

Rural free delivery marks 101st in Branford

Last year marked the 100th anniversary of U.S. Mail Rural Free Delivery. That service was not started in Branford until Feb. 1, 1902 when for the first time mail was delivered to Branford's outlying areas. Previous to that time, residents had to go to the post office in Branford center to get their mail. Short Beach and Pine Orchard also had their own post offices in the summer.

There were three routes — Route No. 1 to the western part of town (the carrier was Irving Morton); Route No. 2 to Pine Orchard, Damascus and part of North Branford (Burt Shepard); and Route No. 3 to

Queach and Brushy Plains (Royal G. Hoadley). Their salary was \$700 per year and they delivered the mail via horse and wagon and with a sleigh as needed.

In 1903, Irving Morton handled more mail than any other rural carrier in the state due to the influx of summer people. Of course, the carrier's visit was not just to deliver the mail, but was also a social event where the citizens received the news of the day. The carrier also sold stamps and wrote letters for people who could not write.

Burt Shepard remained the carrier for Route No. 2 for 30 years until his retirement in 1933. He rode a

horse for 23 years covering 21 miles a day. Two rural routes were combined into one in 1933 and his route was expanded to 33 miles a day. He was one of the last rural carriers in the state to use a horse, but when the last one named "Bobby" died in 1923, he bought a Ford to deliver the mail. During his career, he rode horseback, used a two-wheel gig, an open concord buggy, a mail wagon, a Ford, a Studebaker, a sleigh and a bicycle, but never walked.

The late Pearl (Blackstone) Milne stated that the delivery of the mail to Damascus was greatly anticipated every day and that Burt Shepard never missed a day due to weather or illness. The only time he was really late was during the blizzard on Feb. 19, 1934 when the only passable road to the area was East Main Street.

Rural delivery in Branford was discontinued just before World War II.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Jane Peterson Bouley is the town historian for Branford.



PICTURES
OF THE PAST

Jane P. Bouley

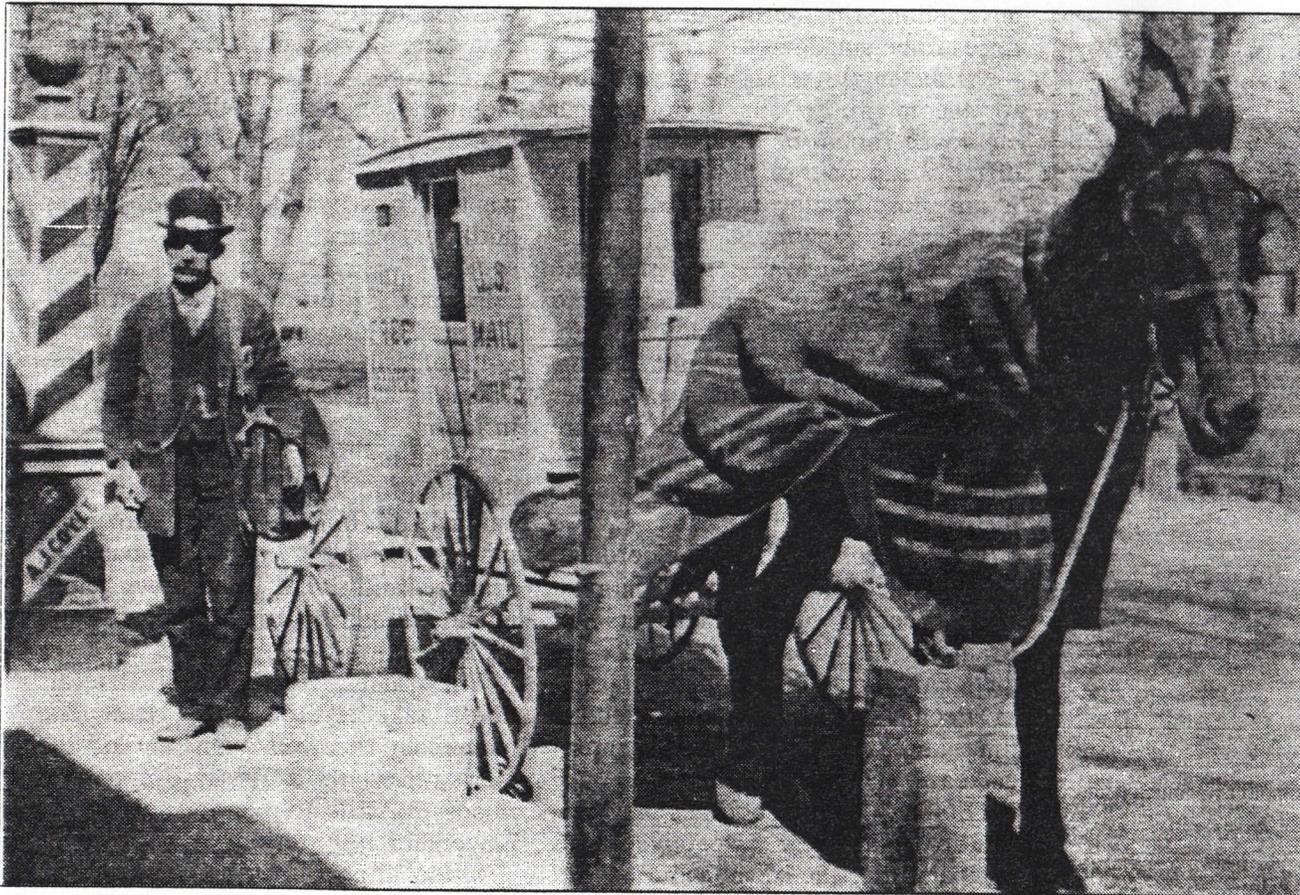


Photo courtesy Irving and Carol Hoadley

Royal G. Hoadley stands next to his U.S. Mail Rural Free Delivery wagon on Main Street in Branford at the turn of the century.