

REASONS WHY RURAL DELIVERY COSTS BUT LITTLE

The Fifteenth of a Series of Articles Written by an Editorial Representative of this Paper, who Recently Visited the United States, with the Object of Studying the Free Rural Mail Delivery System.

It is estimated by the officials of the post office department that 18,000,000 people living in the farming districts of the United States now receive their mail daily through the free rural delivery service. The gross cost of the service this year will be about \$36,000,000. Thus, were these people to bear all the cost themselves the cost of the service for a year for each person would be about two dollars.

But that is the gross cost. The savings that have been effected by the cutting off of thousands of post offices and stage routes and the increased revenue derived through the rural delivery service effect a saving of at least \$6,000,000 a year. Thus, the net cost of the service is about only \$30,000,000 a year. This would mean a net cost per person of about \$1.67 a year.

Even that is not a fair basis of computation. It charges the whole cost of the service to the farming population. As the postal service is national in character its cost should be borne equally by the whole population. The farmers of the United States pay a portion of the cost of erecting the immense post offices in the cities and of the free delivery service in cities. The people of the cities, therefore, should bear a portion of the cost of free rural delivery. Were this done the cost of the service would be much less than even \$1.67 a year.

Exception may be taken to the estimate that 18,000,000 are enjoying the benefits of the service, on the ground that the number mentioned includes the hired men, the grown-up sons and daughters, the grandfathers and grandmothers and others on the farms of the United States, who are not taxpayers. Granted. Let us then look at the matter in its worst light.

THE GREATEST COST PER FAMILY

In June 1903 the average number of boxes on each route throughout the United States was 70. Each box represented at least one family. The average number of people on each route receiving their mail through these boxes was 381 or a little more than five persons for each box or family. Since then the service has been greatly improved. Many routes, having only a small patronage, have been discontinued. It probably is safe to estimate that the number of boxes on each route this year averages 75. There are, this year, 39,228 routes. Estimating 75 boxes to a route, we find that this year 2,941,100 rural families enjoy the service. Taking the net cost of the service as \$30,000,000 the net cost of the service to each family is approximately \$10 a year. This is less than \$1.00 a month or 25 cents a week. But again, that is the gross cost. Were the expense distributed, as it should be, over the urban and rural population alike the net cost would be considerably less than \$5.00 a year for each family or less than 10 cents a week. It is that such a "ruinous" expense that we need to be "appalled" at it? What do our farmers who live three and four and five miles from a post office think about it?

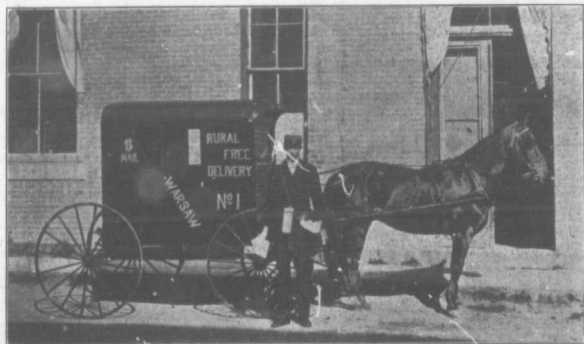
WHAT RURAL DELIVERY MEANS

What does that expense mean? That our farmers would have their mail delivered at their doors daily, that they would be able to post their letters and to buy and send money orders from their own doors, that they would be able to take a daily paper and thus keep posted in regard to the trend of the markets and concerning the world's events; that the value of their farms

would be increased, that farm life would be made more enjoyable for all on the farm including the boys and girls; that much valuable time would be saved that is now lost in going for the mail and that our farmer would be placed on a more equal footing with his brothers in the cities. Is \$5, yes \$10 and even \$15 a year too much to pay for such benefits? We would like our farm readers to answer.

INCREASED VALUE OF FARMS

Then, what about the increased value of farm lands? Officials of the United States Post Office Department have estimated, presumably after making careful enquiries, that rural delivery increases the value of the farms adjoining rural delivery routes, by an average of at least five per cent. Farmers in the states of Virginia, Pennsylvania and New York, with whom I talked on this subject, estimated that the value of their farms had been increased anywhere from 2 to 15 per cent. as a result of the advent of rural delivery. I was told that when farms are advertised for sale, care is taken to set forth



An Up-to-date Rural Delivery Wagon in New York State

Farming conditions in New York State are so closely similar to those in older Ontario, both in winter and summer, that they are practically the same. The farms are about the same in size and the population is of about the same density. In New York State the farmers have their mail delivered at their doors daily. In Ontario farmers have to go or send for their mail or do without.

that one of the advantages they possess, (where such is the case) is free rural delivery. A glance at the advertisements of farms for sale as published in United States farm papers, shows this to be the case.

Suppose we accept the estimate that the average increase in the value of the farm is 5 per cent. On this basis a 100 acre farm valued at \$50 an acre or worth \$5,000 would increase in value \$250. Thus were the owner of such a farm to pay \$10 a year for free delivery for 25 years, he would have paid out, at the end of that period, a sum that would represent only the increased value of his farm. Were we to place the increased value of the farms at only 2½ per cent it would represent an increase in the value on a \$5,000 farm of \$125, or enough to pay the cost of rural delivery for many years.

While the figures that have been quoted may be questioned by some people, I believe that they are fair and that their use is amply justified by the information relating to the cost of the service in the United States that is available and by what people in the United States, from farmers to government officials, have told me about the

service. Such people, after their years of experience with the service should be able to express an intelligent opinion.

The readers of The Canadian Dairymen and Farming World are now invited to join in the discussion of this subject. This series of articles will be continued for a number of issues yet. In the meantime, however, we hope that our readers will make their views known in order that the verdict of our farmers may be ascertained. Don't wait for somebody else to write. Write yourself.—H. B. C.

"Free Rural Mail Delivery is the rig' of the rural population of Canada. Rural Delivery and Farm Telephones are the two most needed additions to the modern farmer's conveniences. The Dairymen and Farming World has my hearty support in its efforts in this cause.—J. Adam, Wellington Co., Ont.

"The people generally are well pleased with our present system of delivering the mail by rural free delivery. They do earnestly beg for its continuance. Our mail matter has increased since the establishment of this system about one third. The average number (by one carrier) of pieces delivered, 4,167; the number collected, 938 a month. The first two months, May and June,

collected 2,014 and 3,704; delivered, 668 and 576. The increase in the delivery of newspapers is about one-third. The privilege given the carrier to do errands, etc., for patrons along the route, is appreciated, and such errands have been fairly patronized. The patrons of each route have mostly met the requirements, and provided boxes to receive their mail. The boxes are generally secure and, in some cases, painted."

F. F. Simpson, Postmaster,
Philadelphia, N. Y.

"I think the benefits received justify the expense, and that the benefits received will be greater in proportion to the expense, should the system become more general. I have not heard one word of fault found on the whole route, and we, farmers, can't say enough in praise of it, and would like a continuance of it for years to come."

A. W. Oatman,
Edgewood Farm, Philadelphia, N. Y.

It is good to know what your cows are doing. It is of infinitely greater importance to know what they are doing every day.—A. Groh, Waterloo Co., Ont.