

Rural Telephones in U.S.*

Good roads, Rural Free Delivery and the Rural Telephone as benefits to the farmer, can hardly in equity be compared as they are not in competition with each other. Good roads have always been a benefit. Rural Free Delivery in the United States from its start in 1897, has been a great help to the farmers and in 11 years according to the report of the auditor for the post office, has grown to a total of 40,000 carriers. But the Rural Telephone starting since that time is already outstripping both of these in the number of farmers it is reaching and the ways in which it is benefitting them.

The Rural Free Delivery carrier's routes in the United States rarely exceeds 24 miles in length and serves on an average about 70 farms. A Rural Telephone will operate as far as 40 miles with as many as 30 or 40 telephones on the line. Of course in the well settled states the farmers have both, but in the vast sections of open country, it is obvious that it will be some time before Rural Free Delivery can reach as many farms as the Rural Telephone.

The low first cost of the Rural Telephone puts it within the reach of all. On lines less than 12 miles long the cost is \$4.94 per mile including poles—the latter to be cut and furnished by the farmer himself. On lines over 12 miles long the cost is but \$6.87 per mile; same arrangements about the poles. In either case, the cost of his telephone set complete is \$13.00. The above figures represent standard "ground" wire construction and long distance telephones. It is a simple matter to build the line and no operator is required. The annual maintenance expense is not over \$0.75—the renewal of the dry batteries in the farmer's telephone. In addition the farmer can run the line to a neighboring town and there connect with the town exchange and long service to the rest of the country. The Rural Telephone in sickness or emergency enables the farmer to summon immediate aid. It enables him to learn the latest market prices and so get more money for his products. It removes the isolation of country life; it improves the conditions surrounding the farmer's wife. During the day and evening it is used a great deal for social intercourse—everybody being able to "get in" on the line at the same time if they desire.

PROTECTION IN THE SOUTH

Down South it is the white woman's protection in the country districts. In many sections of the United States where Rural Telephone lines exist, it is customary to furnish weather bureau reports over the line each morning. For instance at nine o'clock in the morning the telephone company in town will give three long rings over each rural line entering its exchange and those who desire may, on taking the receiver off the hook, hear the operator read the weather bureau report. The companies often also give out at the same time, the prevailing market quotations.

*Mr. Starkweather in a paper read before the Country Life Commission

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FARM AND DAIRY

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The Rural Telephone certainly is the farmer's greatest servant. In using it to do errands, it saves him time. In dry seasons, he may be promptly notified of the approach of prairie or forest fires, of not infrequent occurrence if his farm adjoins a railroad, or in case of fire in his own home he can summon aid without leaving the farm himself. It is hard to say in what way it helps him the most on the various things mentioned above. Wherever he is, ask him if he would be willing to do without it and his answer is "No!"

In the vast sections of open country away from schools, churches and other conditions improving country life, the Rural Telephone is fast reaching out, removing one of the greatest disadvantages of living in the country; namely, that one must travel a considerable distance to reach a market or talk with a neighbor. It is estimated that there are about seven million farmers' families in the United States to-day, taking the word farmer in its broadest sense and including all families living in the open country. Of those it is estimated that in the few years since the Rural Telephone has been considered seriously, more than two million have adopted it and it is rapidly being extended.

The Rural Telephone, born of necessity and of vital benefits to the farmer has as its further recommendation, its accessibility to the entire population of farmers, many of whom cannot be reached by Rural Free Delivery or good roads for generations to come.

GRANGE NOTES

MIDDLEMARCH.—Apple Grove Grange held its regular meeting Friday evening, March 18. Although the night was dark and threatening rain, there was a good attendance. After one new member had been initiated and four others proposed for membership, the discussion arranged for the evening took place. It was on "Hoe Crops." Potatoes and beans claimed the most attention. The majority of the members giving their experience in the culture and varieties of potatoes best suited to our land. Whether to plant large or small, cut or uncut potatoes, was fully discussed; also the yields and market value of some varieties. The proceedings were enlivened by the rendering of some good music.

Elgin Division Grange is to be revived. A meeting will be held in St. Thomas early in April to which all Granges in Elgin will send delegates. As Apple Grove was entitled to nine, on the basis of one for every ten members, these were duly elected. The Grange at Middlemarch is no longer an experiment, it having held meetings fortnightly for 34 years. It is now stronger than at any time in its history and is recognized by all to be the social, agricultural and literary centre of this neighborhood. It owns a comfortable, well lighted and well warmed hall, with kitchen, and ready for teams attached. It is furnished with an organ, blackboard, pictures and a library, also a platform and curtains for entertainments.

The aim of the Grange is to elevate the characters and increase the usefulness of its members. It also gives farm life a charm by raising the standard of the homes in the country. It tries to make the young people proud to be among the tillers of the soil. One of our favorite songs commences—

The farmer's the chief of the nation,
The proudest of nobles is he,
How best beyond others his station,
From want and from envy how free.

The meetings are always arranged with a programme, which is varied in



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order to avoid monotony. Agricultural and literary subjects are taken in turn, whilst occasionally a night is given solely to amusement by having charades, guessing contests, progressive games, etc. Our Grange believes in the old adage of "Jack and the dull boy." In their respective seasons we have an annual sugar social, ice cream social, and an oyster supper for members only, and paid for either from the funds or by collection. As soon as a program is finished a committee is appointed to get out a new one for the next three or six months. Advantage is taken of any special days such as St. Patrick, come on Grange night, and patriotic occasions are never lost sight of. For many years no open meetings have been held unless a fee was

charged, for it was found that a noisy element would prove troublesome and often unappreciative. Sometimes, however, we have had an invited evening for members' families, which have resulted in some of them joining the organization.

The farmers at Middlemarch look upon any section without a Grange with the deepest pity and commiseration.—H. Robinson, Overseer Dom. Grange.

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