

Getting mail hasn't always been easy

In early days, state had 2 post offices; pickup was in Charleston

NEARBY HISTORY

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In 1791, there were only two post offices in South Carolina - in Charleston and Georgetown.

North Carolina had four, all of them on the coast. If someone living in our area expected a letter, he probably could pick it up only in Charleston, which was inconvenient, to say the least.

In 1792, a private carrier advertised the dates that mail could be picked up in Camden. From Camden the post rider headed for Fayetteville, N.C. Charlotte existed but, as President George Washington observed the previous year, Charlotte was "a trifling place."

Chester Courthouse gained postal service in 1794 on a route that went from Columbia to Pinckney Courthouse (the courthouse serving both York and Spartanburg counties, located on the west side of the Broad River).

In 1795, a post road was established between Charlotte and Lancaster Courthouse, continuing on to Camden. Yorkville did not have postal service until 1797.

Not until 1810 was there further service for this area. At that time, York County got a second post office called Alexander's, southeast of present-day Rock Hill near the Catawba River. Lancaster County gained Cairo in the Pleasant Valley community not far below the N.C. line.

After the War of 1812, there was a period of great prosperity, and the number of post routes shot up dramatically. There is no evidence of post offices as we think of them. Most stops were inside taverns or stores, a few in homes.

York District had a post office at Hill's Iron Works and two other ironworks sites, Jackson Furnace and Kings Mountain Furnace.

Chester District had 10 post offices with the suffix "ville," including one with the unlikely name of Screamersville.

Lancaster District had only one "ville" - Stognersville - but had one called New Potosi. ("Old" Potosi was a rich silver-mining area in Bolivia.)

After the Civil War and the

convenience of post offices at railroad stops, almost every rural community had a post office. Colorful names abounded.

In York County, there were Bagdad, Bandana, Balloon, Borax, Carp, Cora, Corncob, Energy, Fodder, Hero, Push, Robinia, Tupper, Valdora, Zadok and Zeno, among others.

Lancaster had Gum, O.K., Sincerity and Tank, along with Dry Creek, Flat Creek and just plain Creek.

Chester County had Armenia, Baton Rouge, Cabal, Cotton, Hemlock, Olive, Red Lick and Torbit. Textile mills had post offices, too. There was Baldwin Mills and Factory (which was changed to Lando).

Rural Free Delivery was initiated in 1896 as an experiment in selected areas. This area didn't have free delivery at that time, but by January 1902, the Yorkville Enquirer had printed a list of carriers who had contracted with the U.S. Post Office to deliver mail using their own horses and buggies.

An example of this was the announcement that J.J. Perry was "getting up a mail route from Osceola to Belair, to Pleasant Valley and upper Indian Land." Perry was paid \$600 a year.

The mail was dropped off by a train at the Hancock station in the Lancaster County village of Osceola. Perry ordinarily used a buggy to cover his route, but if he was sick or the weather was severe, his son-in-law Will Rodgers subbed and rode a mule, carrying the mail in saddlebags.

At first, there were no standard mailboxes. Carriers complained that people were using such things as old syrup cans or oil cans with sticky sides. In 1901, a law was passed requiring standard manufactured mailboxes.

The mailboxes were sold to the patrons for \$1 to \$3 a box, according to size. Boxes were free for those who could not pay. Most on Perry's route declared they could not pay.

Louise Pettus is a retired Winthrop University history professor. Her column appears Sundays.

my great grandfather