

Transcribed Excerpts from "Rural Mail Report" Newspaper Article, October 24, 1899

Rural Mail Report

W.F. Conger, the Special Agent Tells of the Work.

HEDRICK ROUTE LAST TO BE PUT ON

Forty-Three Free Delivery routes in Iowa--Popular Where it Has Been Tried--It Stimulates Use of the Mails.

Des Moines, Oct. 19.--There are 43 rural mail delivery routes in Iowa. The last to be established was at Hedrick, in Keokuk county ... The special agent of the post-office department for rural free delivery in Iowa is W. F. Conger, of Clinton. His report for the month of September has just been issued, and is herewith reproduced ...

"Dear Sir: In compliance with your request, communicated to me by the special agent in charge of western division, I beg leave to submit the following:

"First, I desire to say in general that I have found the people eager for rural free delivery of mail wherever they have come to understand its advantages and benefits. I find a majority of the people know little or nothing about rural free delivery or the attempt on the part of the government to establish and test it. I might say further that few postmasters have given it serious attention or realize its advantages to the people served by it or the just claims of the rural population to a fair share of the benefits of our postal system.

"I do not desire to speak in disparagement of free city delivery, but aside from a business delivery in cities the claims are, to my mind, much stronger in favor of rural free delivery than residence delivery in cities.

"The residents of the average free delivery city are within a short distance of the post office or some of its sub-stations and have the additional advantage of sidewalks and street cars by which to conveniently reach it in any and all kinds of weather.

"Farmers are miles from the post office and often prevented, through the busy producing season or by reason of bad weather and bad roads, from getting their mail for many days or weeks at a time.

"Again, farmers, being producers of food supplies, grains, etc., need the daily market reports, which are of small advantage to the residents of a city.

"Why eight hundred or one thousand people, living within a mile of a post office in a city, with sidewalks and street cars at their service, should have their mail delivered by a carrier, costing

the government \$800 to \$1,000 a year and an equal number of farmers living from five to ten miles from a post office, should not be served by a \$400 carrier, I am at a loss to understand. The stronger claim of the farming community to daily delivery of mail is becoming better understood each year, and whenever and wherever a rural route is established the advantages become at once so apparent to those served that the justice of the claims of rural delivery is at once admitted ...

To my mind it is not so much a question whether the government can afford to give the people free rural delivery as whether it can afford to withhold from them a service of such inestimable benefit.

“Every community served by rural delivery feels itself set a long distance forward in the scale of civilization and brought into closer touch with the life and progress of the world. The monotony and isolation of farm life are greatly relieved from the discontent so noticeable on the increase with the farmer youths of the country is allayed. It is not only a business advantage, but a social benefit of even greater value than any commercial consideration.

As to your inquiry in regard to increased use of the mails by reason of the rural service, the universal testimony as shown by the records of the various routes is that letter correspondence is greatly stimulated and that on every route scores of daily papers are now taken where there was none before the service was established. On one route I find 47 daily papers are now being taken, and the number is constantly increasing, where not one of them took a daily paper before the route was established ...

In the inspection of the routes which I have personally traversed with the mail carriers I find a universal satisfaction with the service and have met with frequent expressions such as these ...

Another patron said to me: “I consider my land worth \$5 per acre more since the establishment of our rural free delivery route ...

W. F. Conger, Special Agent.