

POST OFFICE ROUTES & NAMES, 1791 TO PRESENT

In 1791 there were only two post offices in South Carolina—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 only pick it up 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 Pres. George Washington observed the previous year, Charlotte was "a trifling place."

Chester Court House gained postal service in 1794 on a route that went from Columbia to Pinckney Court House (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 Court House, continuing on to Camden.

In 1810 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 located inside taverns or stores, a few in private homes.

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.

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

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 saddle bags.

At first, there were no standard mail boxes. 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 mail boxes.

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