

Registration in the Early Years of the United States Rural Free Delivery Service

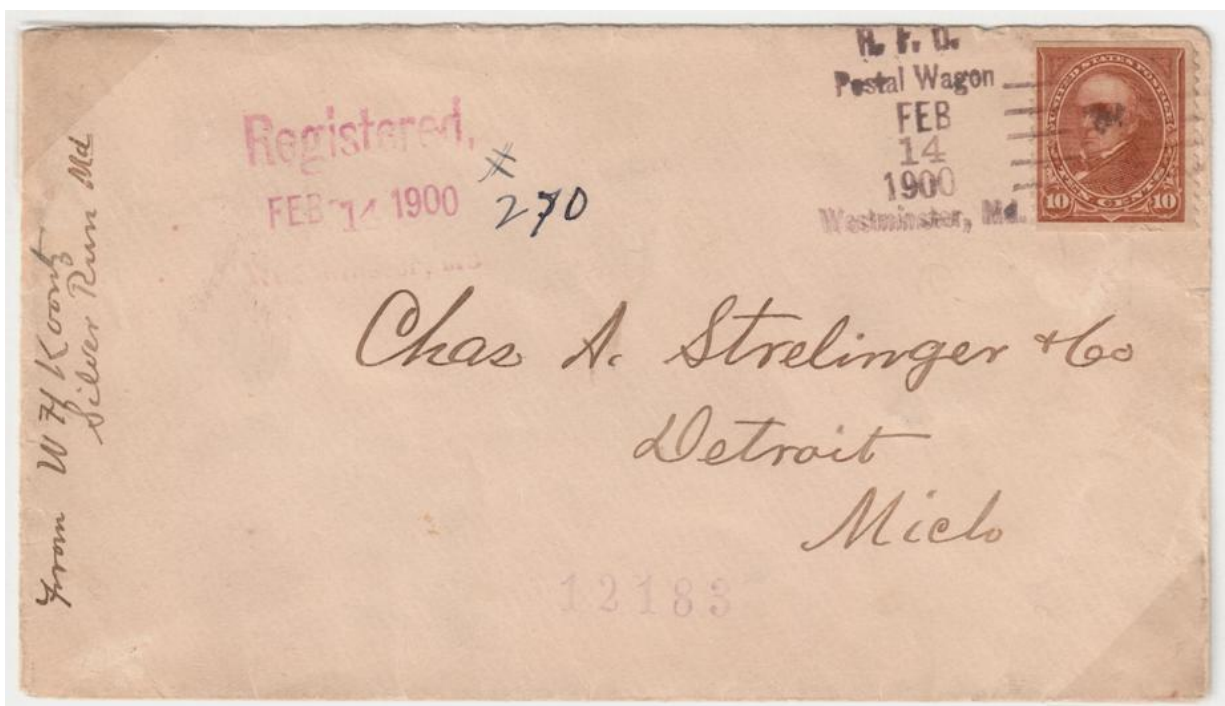
The first Rural Free Delivery Routes were established on October 1, 1896 in the small communities of Halltown, Uvilla and Charlestown located in the West Virginia home county of Postmaster-General William L. Wilson. By 1899 the RFD experiment had grown to nearly 400 carriers in forty states, but the service provided was still limited to the collection and delivery of mail matter and the sale of stamps and stationery. Rural carriers did not postmark the mail they handled, except in the special Carroll County, MD county system.

Although Rural Free Delivery would not officially be made a permanent POD service until July 1, 1902, by early 1900 Rural Free Delivery had become so popular and successful, and the demand for expanded postal services including registration and money orders so vocal, its permanence was inevitable.

In 1899 the first RFD registry service became available on the Postal Wagons and at Postal Stations in an experimental Carroll County, MD service. It was not until April 12, 1900 that all RFD Carriers were finally empowered to accept and deliver registered matter. While technical registration did not take place until the carrier turned the Registered Article over to the Postmaster at the parent Post Office, indemnity commenced upon the acceptance of the article by the carrier and the issuance of a special receipt to the rural patron.

This postal history exhibit covers all aspects of the Registry Service during the early years of Rural Free Delivery, and is organized according to the conduct of the service, beginning with its establishment and promotion, followed by the special regulations applicable to rural carriers governing the acceptance and delivery of registered matter on route, then closing with collected and delivered rural registered mails.

Registered at RFD Wagon D in the Experimental Carroll County, MD RFD Service



RFD Postal Wagon D Westminster, MD

February 14, 1900

Mailed at the Silver Run, MD scheduled stop.

The Post Office at Silver Run closed December 19, 1899 with service provided by RFD Postal Wagon D.

POD Notice to Postmasters and Carriers of Commencement of Service

This four page notice contained the special regulations in effect for service on Rural Free Delivery routes.

Post Office Department,
Office of the Third Assistant Postmaster General,
Washington, D. C.

In any further correspondence
on this subject quote the above
Letter, Number, and Volume.

APR 16 1901

1900.

Postmaster,

Racine Minn.

Sir:

In order that residents in districts where the rural free-delivery system has been introduced may have the benefits of the registry service, the Department has devised a plan whereby valuable mail matter, including letters which contain money, may be registered by rural carriers on their routes, with the same security as at the post office.

The system will be put in operation at your office, and on the rural carrier routes connected therewith, on **MAY 15 1901**, 1900.

The following instructions are given for the guidance of yourself and all who may in any way be connected with the operation of the system:
Supplies, including books of receipts for use by the carriers.

Registry Service notice for the first Rural Routes at Racine, MN that were established May 15, 1901.

Registry Service was authorized and provided effective April 12, 1900 on all existing Rural Routes and upon commencement of service on all new rural routes established thereafter.

POD Promotional Cards

Distributed periodically by Carriers to Rural Route Patrons to Promote Use of the Service.

CAUTION!

Registration in the Rural Free Delivery Service.

CAUTION!

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT, WASHINGTON, D. C.

TO THE PUBLIC:

All valuable letters and parcels sent in the mails should be REGISTERED to insure their safe transmission and correct delivery.

Rural Carriers are prepared to register mail matter on every trip. The Registry Fee is only 8 cents in addition to postage; and both must be prepaid with stamps affixed to the article registered, or in money paid to the Carrier, who will write the amount in the receipt given you.

Letters and parcels to be registered *must*—1. Be plainly and correctly addressed. 2. Bear the name and address of sender. 3. Be enclosed in envelopes or wrappers strong enough to carry contents to destination. 4. Be in perfect condition.

The Rural Carrier will give you a receipt for each letter or parcel at the time he accepts it for registration. A second receipt, signed by the addressee or his authorized agent, will be mailed you when the letter or parcel is delivered.

If a letter or parcel prepaid at the letter rate of postage, registered at a United States post office, or by a Rural Free Delivery Carrier, and addressed to a United States post office, be lost in the mails, and such letter or parcel, or its value, be not recoverable, the POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT WILL MAKE GOOD ITS VALUE, up to ten dollars.

First Edition Form 3898 - in use from April 12, 1900 through June 30, 1902 - \$10 Indemnity for Loss

Form 3898. **RATES OF POSTAGE.**

Domestic Rates.—Letters, sealed, or written matter, 2 cents an ounce or fraction of an ounce. This rate applies to the United States and all the Possessions thereof, as well as to Cuba, Canada, Mexico, Republic of Panama, and Shanghai, China.

SECOND-CLASS MATTER.—Authorized newspapers or publications (except those returned as unsold), when mailed by a publisher or news agent to subscribers or other news agents, 1 cent a pound; when mailed by others or returned unsold, 1 cent for each 4 ounces or fraction thereof.

THIRD-CLASS MATTER.—Books, prints, seeds, bulbs, roots, plants, samples of grain, etc., 1 cent for each 4 ounces or fraction thereof.

FOURTH-CLASS MATTER.—Merchandise, engravings, coin, minerals, metals, tin type, etc., 1 cent for each 4 ounces or fraction thereof.

Foreign Rates.—Letters and sealed matter, 3 cents an ounce or fraction of an ounce.

For printed matter, 1 cent for each two ounces or fraction thereof.

For commercial papers, 5 cents for the two ounces or fraction thereof.

For samples of merchandise having no value, 1 cent for each additional 2 ounces or fraction thereof.

There is a limit to the weight and size of letters. There is no provision for sending parcels by Parcel Post, unless it be prepaid at the rate of postage for parcels, from the place of mailing.

[OVER.]

SPECIAL NOTICE.

Form 3898. **REGISTRATION IN THE RURAL FREE DELIVERY SERVICE.**

SPECIAL NOTICE.

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT, WASHINGTON, D. C.

TO THE PUBLIC:

All valuable letters and parcels sent in the mails should be REGISTERED to insure their safe transmission and correct delivery.

Rural carriers are prepared to register mail matter on every trip. The Registry Fee is only 8 cents in addition to postage; and both must be prepaid with stamps affixed to the article registered, or in money paid to the Carrier, who will write the amount in the receipt given you.

Letters and parcels to be registered *must*—1. Be plainly and correctly addressed. 2. Bear the name and address of sender. 3. Be enclosed in envelopes or wrappers strong enough to carry contents to destination. 4. Be in perfect condition.

The Rural Carrier will give you a receipt for each letter or parcel at the time he accepts it for registration. A second receipt, signed by the addressee or his authorized agent, will be mailed you when a domestic letter or parcel is delivered.

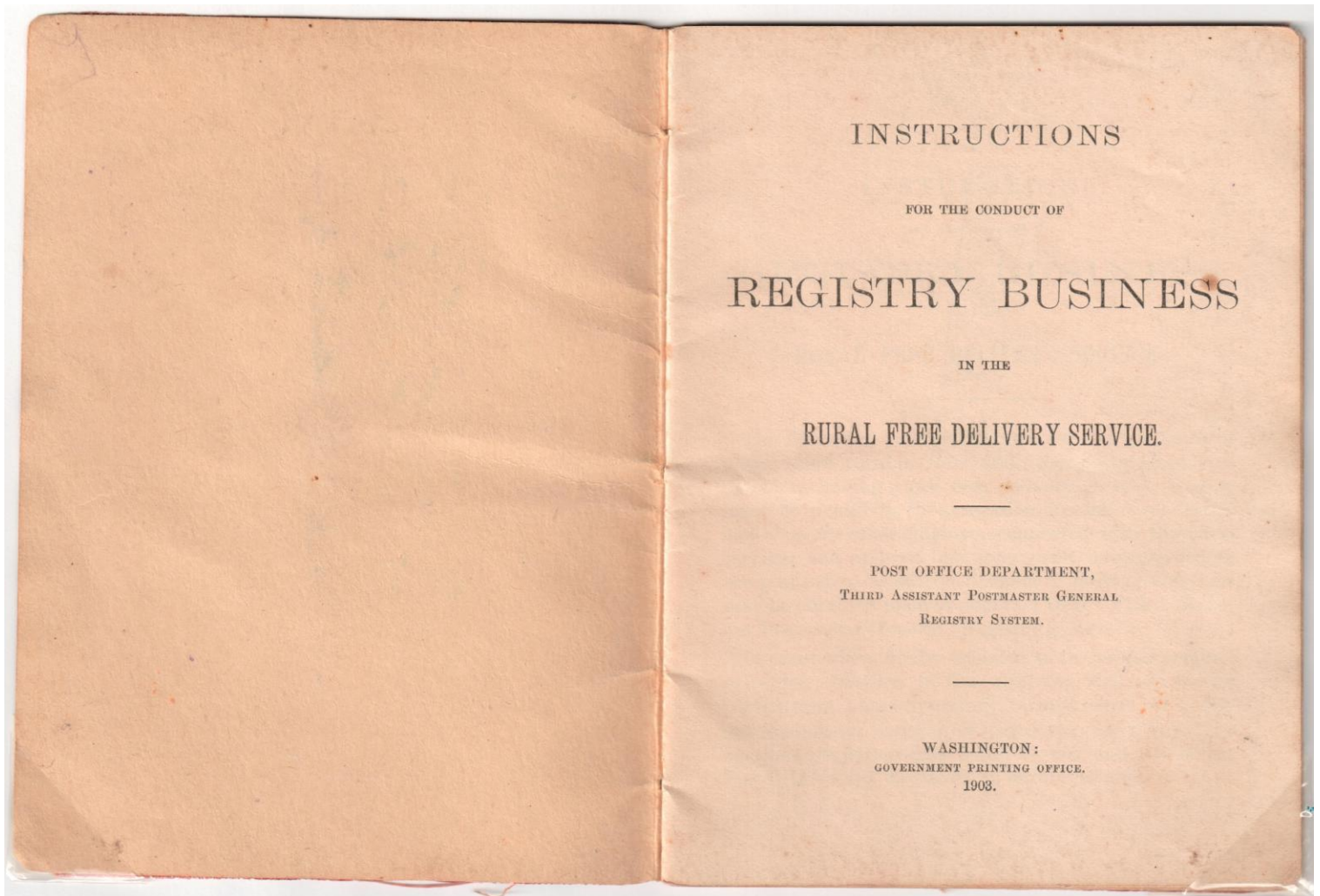
If a letter or parcel prepaid at the letter rate of postage, registered at a United States post office, or by a Rural Free Delivery Carrier, and addressed to a United States post office, be lost in the mails, and such letter or parcel, or its value, be not recoverable, the POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT WILL MAKE GOOD ITS VALUE, up to TWENTY-FIVE DOLLARS.

[OVER.]

Second Edition Form 3898 - in use from July 1, 1902 forward - Increase to \$25 Indemnity for Loss

1903 POD Booklet - Regulations for the Conduct of Registry Service

Detailed Instruction Booklet provided to all Carriers superseding the the earlier POD Service Notice.



In 1903 a special Instructional Handbook was published and distributed to all rural carriers.

Additional regulations were published as necessary in the intervening issues of the Postal Bulletins and Guides.

Too bulky to show in this exhibit is the 1905 Edition of this Handbook and the 78 page "Instructions for the Guidance of Postmasters and Carriers in the Conduct of the Rural Delivery Service" published in March, 1907 containing updated registry service regulations.

Registry Service

Special Regulations

Registered Article Numbering and Postmarking

Fully conforming articles registered on a rural route should bear 3 distinct registry numbers:

1 - Carrier Registry Number 2 - Parent Office Registry Number 3 - Delivery Office Registry Number

Postmarking regulations varied over time:

Prior to August 1, 1900

Carriers prohibited from postmarking any mail except in Carroll County, MD

August 1, 1900 - June 30, 1900

Carriers required to postmark all mail collected

July 1, 1903 forward

Carriers only to postmark collected mail if delivered further down their route



RFD 2 Warren, Ohio Sep 23, 1900

Registry Fee Paid in Cash

"No 2"

Carrier Registry Number matching sender receipt Article Number

"330/330"

Main Office Distribution Registry Number assigned by the Parent Office

"1468"

Delivery Office Registry Number



RFD 2 Coopers Mills, Maine Aug 19, 1911

Not Postmarked by Carrier and to RFD 2, Augusta, Maine

Rural Route origin confirmed by presence of all 3 requisite Registry Numbers although not postmarked by Carrier

"Reg 4" Carrier Registry Number, "515" Main Office Registry Number, "1313" Augusta Delivery Office Registry Number

Registry Fees Paid in Cash

Due to the nature of RFD Service patrons sometimes paid the postage and/or registry fees in cash, leaving the letter and the money in their rural box for collection by the carrier. Carriers would apply the postage and fees paid in cash, and either cancel the stamps or leave them for cancellation by registry clerk at the parent office.



RFD 1 Bronson, Iowa Aug 10, 1903

8c Registry Fee Paid in Cash and Canceled at Parent Office



RFD 2 Holstein, Iowa Jul 21, 1903

8c Registry Fee Paid in Cash and Canceled by Carrier

Mixed Use of a 2c 1898 Issue and Strip of 4 of the 2c 1903 Issue indicates Letter Postage Prepaid by Stamp and Registry Fee Paid in Cash and stamps applied by Carrier.

Rural Carrier Registry Receipt Manifold

Special Receipt Books were provided to Rural Carriers for recording Registered Articles accepted On Route. Upon Acceptance by the Carrier, a Receipt from this book was given to the Sender and Indemnity commenced.

IMPORTANT NOTICE.

These Books are made of Metallic Duplicating Paper, no inter-leaving of carbons necessary. Place the "Stop Card" under the Plain sheet. Write with even pressure, with a hard pencil, not very sharp pointed. This will insure good copies.

1902

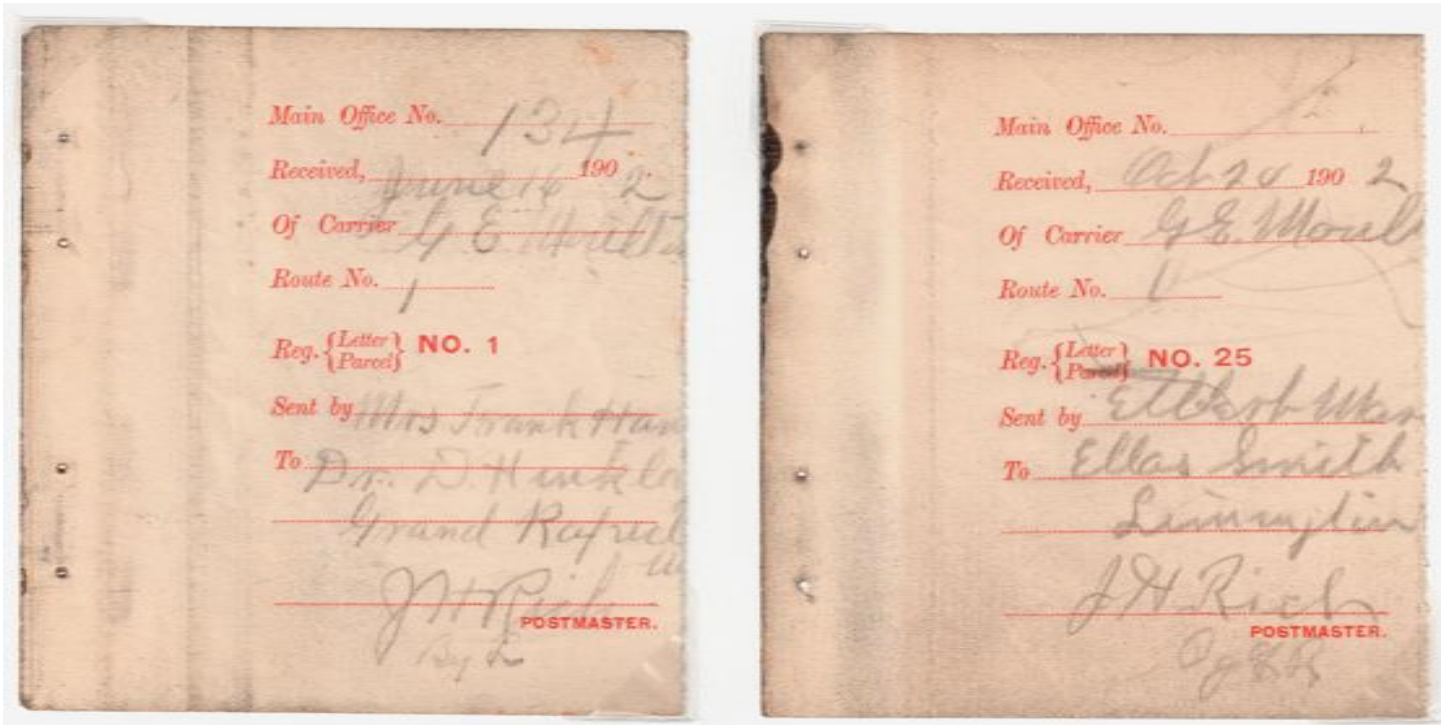
<p><i>Gilbert C. Woulton</i></p> <p>NAME OF RURAL CARRIER.</p>
<p><i>Sebago Lake Maine</i></p> <p>NAME OF DISTRIBUTING POST OFFICE.</p>
<p><i>One</i></p> <p>NUMBER OF RURAL CARRIER'S ROUTE.</p>

RFD 1 Sebago Lake, Maine June to October 1902 - Metallic Coated Duplicating Paper

Receipt Books consisted of paired sets of duplicate red and black receipt forms with perforated stubs, although the size and exact format varied over time. The original Receipt Form was separated from the Stub and given to the Rural Route Patron. The original Receipt Stub was completed at the Post Office with their Registry Number and signed by the Postmaster. The Postmaster retained the original Stub along with the duplicate Patron Receipt, leaving the duplicate Stub in the Manifold for the Carrier.

Historical Note: In early 1903 an internal investigation of the POD resulted in the removal and indictment of a number of high ranking POD officials for bribery and patronage. Among those removed was Michael W Louis, Superintendant of the Supply Division, in connection with procurement irregularities, including those relating to RFD Registry Manifolds. In early 1902, large orders for new carbonless "metallic" duplicating registry receipt books were given to the General Manifold Company of Franklin, PA at nearly double the cost of the currently used carbon books, and with each book containing only half the number of receipts. The Manifold shown above was provided under one of these questionable orders.

Manifold Receipt Stubs and Rural Patron Receipt



Receipt Stubs for Registered Articles #1 and #25 from the RFD 1 Sebago Lake manifold on the previous page. This receipt book contained 25 pairs of registry receipt forms.

RURAL CARRIER REGISTRY RECEIPT.

Letter { } Parcel { } No. 1040 Date June 9, 1902

Registered at Post Office at La Grangeville N.Y.

Sent by Theron S. Dean

Residing at La Grangeville N.Y. (Locate place of residence.)

Addressed to Parker Pen Co. Jamestown N.Y. (CITY AND STATE ONLY.)

A Z Rensley, Rural Carrier, FOR POSTMASTER.

5-4466 Route No. 1 Trip No. 413

MONEY RECEIVED FOR POSTAGE AND REGISTRY FEE IN LIEU OF STAMPS 8 Cents.

THIS ARTICLE WILL BE RETURNED IF NOT FULLY PREPAID AND OTHERWISE ACCEPTABLE WHEN RECEIVED AT THE POST OFFICE.

Registry Package Receipt provided by A Z Rensley, Carrier on RFD 1, Lagrangeville, NY June 9, 1902 From an earlier type Carbon Duplicating Manifold without Pre-Assigned Carrier Registered Article Numbers.

Night Window and Fancy Carrier Collection Marking



RFD 10 Corry, PA Jul 29, 1901 Turned in at Night Window upon Late Return of Carrier to Main Office
In July 1899 the POD expanded a pilot program by encouraging all large offices to maintain a Night Window with Registry Service.



RFD 19 Buchanan, Tenn May 19, 1905 Fancy Rural Delivery No. 19 Horse and Wagon Handstamp
After July 1, 1903 Rural Carriers were technically prohibited from cancelling mail they collected except when deliverable further along their route. This regulation was essentially ignored and carriers continued to postmark collected mail at their discretion without interference from Postmasters or the POD. Many bought or made their own fancy handstamps.
Some carriers skirted regulations and only used Route Number Handstamps to indicate collection on their routes.

Registry Service

Collected on Rural Route

Mailed at RFD Postal Station and on Rural Route Based from Postal Station



Frederica Postal Sta, Felton Del PO Mar 21, 1904

RFD Postal Station in the Kent County System

Frederica was an RFD Postal Station tributary to the Felton DE Post Office from 04/01/1901 – 11/15/1907



RFD 2 Melville Sta, Newport, RI Jun 1, 1903

Bearing all 3 requisite registry numbers

Melville was an RFD Postal Station tributary to the Newport RI Post Office from 07/01/1901 – 10/31/1904



RFD 3 Freeland, MD Sep 26, 1904

RFD 2 Cherokee, Iowa Jul 21, 1903

RFD 1 Lockbourne, Ohio Apr 2, 1902 Double Letter Rate

Registry to Foreign Destinations



RFD 3 Wilton, NH Jul 9, 1903

to Funchal, Madeira

Triple 5c UPU Foreign Letter Rate + 8c Registry Fee



RFD 1 Bomarton, Texas Jun 3, 1913

to Basutoland, South Africa

Return Address plus "Reg 10" Carrier receipt number in pencil and "525" Main Office number confirm rural route origin
Special Issue Registry Stamp pays Registry Fee

Form 1548 - Registry Return Receipt for Articles Mailed on Rural Route

This card must be neatly and correctly made up and addressed at the post office where the article is registered.
The postmaster who delivers the registered article must see that this card is properly signed, postmarked, and mailed to the sender.

Post Office Department.
OFFICIAL BUSINESS.
Penalty of \$300 for private use.

RETURN TO: *A Graham*
Name of Sender *RFD*
Street and Number, }
or Post Office Box. }

TUCSON,
ARIZONA.

Postmark of Delivery Office
and Date of Delivery.

This card must be neatly and correctly made up and addressed at the post office where the article is registered.
The postmaster who delivers the registered article must see that this card is properly signed, postmarked, and mailed to the sender.

Post Office Department.
OFFICIAL BUSINESS.
Penalty for private use to avoid payment of postage, \$300.

RETURN TO:
Name of Sender *Amanda Graham*
Street and Number, } *R.F.D. #1*
or Post Office Box. }

TUCSON,
ARIZONA.

Postmark of Delivery Office
and Date of Delivery.

CORNING
OCT
30
1908
630A.
IOWA.

Registry Return Receipts for Articles Mailed on RFD 1, Tucson, Arizona Territory in 1907 and 1908

A Form 1548 Registry Return Receipt accompanied the Registered Article, signed by the Recipient, and then mailed back to the Sender as evidence the Registered Article was successfully delivered.

Delivery Regulations

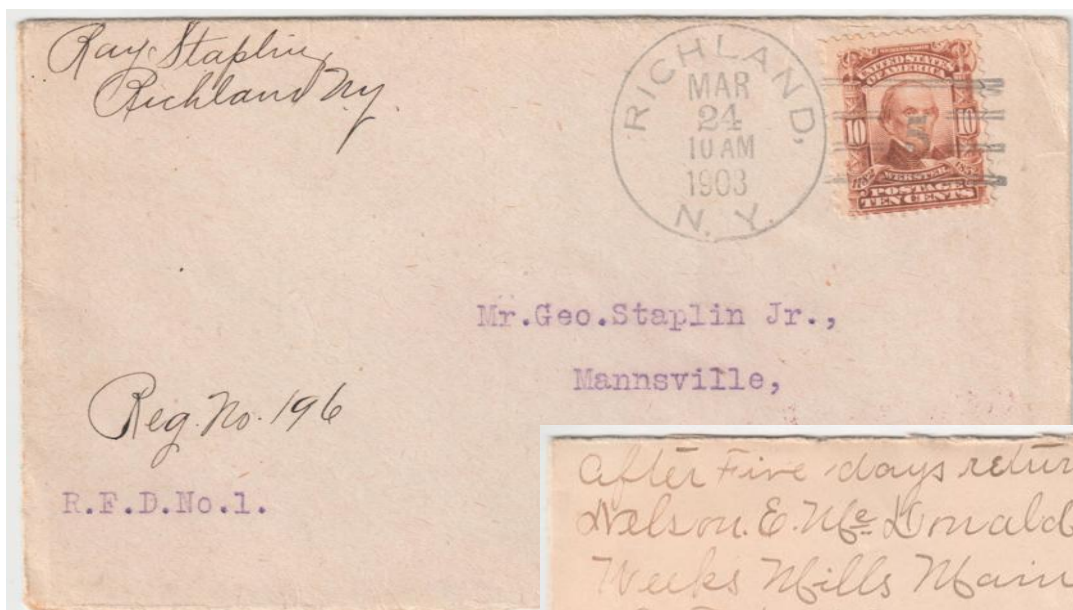
Since Rural Carriers did not Transit or Receipt Mark mail they delivered, it can only be assumed that mails address to routes were delivered by the carrier. Rural delivery of Registered Mail was one of only three instances where carriers were allowed to deviate from their route and drive up to the addressees residence or business. Delivery regulations for rural carriers were the same as for any other post office employee:

Delivery in hand to addressee or explicitly authorized agent

Form 1560 Carrier Delivery Book signed by recipient to acknowledge receipt from carrier

Form 1548 Registry Return Receipt signed by recipient if applicable and postmarked by the Carrier

Form 1525 Left in rural box if personal delivery could not be effected (no RFD examples known)



Registered Letter from Richland, NY to RFD 1, Mannsville, NY

Mar 24, 1908

Registered letter from RFD 1, Weeks Mills, ME to RFD 2, Liberty, ME

Oct 12, 1906

Form 1548 – Registry Return Receipt for Delivered Article

Signed by Addressee upon delivery and returned to the Sender evidencing successful delivery of the Article.

The image displays three examples of Form 1548, "Registry Return Receipt for Delivered Article," which are used to document the successful delivery of registered mail. Each form is a light brown card with a structured layout for recording delivery details.

Example 1 (Top): This form is for RFD 4 in Remsen, Iowa, dated April 27, 1904. The sender is "FARMERS STATE MUTUAL HAIL". The form includes instructions for the postmaster and the addressee, and a section for the return address.

Example 2 (Middle): This form is for RFD 1 in Warner, N.H., dated April 13, 1904. The sender is "L. B. Shaw". The form includes instructions for the postmaster and the addressee, and a section for the return address.

Example 3 (Bottom): This form is for RFD 3 in Decatur, Tenn., dated March 8, 1906. The sender is "J. W. Lillard". The form includes instructions for the postmaster and the addressee, and a section for the return address.

Each form contains the following text:

This card must be neatly and correctly made up and addressed at the post office where the article is registered. The postmaster who delivers the registered article must see that this card is properly signed, postmarked, and mailed to the sender.

Post Office Department. OFFICIAL BUSINESS. Penalty of \$300 for private use.

RETURN TO: Name of Sender, Street and Number, or Post Office Box, County.

Postmark of Delivering Office. and date of Delivery.

When the registered letter or parcel accompanying this card is delivered, the Postmaster will require signature to the receipt on the other side, also on his record of registered deliveries, and mail this card without cover to address below. A penalty of \$300 is fixed by law for using this card for other than official business.

Post Office Department. OFFICIAL BUSINESS. Post Office at. RETURN TO: Name of Sender, Street and Number, or Post Office Box, Post Office at, County of, State of.

RFD 4 Remsen, Iowa Apr 27, 1904

RFD 1 Warner, NH Apr 13, 1904 Between Rural Routes - sender lived on RFD 1, Andover, NH

RFD 3 Decatur, Tenn Mar 8, 1906 Manuscript by Carrier in Indelible Pencil

Form 1560 – Carrier Delivery Book

Signed by the addressee upon delivery of the Registered Article releasing Carrier and the POD from liability.

RECEIVED of _____

No. REGISTERED
LETTER OR PARCEL.

Letter Carrier at _____ P. O.,
described opposite _____

To WHOM ADDRESSED _____

Form 1560.

CARRIERS' REGISTRY DELIVERY BOOK.

INSTRUCTIONS TO CITY AND RURAL CARRIERS RELATIVE TO THE DELIVERY OF REGISTERED MAIL.

June 15, 1907.

Carrier's name and the name of the post office and State must be written, with ink, at the top of each page before entries are made. See sec. 866, par. 9.

Each regular carrier must have his own delivery book. When a regular carrier goes off duty for one or more trips, his delivery book should be turned over to the substitute serving his route, who will use this book in accordance with the instructions prescribed for the regular carrier. The last page used by the regular carrier must be closed when the substitute carrier takes the book (by drawing a diagonal line from the left of the last entry to the lower right-hand corner of the page), and the next page appropriately headed to show by whom the matter recorded thereon is delivered. Likewise, when the book is returned to the regular carrier the last page used by the substitute must be closed (as above indicated) and the next page appropriately headed.

City carriers are required to attempt the delivery of registered mail for persons residing in their respective districts on the first trip after it is prepared for delivery, unless the addressee has given orders to the contrary.

Carriers must enter descriptions of registered letters and parcels in this book with ink, reserving two lines for each entry; city carriers will enter street and number under name, unless the pieces are for well-known addressees. See sec. 866, pars. 10 and 11.

Signatures should be made with ink, if possible; otherwise with indelible pencil. See sec. 866, par. 12.

Registered mail must not be delivered to anyone but the person to whom it is addressed, or the person in whose care it is addressed, without a **written** order from the addressee, duly verified; and no exception can be made to this rule because of relationship of any nature between the addressee and the person claiming the matter. Written orders authorizing the delivery of registered mail to anyone other than the addressee may be for a specific letter or parcel, or they may cover all registered articles addressed to the person giving the order; except those the delivery of which to the **addressee in person** has been demanded by the sender in an indorsement upon the articles themselves. See sec. 858, pars. 1 and 2.

Registered mail indorsed for delivery to the addressee in person should be delivered to no one but him, not even upon his written order; and if it can not be so delivered it must be returned to the sender. See sec. 858, par. 3 as amended.

Registered mail addressed to a minor living with or under the control of his parents is, as a general rule, subject to the parents' control, unless it be indorsed for personal delivery, when the special rule applies. See sec. 858, par. 3 as amended, and par. 7.

Persons in whose **care** registered mail is directed may receive and receipt for it, without a written order, unless the addressee has specially directed otherwise. See sec. 858, par. 4.

Registered mail addressed to guests must never be delivered to the manager or clerk of a hotel, unless it is plainly directed in his care. See sec. 858, par. 5.

Registered mail addressed to a public officer, or to an officer of a corporation, by **his title**, should be delivered to the person holding the title addressed. See sec. 858, par. 8.

Identification must always be required where the applicant for registered mail is unknown; and in case of doubt, a ruling from the Department should be obtained. See sec. 858, par. 9.

If a registered article is receipted for by anyone other than the addressee, the name of the addressee followed by the signature of the recipient must appear in the receipts. See sec. 859.