

# The CANADIAN DAIRYMAN AND FARMING WORLD

AGRICULTURE, THE KEYSTONE OF CANADIAN PROSPERITY

VOL. XXVII.

FOR WEEK ENDING FEBRUARY 12, 1908

No. 4

## FREE RURAL MAIL DELIVERY—SHOULD WE HAVE IT IN CANADA?

The First of a Series of Articles Written for The Canadian Dairyman and Farming World, by an Editorial Representative of this Paper Who Recently Visited the United States With the Sole Object of Studying the Free Rural Mail Delivery System.

IN CANADA, where the bulk of the taxation required for the purposes of government is contributed by the farming community, our farmers have to drive or send to their nearest postoffice for their mail—or do without. In the United States 18,000,000 people living in the rural sections have their mail delivered at or near their doors daily.

If a farmer in Canada desires to send a money order or registered letter, he has to walk, or hitch-up and drive, to his nearest post office.

All that 18,000,000 people living in the rural sections of the United States have to do, is to erect a small sign in front of their doors and a rural mail carrier will stop that day and take their letter or sell them a money order.

Only an imaginary line separates the farmers of New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario and our western provinces from the farmers in the adjoining states of the American Union. On one side of that line the farmers have to depend on their nearest post offices for their mail. Sometimes they do not receive their mail for days at a time. But few of them take daily papers.

On the other side of that line, 18,000,000 country people have their mail delivered at their doors daily; most of them take daily papers: They laugh at the farmers in Canada because they have not demanded free rural mail delivery long ago. Are they justified in doing so? The series of articles that are to follow will show.

### ORIGIN OF FREE RURAL MAIL DELIVERY.

Free rural mail delivery was started in the United States as an experiment, twelve years ago or in the beginning of 1898. The first year, 83 carriers were appointed. They

\*Tables prepared by the United States Postal Department show that in 1898 the average number of persons served on each route was 81. The number of persons served has been found by multiplying the number of carriers by 81. The post office officials state that 18,000,000 people are now being served by the rural delivery carriers. This indicates that 81 is now less than the average number of persons served on each route, and that the figures given in the table in the adjoining column are considerably under the mark.—Ed.

delivered mail daily to over 30,000 people. The expense of this service was \$14,840.

Since then the service has been extended by leaps and bounds. Now every state in the Union has free rural mail delivery. In many of the older and more thickly settled states free rural delivery is almost universal. Two years ago practically every farmer in 345 coun-

mate that five-sixths of the territory in the United States suitable for the introduction of the free rural delivery service now has it. Postmaster General Meyer is now urging the United States Congress to add a parcel post on the rural routes. If his recommendations are adopted it will cost twelve cents a pound for city firms to send parcels to the rural delivery patron from any city post office. Parcels mailed from the distributing office of the rural route, or parcels mailed by a patron of any rural route for delivery to a patron on the same route, will cost for postage only five cents for the first pound and two cents for each additional pound up to eleven pounds, or 25 cents for a package weighing 11 pounds.

The object of the discrimination in rates is to protect the small country store keepers from the competition of the large mail-order firms in the cities. When the farmers of the United States secure this additional boon they will have yet another advantage over the farmers of Canada.

### IS THE SYSTEM A SUCCESS?

Had the people of the United States not considered free rural delivery a success, the service would not have been extended with such rapidity. Why then has free rural delivery not been introduced into Canada?

During the past twelve years, while the system has grown and been extended in the United States, our farmers have watched it with longing; yes! and with longing. We have wondered why we should be deprived

of a convenience enjoyed by the farmers of the United States. From time to time our agricultural press have printed extracts from the United States government reports relative to the success of the system in the States. Our farm papers have asked the government for its reasons for not introducing free rural delivery in Canada. The same question has been asked on different occasions in the House of Commons.

### OBJECTIONS TO THE SYSTEM.

In reply to these questions we have been told that Canada is not yet ripe for the introduction of the system: That it is tremendously expensive. That the expense is altogether out of proportion to the benefits derived. That in the United States it is a political scheme controlled by the Republicans that they may keep themselves in power. That the time



A TYPICAL UNITED STATES RURAL MAIL CARRIER

Most of the rural mail carriers in the United States cover routes averaging between twenty and twenty-five miles in length and serving from ninety to one hundred and twenty-five families. Many of the wagons used are not as neat as this. The carriers have to provide their own vehicles. A large proportion of them use ordinary buggies.

ties, in different states, had his mail delivered and collected at his door. In those countries the service was complete.

The tremendous growth that has taken place in the service in the United States is best shown by the following table:

Fiscal Year	No. of Carriers	No. of Persons Served*
1897	83	31,623
1898	148	56,388
1899	391	148,071
1900	1,277	486,156
1901	4,301	1,638,681
1902	8,466	3,225,549
1903	15,119	5,760,339
1904	24,566	9,359,046
1905	32,055	12,212,955
1906	35,666	13,588,746
1907	37,582	14,945,868

The post office officials at Washington esti-