

It appears that it would be improper to release the memorialist from his contract, for another line of stages has been erected from Petersburg to Fayetteville, at great expense to the contractors, on the assurance that this contract had been made, and a reliance that it would be kept up. If this contract should be relinquished, it is not probable that another could be obtained on as good terms as this, with the addition required. If the stage should be wholly discontinued it would ruin the proprietors on the other line.

The Postmaster General is therefore of opinion that an additional allowance of four thousand two hundred dollars should be granted to the memorialist for the current year, and in that proportion for the remainder of his contract, deducting therefrom whatever may be received for stage fare between Fayetteville and Georgetown, over four thousand six hundred and thirty-one dollars a year, of which he ought to render proper accounts.

All which is respectfully submitted.

GIDEON GRANGER, *Postmaster General.*

The Hon. NATHANIEL MACON,
Speaker of the House of Representatives of the United States.

8th CONGRESS.]

No. 16.

[2d SESSION.

MAIL ROAD FROM WASHINGTON TO NEW ORLEANS.

COMMUNICATED TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, FEBRUARY 1, 1805.

To the House of Representatives of the United States:

For some weeks past I have had reason to expect, by every mail from New Orleans, information which would have fully met the views of the House of Representatives, expressed in their resolution of December 31, on the subject of a post road from the City of Washington to New Orleans; but this being not yet received, I think it my duty, without further delay, to communicate to the House the information I possess, however imperfect.

Isaac Briggs, one of the surveyors general of the United States, being about to return in July last to his station at Natchez, and apprised of the anxiety existing to have a practicable road explored for forwarding the mail to New Orleans, without crossing the mountains, offered his services voluntarily to return by the route contemplated, taking, as he should go, such observations of longitude and latitude as should enable him to delineate it exactly, and, by protraction, to show of what shortenings it would admit. The offer was accepted, and he was furnished with an accurate sextant for his observations. The route proposed was from Washington, by Fredericksburg, Cartersville, Lower Sauratown, Salisbury, Franklin Court House, in Georgia, Tuckaubatchee, Fort Stoddert, and the mouth of Pearl river, to New Orleans. It is believed he followed this route generally, deviating at times only for special purposes, and returning again into it. His letters, herewith communicated, will show his opinion to have been, after completing his journey, that the practicable distance between Washington and New Orleans will be a little over one thousand miles. He expected to forward his map and special report, within one week from the date of his last letter; but a letter of December 10, from another person, informs me he had been unwell, but would forward them within a week from that time. So soon as they shall be received, they shall be communicated to the House of Representatives.

February 1, 1805.

TH. JEFFERSON.

Col. Hawkins's Establishment, about two miles South of Tallapoosa river,
and five miles S. S. W. of the south easternmost bend of the river, 2d of the 10th month, 1804.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

No doubt it is matter of surprise that we proceed so slowly; indeed, when I undertook this journey, and the astronomical survey, I had no adequate anticipation of the difficulties, fatigues, and even dangers, through which we have so far struggled. They principally arise from the inauspicious season of the year in which we have made the attempt. Had I been gifted with foreknowledge, I think it would have put to the proof all my patriotism to have undertaken so arduous a task. Health, however, has been mercifully afforded to us, and I am induced to think that we can encounter difficulties with tolerable courage. We are disposed, with true French vivacity, to cry vive la république, and press forward.

I find, in making astronomical observations on my journey, an assistant absolutely necessary; without one of some intelligence the requisite degree of accuracy would be impracticable. I am therefore glad that I brought Thomas Robertson with me; his faithfulness, I hope, will be remembered and rewarded.

On the 2d ultimo I wrote to thee from Clarksborough, in Georgia, from whence we proceeded to General Meriwether's for information; whose kindness merits our warmest acknowledgment, in furnishing us with much useful information, a packhorse, and provisions for our journey, as far as Colonel Hawkins's, on Flint river. These preparations necessarily delayed us four days. On the 6th we departed from General Meriwether's, and after wandering many miles astray in the wilderness, we arrived on the 8th at the store of an Indian trader, about thirty-one miles from General Meriwether's. Here we were delayed two days by severe and stormy weather; sometimes the ear could scarcely distinguish an interval between the sound of one falling tree and that of another. Having made many fruitless efforts to procure a guide to Colonel Hawkins's, on the 10th we proceeded without one. From thence to Colonel Hawkins's, (a distance of about sixty miles) we travelled or rather wandered at least one hundred and twelve miles, frequently climbing over precipices, wandering through swamps, and crossing the deep and difficult water courses, many miles without a path, our horses greatly incommoded and fatigued by sensitive briars and other vines. Our provisions were soon wet and spoiled, and we were in danger of starving, not having seen a human face except each other's, for more than four days: on the 15th we arrived at Colonel Hawkins's, on Flint river.

From Colonel Hawkins we received the most polite and friendly treatment, and every assistance in his power. He informed us that, had we made the attempt sooner in the season, it would have been impossible for us to have passed through, for the scarcity of provisions has been such that the nation has been almost in a state of famine—and that the large horse flies would have destroyed our horses; having actually killed many.

The Colonel having furnished us with a packhorse, provisions, and a guide, on the 20th we proceeded, and on the 27th we arrived here, (one hundred and twenty miles) after a journey the most laborious, both to ourselves and our horses. There having fallen a very heavy rain after we left Flint river, we found the rivers, creeks, and low ground, so full of water, so rapid, and so entangled with vines, as to threaten almost a certainty of drowning our horses, if not ourselves, should we attempt to cross before the waters had subsided, so that we could see by the bushes the course of the path. Our horses swam the Chattahoochee river from shore to shore, and six creeks between that and this place. In short, we arrived here much fatigued.

I had an idea that I could pass through this country without a path or a guide, but when I mentioned it on the frontiers of Georgia, it was scouted and laughed at, and I am now firmly of opinion that, in this way, it would be at least

a *four months'* passage from Georgia to New Orleans. I have at this place seen two of the principal chiefs of the nation, Oche Hajo, and Esau Hajo; they appear to be very friendly, and well disposed towards the United States. They have taken me by the hand, and offered me full protection, and every accommodation in their power. To Oche Hajo, whom I believe to be a man of intelligence and integrity, I mentioned the subject of the road through their nation, and he expressed a full concurrence with me in the opinion, that the facility of intercourse which such a road would occasion, would be highly beneficial to the red people as well as to the white.

I have made some very satisfactory astronomical observations at this place and at Flint river. For the longitude of this place I have a mean of eight sets, and for that of Flint river of four sets, of lunar observations, carefully made in favorable circumstances; for that of Franklin C. H. a mean of three sets, snatched in the intervals between flying clouds, but pretty good. The latitude of all those places, and many others, well ascertained.

Finding from unexpected and insurmountable delays, that my report will be unavoidably much later in coming to thy hands than I contemplated, I am anxious to employ every moment of my time, when I am not on horseback, taking refreshment, or with the instrument in my hands, in *calculating* the observations, that I may have the less to do after I shall have arrived at New Orleans.

Accept assurances, &c. &c.

ISAAC BRIGGS.

P. S. 3d, in the morning, we are just about to mount our horses, and expect to be at Fort Stoddert in six or seven days.

PRESIDENT of the United States.

NEW ORLEANS, 26th of the 11th month, 1804.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

I am just arrived here, in safety and good health, after a journey, the unavoidable delays, embarrassments, and fatigues of which, I had no anticipation.

I wrote to thee on the 2d of the 10th month, from the south easternmost projection of Tallapoosa river, which I call Point Comfort. Next morning (3d) we left Point Comfort, and proceeding on the southeast side of Alabama river, nearly parallel with its course, we arrived, on the 9th, at the house of Nathaniel Christmas, on the west side of the Tombigbee river, about two miles above its confluence with Alabama. At this place I received certain intelligence that the yellow fever at this time raged in New Orleans with uncommon violence, and was peculiarly fatal to visitants from other places: so that I deemed it prudent to delay my entrance into that city until a change in the weather, and future intelligence, should offer me some prospect of safety. I had also, on the very day of my arrival here, another visit from my old acquaintance the autumnal intermittent fever. For these reasons I remained on Tombigbee three weeks, industriously employing all the time my indisposition allowed me, in calculating the geographical position of places on my route. Although my arrival in New Orleans has been several weeks later, my report on the post road will not be one day delayed by my remaining on Tombigbee.

On the 29th ultimo we left Tombigbee, passing through the town of Mobile; we crossed Pascagoula river near its mouth, passed round the bays of Biloxi and St. Louis, to Pearl river, about ten miles above its mouth. From thence we passed down Pearl river, through the rigolets and lake to New Orleans. On this part of our route, (a distance of about two hundred miles) we were twenty-five days. To give some idea of the difficulties we have encountered, besides the insurmountable delays of transporting our horses over rivers several miles wide, where there are no ferries, I will mention the progress we made in one fatiguing, industrious, and laborious day's travelling, when, entangled among impassable and boggy drains, which are very frequent, and of considerable length, we encamped at night about three miles from our encampment on the preceding night. Yet these obstacles might be easily overcome by a little labor, and a road, in my opinion, may be made on the route which we have contemplated, with much less expense, and far superior to the best gravelled turnpike in the Middle States. The practicable distance from the city of Washington to this place, will be very little more than one thousand miles.

By next mail I expect to send on a full report, with a map, and then proceed immediately to the Mississippi territory.

Accept assurances, &c.

ISAAC BRIGGS.

The PRESIDENT of the United States.

CLARKSBOROUGH, IN GEORGIA, 2d of the 9th month, 1804.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

Attending to the necessary observations, under the frequent interruption of clouds, keeping a regular series of notes, and the rest absolutely requisite to repair the fatigues of travelling in weather so extremely hot as we have had it, have prevented us from making a more rapid progress on our journey, and have compelled me to be a much less attentive correspondent than I expected, or intended to have been.

By our reckoning, Franklin Court House is five hundred and sixty-seven miles from the city of Washington, and the arch of a great circle from thence to New Orleans, about four hundred and seventy-five miles.

In order to obtain some important information from General Meriwether respecting our route, we are here about twenty miles to the left of our course.

In consequence of the labor of making astronomical observations, and of the hot weather, I have found this, I think, both to body and mind, the most fatiguing journey I ever undertook. However, if I shall be so fortunate as to give satisfaction to my friend the President, it will be a rich reward.

Accept assurances, &c.

ISAAC BRIGGS.

The PRESIDENT of the United States.

MAIL ROAD FROM WASHINGTON TO NEW ORLEANS.

COMMUNICATED TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, FEBRUARY 23, 1805.

To the House of Representatives of the United States:

In further compliance with the desire of the House of Representatives, expressed in their resolution of December 31, I now transmit the report and map of Isaac Briggs, referred to in my message of the first instant, and received by the last post from New Orleans.

FEBRUARY 23, 1805.

TH: JEFFERSON.