

The crediting of letters, pamphlets, and newspapers is an act of the postmaster, at his own risk. Neither the Department nor the acts of Congress authorize the crediting of any sum that may be, through its officers, due to it; on the contrary, it requires that its officers shall be prompt when called on by the Department to pay over its collections: the propriety of which must be manifest to all. To release Mr. Walker from the payment due the Department in consideration of his loss, (it is not pretended that any part of that loss was the proceeds of his office collected,) would be, in the opinion of your committee, establishing a dangerous precedent, and opening a door for innumerable applications. Your committee, therefore,

*Resolve*, That it is inexpedient to grant the relief asked for.

22d CONGRESS.]

No. 124.

[2d Session.

REDUCTION OF THE RATES OF POSTAGE.

COMMUNICATED TO THE SENATE, JANUARY 22, 1833.

Mr. GRUNDY made the following report:

The Committee on the Post Offices and Post Roads, to whom was referred the resolution of the Senate of the 2d instant, directing an inquiry "into the expediency of reducing and equalizing the rates of postage, and particularly of abolishing the postage on newspapers," have had the same under consideration, and report:

That a majority of the committee, after the resolution was referred to them, determined, at their first meeting, that the transportation of the mail ought not to be made a charge upon the public treasury, and that the Department should rely exclusively upon its own resources, except the expenditures in the General Post Office. They accordingly directed the chairman to address a letter to the Postmaster General, asking his opinion and views as to what could be done, consistently with the principle laid down by the committee. A copy of that letter, and the answer of the Postmaster General, accompany this report; and, from the facts disclosed in the letter, the committee are of opinion that there is no such sufficient cause of complaint against the rates of postage now imposed by law as would justify any material reduction of them; especially when it is ascertained that such reduction would diminish mail accommodations, and thereby impair the usefulness of the Department. The committee, therefore, recommend the adoption of the following resolution:

*Resolved*, That it is inexpedient, at this time, to pass any act reducing or changing the rates of postage.

DEAR SIR:

SENATE CHAMBER, *January 7, 1833.*

I have been directed by the Committee on the Post Offices and Post Roads to transmit to you the enclosed resolution of the Senate, and to ask your opinion and views in relation to the several subjects embraced in said resolution. The committee have decided that the Post Office Department should rely exclusively upon its own resources for the transportation of the mail; and, of course, any reduction in the rates of postage should be made upon that principle, and not under the expectation that a deficiency would be supplied from the treasury of the United States.

Yours, with respect,

FELIX GRUNDY.

HON. WILLIAM T. BARRY, *Postmaster General.*

SIR:

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT, *January 19, 1833.*

In answer to your inquiry concerning my opinion and views in relation to the several subjects embraced in the resolution of the Senate passed the 2d instant, I have the honor to state:

From the earliest period of our Government, when the circulating medium of the country was much more limited, and consequently its nominal value much greater than at present, there has been no essential variation in the price of postage, as will appear from the following statements. The law of February, 1792, fixed the rates thus:

Postage on a single letter, for any distance not exceeding 30 miles, 6 cents.

Exceeding 30 miles, and not exceeding 60 miles, 8 cents.	
60	do. 100 " 10 "
100	do. 150 " 12½ "
150	do. 200 " 15 "
200	do. 250 " 17 "
250	do. 350 " 20 "
350	do. 450 " 22 "
450	do. 25 "

Newspaper postage, not exceeding 100 miles, 1 cent.

Exceeding 100 " 1½ "

The law was revised by Congress in May, 1794, and the same rates of postage were again determined upon, as above stated, in 1792.

The law of March 2, 1799, fixed the rates of postage as follows:

Single letter postage, for any distance not exceeding 40 miles, 8 cents.

Exceeding 40 miles, and not exceeding 90 miles, 10 cents.	
90	do. 150 " 12½ "
150	do. 300 " 17 "
300	do. 500 " 20 "
500	do. 25 "

Newspaper postage continued as before.

The law was revised in 1810, but no change made in the rates of postage.

From February 1, 1815, to March 31, 1816, 50 per cent. was added to all postages, for the purpose of raising a revenue in aid of the expenses of the war in which the country was then engaged.

In April, 1816, Congress established the rates as they now stand, to wit:

Single letter postage, for any distance not exceeding 30 miles, 6 cents.

Exceeding 30 miles, and not exceeding 80 miles, 10 cents.	
80	do. 150 " 12½ "
150	do. 400 " 18½ "
400	do. 25 "

Newspaper postage continued as before, except that the postage was reduced to one cent, though conveyed more than one hundred miles, if delivered in the same State in which it was printed.

In 1825 the law was revised, but the rates of postage were confirmed, as in 1816, above.

Under these circumstances, I was warranted in the conclusion that the rates of postage were so far settled, as that no important difference in their aggregate amount was to be contemplated. An experience of forty years, without producing an opposite conviction in the public mind, was deemed sufficient to justify the conclusion that the principle was settled. On this principle all the existing contracts for transporting the mails have been predicated. A reduction of the rates will, of course, require a very important reduction in the mail facilities of the country.

In relation to postage on newspapers, the consequence will be no less embarrassing. The expense of their transportation is very great, and their numbers are continually multiplying. It is an occurrence of almost every day, that more than a ton weight of newspapers is carried in one mail for hundreds of miles together, and at the rate of from eighty to upwards of a hundred miles a day; and if the postage on them shall be abolished, the number will be multiplied, and the expense of their transportation increased. It will probably be the means of superseding many of our village newspapers, by supplying their place with papers from the cities, which will render it difficult to provide for their rapid transportation at any expense.

The postages returned on newspapers for the year ending the 30th of June last amounted to \$254,796 64. If this sum shall be abstracted from the revenues of the Department, and the same or increased services still performed, it must be obvious that its present operations cannot be continued upon its own resources.

The conveyance of letters by mail affords a considerable revenue, with but little weight to transport. That revenue is the principal support of the Department. The conveyance of newspapers by mail gives a heavy weight to transport, with but a light revenue compared with their weight. If the revenue arising from letter postage shall be materially diminished, or if that arising from newspapers shall be abolished, it will be necessary so to abridge the mail facilities of the country, as that daily mails cannot be carried except between the principal commercial cities on the seaboard. The frequency and celerity of mail intercourse must almost every where be diminished; horse transportation must be substituted for that of mail coaches on many important routes; and distinct and more tardy methods must be adopted for transporting newspapers than letters. Such will be the inevitable consequences, unless provision shall be made to defray the expense from the treasury—a resort never solicited, never desired, and never given.

With these views, which are the result of certain calculation, the course which it will be most eligible to adopt is respectfully submitted to the wisdom of the committee.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

W. T. BARRY

Hon. FELIX GRUNDY,

*Chairman of the Committee on the Post Offices and Post Roads, U. S. Senate.*

[22d CONGRESS.]

No. 125.

[2d SESSION.]

#### INDEMNITY ASKED BY MAIL CONTRACTORS FOR THE LOSS OF A STAGE AND HORSES.

COMMUNICATED TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, FEBRUARY 6, 1833.

Mr. CONNOR, from the Committee on the Post Offices and Post Roads, to whom was referred the petition of Reeside and Robinson, reported:

That the petitioners set forth that they were contractors for carrying the mail from Montgomery Court-house, in Virginia, to Blountsville, in Tennessee; that, in January, 1829, in attempting to cross Reed creek, near Wythe Court-house, in Virginia, the waters being up, their horses were drowned, and stage and harness injured; for which loss and damage they ask of Congress remuneration. The committee view it, when an individual or individuals make a contract with the Post Office Department for the transportation of the mail, that they are to run the risk of loss and damage in stock, stages, &c.; the annual compensation given for the performance of the service is deemed to be satisfactory to the person or persons thus engaging. Your committee, therefore, believe it inexpedient, and *Resolve*, That the prayer of the petitioners be not granted.

[22d CONGRESS.]

No. 126.

[2d SESSION.]

#### APPLICATION FOR CARRYING THE MAIL ON THE OHIO AND MISSISSIPPI RIVERS IN STEAMBOATS.

COMMUNICATED TO THE SENATE, FEBRUARY 20, 1833.

*To the honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States in Congress assembled: Your memorialists, citizens of the town of Louisville, and commonwealth of Kentucky, respectfully represent:*

That an association or company has lately been formed by citizens of Louisville, Cincinnati, New Orleans, Pittsburg, and other places, composed of a number of their most wealthy, enterprising, and meritorious merchants and traders, under the name of the "Ohio and Mississippi Mail Line;" and, with a view to promote the best interests of commerce and navigation on the western waters, it has succeeded in establishing, at great expense, a line of packets between the cities of Cincinnati and New Orleans, consisting of a number of the largest and most commodious steamboats. The number of vessels necessarily employed in the carrying trade on the Mississippi and its tributaries; the loose and irregular manner of conducting, heretofore, this business; the many disastrous and fatal accidents