

RURAL MAIL CARRIERS

Prepared by John Dudley - 1996

RFD or Rural Free Delivery was established in 1896. Grangers through the country had worked toward passage of the Rural Free Delivery Bill and the Parcel Post Bill. Prior to 1896, the mail was delivered to the various post offices and the rural residents had to go get their mail. Prior to 1866, the person getting a letter had to pay the postage. After 1855, the mailer had to prepay the postage as we do now.

Those who handled the rural mail were either government employees or were contract carriers. Government, or now United States Postal Service, employees were the RFD carriers. In this article no attempt has been made to differentiate between the contract carrier and the RFD carrier. Most of the mail drivers in this area were contract carriers, and usually contract carriers carried the mail between post offices.

Parcel Post started on January 1, 1913. Montgomery Ward and Sears, Roebuck and Company became major businesses with their "wish books" and this service. Sears boasted of selling a watch every minute, a revolver each two minutes and a buggy each ten minutes.

The sources for each rural mail driver are listed within the article. I thank all, and especially Austin Gray. General information in the introduction came from HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE, a booklet published in 1993 by that service and in the A-CHS files. I hope readers will send along names of other rural mail carriers.

AIR LINE STAGE COMPANY: After the railroad mail service was extended easterly to Bangor in 1856, political pressure was applied for a quicker mail service east from Bangor to Calais. A mail route was inaugurated between Calais & Bangor in 1857 via the Blacks Road. This service was discontinued in 1887, but its name has ever since been applied to the road over which it ran. Several drivers of this mail route were Will Delano, Martin Cone, Dan Gardner, Albert Metcalf, Levi Henderson, Flood Stands, Mr. Flannigan, and George McCurdy. It was McCurdy whose neck was broken in an accident near the Sam Day place, thus the name Breakneck Hill. Post houses were at Clifton, Aurora, Beddington, Eben Bacon's in TWP 31, Wesley, and at Ben Strout's in Alexander. Mail was not delivered along the way. Information from Carola Nickerson of the Wesley Historical Society and H. E. "Ned" Lamb

POST ROUTE: By 1810, a post route came from Boston to Calais along the coast. In 1837, Post Route No. 28 ran from Bangor to Calais, again along the coast. This was a daily mail run. Post Route No. 87 was once a week from Dennysville through Pembroke, Charlotte, Gilman's Mills (Meddybemps), Cooper, Alexander, Baring, and on to Calais. Information from Ned Lamb

RUPERT DAY (1903-1991) of Crawford carried the mail between Crawford and Baring for 27 years and 10 months. He was always a contract carrier. The winter of 1934-35 was his toughest. He had to snowshoe from Crawford to about where the Downeast Christian School now is. The roads were plowed starting the winter of '35-36 but were not sanded. He delivered mail to 58 boxes along his route. Earlier, Rupert lived in Wesley and carried the mail from Wesley to Crawford. This contract was for two years from February 1931. He lost the bid on this route but got the other route. Information from notes made when Rupert spoke at A-CHS meeting.

CHARLIE GROVER (1870-1928) of Crawford was a mail carrier who delivered mail along the

Airline. He delivered the mail direct to the houses. Memory of Zela Cousins

LORIN MORAISEY (1904-) of Crawford also delivered mail, likely between the Alexander Post Office and the one in Crawford. Memories of Fletcher and Clarice Perkins

FRED LELAND GETCHELL (1924-1996) of Marshfield was a rural carrier for over 20 years. His route included Wesley, Crawford, Alexander and Baring. Later his route was shortened and he delivered mail along Route 192 and throughout Wesley until about June of 1993 when RENA COLE of Machiasport took over as a substitute driver. From his obituary,

JOEL DAY (1808 – 1884) of Wesley made once a week mail trips between Wesley and Machias on horseback. He was the son of Samuel Blether Day. Memory of Austin Gray

LEVI HENDERSON (ca 1840 - ca 1915) of Alexander used a horse and wagon to haul mail between Alexander and Machias via Wesley after 1880 and before 1885. He was also a stage driver on the Airline. Information from Austin Gray and Carola Nickerson

ARLINGTON J. DAY (1864-1921) of Wesley used one horse and a wagon or sled to haul mail between Wesley and Machias around 1900-1910. He had a barn in Northfield near Bog Lake where he kept a horse for a change. He sometimes hired Charles and his wife Della Munson as drivers. Memory of Austin Gray

CLARENCE HAWKINS (1896-) of Wesley used a Ford Model T car and a Ford Model T snowmobile from before 1919 to ca 1929 for the Wesley -Machias route. The snowmobile used a canvas belt and had a closed-in wooden box enclosing the driver and behind, much like a panel truck. It was painted green. Information from Austin Gray

GEORGE WILLIAMS (1893-1952) of Wesley drove a Buick car and bought Clarence's snowmobile for that route from the late '20s to about 1932. Memory of Austin Gray

HARRY HAYWARD (1894-1986) of Wesley drove a car and a pick-up from 1932 to 1938. Information from Austin Gray

HARVEY ROBERTS (1892-1957) of Wesley bid for a four-year term, ca 1938 -1941. He drove a Hudson-Essex and later a new ca 1938 Dodge car. His wife Ruth drove, too. On icy roads he had snow tires on the front and chains in the back. He said "I think I can keep her between the fences. Memory of Austin Gray

GEORGE WILLIAMS (1893-1952) had the Machias route from this time until his death in 1952. When he first got the bid he bought a new four door Chevrolet car for about \$1000. His widow SARAH WILLIAMS then had the contract and sometimes her son-in-law ROY DENNISON drove for her. From Austin Gray

RICHARD HAYWARD (1928-) of Machias drove from Machias to Wesley. Later his route was increased to go through Wesley, Crawford, and Alexander to Baring during the 1960's. Richard drove Rambler cars. He quit driving and got a job as janitor at the Machias Post Office. Memory from Austin Gray

SHELDON DAY (1866-1953) of Wesley carried the mail from the Wesley Corner Post Office to the

Pines Post Office under Day Hill from 1916 by horse and wagon. From Austin Gray

EDITH DURLING (1892-1972) drove the route between Wesley and Crawford.
From Austin Gray

HATTIE GUPTILL (1895-1975) drove the same route. From Austin Gray

MYRON AYERS (1871-1957) of Ayers Junction in Charlotte drove the mail in 1916 from Ayers Junction to Grove Post Office in Cooper with a horse and wagon. Information from Austin Gray

HENRY A. DAY (born ca 1861) of Wesley was a contract carrier in 1893. From Carola Nickerson of WHS

MANLEY E. DAY (1867-1901) of Wesley was a mail carrier on October 24, 1900.

PHILLIP DURLING (1913- 1994) of Wesley carried mail out to Fletcher Field in 1932-33. From Carola Nickerson of WHS

ANDREW GROVER (1865-1929) of Crawford drove from Crawford to Machias through Wesley.
From Austin Gray

JAKE FROST (1841-) moved from Eastport to the Fisher place in Charlotte. He drove the mail from Ayers Junction to Cooper with a horse and wagon. He named his horse 'Old Fearnot' and constantly yelled at it. From Gladys Ayer Bridges folder at A-CHS

SANDRA POTTLE of Perry was hired in February 1980 as a RFD carrier from Woodland Post Office to Baring, Alexander and Crawford. From Sandra Pottle

CARLETON MILLER did the Alexander/Baring/Crawford route from August 1979 to February 1980. Information from Sandra Pottle

RALPH SADLER of Cooper carried the mail three days a week between the Grove Post Office in Cooper and the Cedar Post Office in Alexander. Information from Belle Carlow

ELLIS BOYDEN (1882-1964) of Perry was appointed carrier on December 16, 1912 and retired in 1943. He used "horse drawn conveyance - either a buggy, a two wheeled cart, or a canvas covered mail wagon... he wore out ten horses to cover Route No. 1 in Perry. Later he used a car in summer, and after the roads were plowed he used the car year around. For one week he and his wife put on snowshoes and carried the mail on their backs. He missed eight days of work in 31 years. He once grew a 12-pound Detroit Dark Red beet! From Gladys Little's scrapbook.

ROY POTTLE of Perry was a substitute driver. From Gladys Little

NORMAN LORING of Perry took over Ellis Boyden's route in 1943.