffice, which he would hardly feel justified in undertaking in the most favorable weather more than twice a week, and then at much personal inconvenience and pecuniary loss. Under the rural free delivery system he gets his mail and his paper daily without cost of time or money,

and he is gratified—properly so—for the recognition which the Government has given him in bringing the mails so near to his door.

Rural free delivery carriers, as a rule, "put on frills" in Indiana, which State, next to Ohio, has the lion's share of the existing experimental service. Most of them provide themselves with regulation uniforms, at their own cost, and furnish special wagons, with pigeon holes and other postal appliances—all for \$400 a year, horse hire included.

Out in Arizona, where in the genial summer sunshine the temperature occasionally rises to 110 degrees and stays there, the rural carrier rarely wears any insignia of his dignity, except his badge, which is a nickel plated arrangement made to fit any kind of hat. Instead of comfortably

riding in a specially constructed postal wagon, he as often as not mounts a bucking bronco, or dives him to a buckboard, with only an umbrella for shade. But he makes thirty odd miles a day, nevertheless, and the Department has just issued orders to cut down this particular route from Tempe, five or ten miles a day, chiefly out of consideration for the bronco, because



A CARRIER AT CRAWFORDSVILLE, IND.

the carrier can probably sleep as comfortably in his saddle as anywhere else.

The hardships sometimes encountered by the rural carriers are shown in the photograph of a rural carrier in Northern Ohio returning from a trip when the thermometer was forty degrees below zero. Yet, though the First Assistant Postmaster-General reports that there are several girls acting as bonded rural carriers, few instances are recorded of their failing to make their daily trips, either in the coldest storms of winter or the blazing heat of summer.

One question which has received grave consideration by the Department is the insecurity and improper character of the mail boxes put up. On this subject the First Assistant Postmaster-General says:

In the early days of the service, when neither Congress nor the Post-office Department, as then organized, held out any hope that rural free delivery would prove more than a transitory experiment, extreme carelessness was manifested as to the kind of receptacles put up as rural free delivery boxes. Tomato cans, cigar boxes, drainage pipes up ended, soap boxes and even sections of discarded stove pipes were used as mail boxes, and were frequently placed in hedge rows or other inconvenient spots out of reach of the carrier.

The Department has entered upon a systematic effort to correct this condition of things, and a recommendation is made that the Government provide uniform boxes and maintain them, charging a moderate rental.

### Kaiser's Great Ring of State.

Whenever the Emperor of Germany is engaged in an important function, either imperial or royal, those near him notice that should he by any chance take the glove of his left hand he wears on the middle finger a large ring—a square, dark-colored stone set in massive gold.

The story is that the ring is an old heirloom in the Hohenzollern family, dating from the time when the ancestors of the Kaiser—the Margraves of Nuremberg—followed their leaders to the capture of the Holy Sepulchre from the Moslems. Margraf, of Ulrich, who lived in the thirteenth century, was an adventurous prince, and it is believed that the ring which the Kaiser now wears came into Ulrich's possession after a hard-fought battle under the walls of Jerusalem. It belonged to one of Saladin's successors, and in some unexplained manner it found its way on to the finger of the German Knight.

Some one of the Nuremberg Margraves obliterated the sentence from the Koran which originally adorned it and engraved a Latin cross in its place.

### A Hard Thing to Understand.

One of the hardest things to understand in this workaday world is how so many incompetent men get such desirable jobs.—Pack.

### Does All the Talking Himself.

A clever woman can always give a slow man the impression that he has said a lot of bright things himself.—Chicago Record.

## AN OFFICER'S DARING EXPLOIT.

Brigadier-General J. Franklin Bell, Single Handed, Whipped Seven Filipinos.

Official reports received at Washington show that Brigadier-General J. Franklin Bell, Colonel of the Thirty-sixth Volunteer Infantry, who is also a Captain in the Seventh Cavalry,



BRIGADIER-GENERAL J. FRANKLIN BELL.

has performed one of the most brilliant exploits of personal daring during the war in the Philippines.

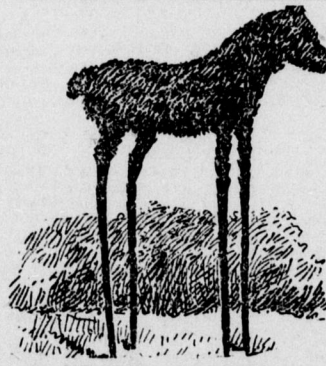
This special act of gallantry was performed by Bell, who was then a Colonel, near Porac, Luzon, when he was in command of some scouts ahead of the regiment. Just as the day was dawning the party encountered the enemy's patrol, consisting of one Captain, one Lieutenant and five privates. Colonel Bell was in advance of his men and spurred on his horse. The enemy was confused, and the men sought to run away. Colonel Bell pushed ahead alone and unsustained charged the seven insurgents with his pistol. He scattered the party and compelled the surrender of the Captain and two privates under a close and hot fire from the remaining four insurgents, who were concealed in a neighboring bamboo thicket. In the report it is stated that this feat was one of several heroic acts performed by Colonel Bell during the present war, and that the wonder is that Bell still lives.

Colonel J. Franklin Bell entered West Point from Shelbyville, Ky., in 1874, and graduated into the cavalry service. When the Spanish war began he was a captain in the Seventh Cavalry. At the beginning of the war he was sent to the Philippines with General Merritt and had charge of the Bureau of Military Information. He was subsequently appointed a Major of Engineers and then a Major and Assistant Adjutant-General of Volunteers. When the Thirty-sixth Regiment was recruited, Major Bell was appointed to be their Colonel.

Time and again the conduct of Colonel Bell in the Philippines has been commended by his superior officers, and he has been recommended for medals and for brevets. At the taking of Calocan last February, while our troops were shelling the town, Bell, then a Major, led a company of the First Montana Regiment in a clever and audacious outflanking maneuver whereby they penetrated the town and arrived unexpectedly on the enemy's left flank. The enemy, outwitted as well as outfought, fled precipitately.

### Natural Curiosity.

The living tree horse here sketched as a natural curiosity to be seen in the vicinity of Datchet, near Windsor, England, says St. Paul's. It is formed of four topped elms, which stretch



THE LIVING TREE HORSE.

over a space of 150 feet and grow to the height of sixty feet. The tops have never been touched by the shears, or otherwise influenced than by nature's own hand.

### Would Nurse Him Herself.

They found her hurriedly packing a valise. "Where are you going?" they asked. "To the Transvaal," she replied. "But I thought you didn't believe in women going to war?" "I don't; but if you think I am going to let any of those red-cross women nurse my Harold back to health if he is wounded you are mistaken. I'm going to be there myself."—Golden Penny.

### A Venerable Church.

The Second Unitarian Church of Boston recently celebrated its two hundred and fiftieth anniversary. Samuel Mather was the first minister of this church. Afterward Increase and Cotton Mather filled the pulpit, and it was here that Emerson served his only pastorate.

### The Chinese Flag in Washington.

The Chinese Embassy is the only one in Washington that flies the flag of a foreign country.

Queensland is being gradually converted into a large orchard. The Australian orange in particular has a great future, as it ripens at a time when Spain, Italy and California cannot provide the fruit.

## FOR FARM AND GARDEN.

### Silage for Fattening Cattle.

At the Ontario Agricultural college they fed three lots of two steers each as follows: Lot 1 had 57 pounds of ensilage each; Lot 2, 31 pounds of ensilage and 9 pounds of hay; Lot 3, 43 pounds of roots and 11 pounds of hay. Each had about 12 pounds a day of grain, consisting of ground peas, barley and oats. Lot 1 weighed 2789 pounds at the beginning, and in 146 days gained 555 pounds or 1.9 pounds each per day. Lot 2 weighed 2735 pounds at first and gained in same time 448 pounds, or 1.53 pounds each day. Lot 3 weighed 2672 pounds, and in the time gained 537 pounds, or 1.84 pounds a day. The gain by feeding only ensilage and grain was not much larger than that of roots and hay with grain, but all estimates indicate that the silage is much more easily and cheaply produced, the 57 pounds requiring less land and less labor than the 43 pounds of roots, to say nothing of cost of the hay.

### Dry Storage for Fruit.

A cellar or any other place where mould or mildew appears on the walls or in any part of the room is too damp for the successful storing of fruit. Brush it up, clean it thoroughly, give it a thorough ventilation, and if it cannot be made dryer by such treatment, warm it until dry, for, although the fruit should be kept cool, it is better for it to be too warm for a little while than too damp all of the time. One way of drying the air in a cellar is to place a pan of unslacked lime, or more than one if the cellar is very large or very damp, at such a place that it will absorb the moisture. When the lime has slacked by the moisture, change it and put in another. This will dry the air without greatly raising the temperature. This will destroy the moulds and other fungus very quickly. It will also sweeten the air, or destroy bad odors, which some fruits will absorb very quickly. Grapes that have been in a musty-smelling cellar will soon become unfit to eat from this cause.

### Dry Earth as an Absorbent.

As an absorbent in the poultry house dry earth is excellent. It is doubtful if there is any kind of material that can be put under the roosts that will work with greater certitude in neutralizing the odors and in taking up and evaporating the moisture. In fact, dry earth is altogether too good an absorbent and moisture destroyer, if one wishes to save the manure to use as a fertilizer. It has been found that in a dry earth closet the same earth may be used over and over again. The dust burns up all faecal matter and even the paper usually found in such places has disappeared. The same dirt has been used over and over in a dry earth closet for six years, being taken out and dried each time the closet was cleaned. In another case the dust was used over ten times. After both of these experiments the dust was analyzed and less than one per cent. of nitrogen found. Most of the earth that has been so used is of no more value for fertilizing purposes than the dirt taken from the garden. When, therefore, we consider its use in the poultry house the value of the manure need not be taken into consideration. If cleanliness is our sole object, then we need not hesitate about using dry dirt, and we may feel sure it will prove effective. Some amount of moisture seems to be needed both to help the manure retain the volatile portions, and we may also presume, to keep germ life in a state in which it can develop. Certainly dust should prove to be a good germicide, for spores once falling into it would be as surely destroyed in time as would the paper and other matter in the dry-earth closet.—Farm, Field and Fireside.

### Preparing Bees for Winter.

Bees ought to be prepared for winter before very cold weather sets in. When the fall honey crop is removed from the hive it is none too early to begin. In the middle states the beginner will have better results by wintering on the summer stands. Cellular wintering requires more experience and watchfulness, says F. G. Herman in the New England Homestead. The first requisite to successful wintering is to have bees enough to cover at least four Langstroth frames. They should have from 20 to 30 pounds of good ripe honey. If lacking in stores they should be fed good granulated sugar, one cup and a half of sugar to one cup of hot water making a syrup of the right consistency. If you have on hand some extracted honey, add a few tablespoons, which will prevent its granulating. Bees will winter well on good sugar, which is about the only substitute that can be used. Unripe honey or honey dew often kills the bees in winter, as they cannot stand a long confinement on such food.

If the bees are in a double walled chaff hive, nothing more is necessary. If in a hive of single thickness an outer case of some sort should be put over the hive, but in no wise close up the entrance. Bees need plenty of fresh air. The hive entrance should be left open full width, which will also prevent the combs from becoming moldy. On warm days during winter when the thermometer registers 50 degrees or more the bees will fly out for a cleansing flight, after which they will be able to stand another month of rigorous weather. With cellar wintering I have had no experience, but the conditions necessary are to have a well ventilated cellar kept dark, with an even temperature of about 45 degrees. Some time in

November, right after the bees have had a good flight, remove them to the cellar, selecting the time toward evening. The bees should be handled as gently as possible to keep them from filling themselves with honey, for it will be four or five months before they will have a cleansing flight. If an even temperature, quietness, darkness and ventilation are secured, success is assured.

### Large and Small Vegetables.

While on a visit to the Pacific coast I found onions and potatoes of enormous size, and the boast of the people is that they can grow larger vegetables than can be grown elsewhere in the country. It is possible that more large vegetables and fruits can be grown in Washington, Idaho, Oregon and California than can be produced in other sections. But there are frequent specimens of vegetables in the middle west that are as large as any that can be grown anywhere. Large onions and very large potatoes are not desirable, however. I have seen onions grown in Indiana that were as large as an onion could be. The land was peculiarly fitted for onion growing, and the product was enormous in size. But I am under the impression that onion growing on that land was abandoned simply because there was no market for such large onions. They were like the eggs of the ostrich, a fine curio, but of no utility to the average person. The market demands a reasonable sized onion and potato. In many of our hotels and restaurants, say nothing of private houses, a small onion only is used for flavoring purposes. These places will not buy onions that are "overgrown." Nor will they buy potatoes that are over-size. Usually potatoes are brought onto the tables of public eating houses whole, and potatoes that are as long as your foot can not be used. It is a mistake to attempt to grow large onions and potatoes.

Fruit is different. That can not be too large. From the cranberry to the apple, size attracts attention and wins the customer, especially if the fruit is well colored.

At Lewiston, Idaho, I saw a Ben Davis apple that in any market of the world would outsell any apple that is grown. It was more than twice the size of the Ben Davis of the east, and was as beautiful as a picture. Irrigation, climate or soil had made a new apple out of this very common and not highly appreciated variety. In growing fruit, therefore, next to good shipping qualities—for without these it is useless to grow fruit commercially—appearance is the most important thing. Of course, the quality must be passable, for the consumer would not buy fruit the second time, however handsome it might be, if the quality was so bad that he could not eat it. But quality is secondary to appearance. The large, handsome colored apple, peach, cherry or other fruit are always the best sellers. The eye fixes the standard of taste and is a regulator of the appetite.—B. F. Brimson in the Epitomist.

### Plenty of Space for Poultry.

One of the greatest mistakes of poultry raisers is to suppose that chickens do not require much space. A dairyman only keeps enough cows on his farm that the land is able to support. If one acre will support a cow, it is crowding them to have as many on the farm as there are acres, but if you put 500 hens on one acre the latter would be quite different. Land is generally cheap enough for poultrymen to have ample room for their poultry, but as a rule they are always too cramped. Not more than 50 to 75 hens should be raised to the acre. A 500 chicken farm should contain at least 8 or 10 acres exclusive of buildings. That is a large space for each bird than most people provide, but it is not too liberal an arrangement, as any one will discover after a few years' experience. Farmers calculate their profits by the acre. If they can clear from \$20 to \$30 an acre, they consider themselves fortunate, and they do not grumble at their hard conditions. Fifty dollars an acre would supply them with substantial rewards for thinking themselves well blessed.

Now in the case of the chicken raiser we find that everything is in his favor for a comparison with any other class of farmers. Suppose 50 hens are raised to the acre, a profit of 50 cents a year on each bird would make fair farming. He would be clearing \$25 a year per acre, which would be more than many farmers can clear today in raising either wheat or corn. But 50 cents a year clear profit is small indeed for respectable poultry, and a dollar a year is not too much to place to the credit of the average well-bred fowl. Here we have \$50 an acre, and a 10 or 20-acre farm stocked to the capacity mentioned ought to yield a good living income to the owner. The trouble with most of us is that we expect to make as much on three or four acres as another farmer can make on a hundred-acre farm. That is placing a handicap upon poultry raising that is hardly fair. One acre judiciously cultivated should raise enough food to keep 50 chickens a year, and that is about all we can expect from it. Let us go to work and cultivate the soil for chicken food as systematically as the farmer cultivates his land for corn and wheat, and then we will realize larger profits and a sure income. The birds will no longer be crowded, and fewer diseases will attack them. Both our pocket books and poultry will be richer and better for expanding the chicken farm in this way.—Anne C. Webster, in American Cultivator.

### Sometimes a Good Thing.

Esotism is often a good thing in that it induces men to put forth commendable efforts for the purpose of living up to what they think they are.