

Why We Work in Southwest Kansas, 2012 Tour

The arrival of the mail carrier was an event to the farmers and homesteaders of Southwest Kansas. Mail was often the only connection to family and friends left behind. The first mail carriers in Southwest Kansas were freighters who brought letters to specific stopping places and camps. Mail carriers transported mail in all kinds of weather by two-wheeled carts, buggies, wagons, and later, by automobile. But in addition to mail, these carriers often transported local information, passengers and light freight. Residents along the mail route often stopped the mail carrier in route to the next town to send for needed supplies or to ask the carrier to run errands for them.

Railroad companies greatly expanded mail transport service after 1862, and beginning in 1913, mail arrived via the Dodge City and Cimarron Valley Railroad. Later, the mail also arrived by bus from Dodge City and by auto and bus from Liberal.

The first post office at Hugoton opened in April 1886. By July, a mail line was established between Liberal and Hugoton and daily mail was carried between the two, with stops at other small communities' post offices. Seventeen post offices existed in Stevens County between 1886 and 1919. Only the Hugoton post office remains.

Postmasters were appointed by letter from the post office department or by announcement for indefinite periods until 1916, when terms were established. Women were frequently appointed postmasters of small rural post offices, with their numbers increasing in the last quarter of the 19th century. In Southwest Kansas, women were appointed to the position of postmaster as often as men.