

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.

NEW ORLEANS, 22d of the 12th month, 1804.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

Although still in a state of convalescence, and but just able to attend to business a few minutes at a time, I am fortunate enough to have finished a map of my route from the city of Washington, to this place. I send it in a tin case by the same mail with this letter. Several weeks ago it wanted but the labor of a few hours of health to complete it. Having written to thee (on the 26th of last month) immediately on my arrival here, promising to send my report and map by the next ensuing mail, I applied myself with assiduity to the work. But early in the progress of it, I experienced an attack of sickness perhaps the most severe in the course of my life—I was brought to the very verge of death. My anxiety, however, to finish my report in season, induced me to apply to it at intervals during my sickness; which was probably prolonged and rendered worse by that exertion.

The length of time employed in my journey, (almost four months) so very far beyond what I contemplated, will, I fear, naturally excite surprise that I have ascertained the geographical position of so few places as I have done. This idea, added to the deep anxiety which has ever filled my mind, not only to do my duty faithfully, but to give satisfaction, makes me extremely solicitous that the embarrassments which retarded my progress should be understood, and, I am apprehensive, renders me prolix. Many causes of delay have had their full effect, notwithstanding my most honest endeavors to prevent it—probably to the injury of my constitution. Some of them have been already detailed in former communications to thee: permit me now to exhibit some of another kind.

When a single celestial object is observed with a large instrument, a small space of clear sky about that object, and for a moment, is sufficient. When two celestial objects are necessary to the same observation (as for the longitude) both must be clearly seen at the same instant, and the chance of disappointment is more than fourfold: their altitudes must be taken as well as their distance, and when all this must be done with one instrument, the serenity of atmosphere must be of some continuance. For taking an altitude on land, an artificial horizon, consisting of a reflecting fluid surface, is necessary; if this surface has not the protection (as mine had not) of a suitable transparent cover, a slight breeze will render the whole observation abortive even in the clearest atmosphere. When the instrument is small (as is that which I used) the operation in all its parts must be many times repeated for the greater certainty of a mean, which renders indispensable the concurrence of all those favorable circumstances for at least an hour. Thus my chances of disappointment were multiplied almost beyond calculation. I was therefore soon reduced to the alternative of relinquishing the idea of ascertaining the position of any but the most important places, or of protracting my report far beyond the proper period. I have frequently sat nearly a whole night, exposed to a heavy dew, and in the day time for hours to a burning sun, in both cases without the protection of my hat, anxiously watching for a momentary interval of a little clear sky and calm atmosphere; and have been often at last disappointed. Considering these and many other exposures to heat, wet, cold, bad provisions, &c. it is a matter of wonder and of gratitude to a merciful God that my health was not sooner destroyed.

Permit me, as the result of my observations, and of the best judgment I can form, to suggest the propriety of establishing, at this time, only the following places as points in the main road, leaving them to be connected hereafter by an actual survey, under the direction of a good judge.

- Fredericksburg,
- Cartersville, } In Virginia.
- Danville, }
- Salisbury, in North Carolina.
- Athens, in Georgia.
- Point Comfort, southeasternmost projection of Tallapoosa river, (Creek nation.)
- Mobile river, just below the confluence of Alabama and Tombigbee.
- New Orleans.

The bearings and distances of the undernamed places, according to my observations, are as follows: they are strictly calculated on the principles of spherical trigonometry—each respective distance is the length, in British statute miles, of the arch of a great circle of the earth, (or what is commonly called a horizontal air-line) terminating in each place. The bearings are the angles of this arch, with a true meridian at each of its extremities.

	Distance.
From Washington, New Orleans bears - - - - - S. 54° 13' 47" W.	} 965.0 miles.
" New Orleans, Washington bears - - - - - N. 46 48 15 E.	
" Washington, Fredericksburg bears - - - - - S. 19 22 29 W.	} 49.1
" Fredericksburg, Washington bears - - - - - N. 19 11 28 E.	
" Fredericksburg, Salisbury bears, - - - - - S. 50 39 17 W.	} 268.6
" Salisbury, Fredericksburg bears - - - - - N. 48 26 4 E.	
" Salisbury, Franklin Court House bears - - - - - S. 58 41 12 W.	} 179.6
" Franklin Court House, Salisbury bears - - - - - N. 57 10 7 E.	
" Franklin Court House, Point Comfort bears - - - - - S. 46 54 30 W.	} 196.2
" Point Comfort, Franklin Court House bears - - - - - N. 45 33 26 E.	
" Point Comfort, M. of Alabama bears - - - - - S. 52 39 39 W.	} 143.4
" M. of Alabama, Point Comfort bears - - - - - N. 51 38 51 E.	
" M. of Alabama, New Orleans bears - - - - - S. 56 31 47 W.	} 142.6
" New Orleans, M. of Alabama bears - - - - - N. 55 31 12 E.	
Whole distance, - - - - -	979.5 miles.

Latitudes and Longitudes, assuming the President's House as the zero of Longitude.

	Latitude.	Longitude.
Washington, - - - - -	38° 53' 00"	0° 00' 00"
Fredericksburg, - - - - -	38 12 43	0 18 00
Salisbury, - - - - -	35 41 43	4 00 00
Franklin Court House, - - - - -	34 21 12	6 41 20
Clarksborough, - - - - -	33 57 30	0 00 00
Hawkins's, on Flint river, - - - - -	32 39 00	7 25 11
Point Comfort, on Tallapoosa, - - - - -	32 23 19	9 8 38
Mouth of Alabama, - - - - -	31 6 57	11 4 48
New Orleans, - - - - -	29 57 45	13 3 30

Of the ground on which the road at present passes from Washington, through Fredericksburg, Cartersville, Danville, &c. to Salisbury, in North Carolina, it will not be necessary for me to say much, as I presume it is well known by several gentlemen in Congress. I shall, therefore, only refer to portions of it, by way of comparison, to explain my idea of those parts of the route which may be less known.

If I may judge by the ground over which I travelled from Columbia, at the Point of Fork, to Cumberland Court House, I think it will not do to cross James river higher than Cartersville—by doing so, a greater distance, in my opinion, must be encountered in meandering to avoid hills, than in the small and regular deflexion from the general course, occasioned by crossing at Cartersville. This deflexion will make the distance somewhat greater than I have given it from Fredericksburg to Salisbury; but by passing through Athens, instead of by Franklin Court House, the distance from Salisbury to Point Comfort will be somewhat less; so as to make the whole distance nearly as stated.

Athens is the seat of the university of Georgia. A straight road from Salisbury to this place, will, from the best information I could obtain, pass over better ground than from Salisbury to Franklin Court House, which is somewhat

hilly. By Athens, the road will be not much inferior to that from Fredericksburg to Salisbury, and far superior to that from Washington to Fredericksburg, which is much the worst part of the whole route.

From Athens to Point Comfort the road will pass nearly on the track on which General Meriwether travelled from Tuckaubatchee to his own habitation. To him, therefore, I refer for information respecting this part of the route.

From Point Comfort to Mobile river is (excepting a few swamps of no very great extent, which must be causewayed) a fine, high, level, sandy ridge. From Mobile river to New Orleans is nearly a perfect level; the soil is, almost without exception, a sandy loam, which receives, when moderately moist, by treading or beating, a degree of firmness nearly equal to a brick.

Perhaps thirty or forty miles of this part of the route must be thrown into a ridge several feet higher than the common surface; and after this ridge is made, a constant attention to all parts of it will be necessary, for several years, to maintain its regular convexity against accidental indentures; and then it would, in my opinion, acquire a firmness which would render it impenetrable by the heaviest rains: for they would instantly roll off. The necessity of this expense is not peculiar to the proposed road: for it is impossible to arrive at New Orleans by a good road: in any direction: without an equal expense.

A survey, from New Orleans to the mouth of Alabama, appears to me indispensable, in order to find the best ground, the best crossings of rivers, with the least augmentation of distance. Notwithstanding a survey of this part strikes me as of primary importance, because least known, yet I wish not to be understood as relinquishing my belief of the expediency of a survey of the whole route.

When it is considered that the small distance from Ocoquan to Fredericksburg is by much the most uneven ground, and that, except a few small parts, all the remainder of this route is equal to the proverbial good road from Cartersville to Salisbury, I think it must be granted that few, if any, other parts of the world admit of a road equally good and equally direct, for so small an expense.

The whole distance, in air measure, as already stated, is, in whole numbers, nine hundred and eighty miles. Considering the uncommon evenness of surface, I think five per cent. will be an ample allowance for the actual road, which will make it one thousand and twenty-nine miles.

I can vouch for the accuracy of the accompanying map in the vicinity only of the path which I travelled; it is a dotted line, and painted yellow. The black line is the proposed road. The direct air line from Washington to New Orleans is also dotted, and is made the basis of the projection. The county of Washington, in the Mississippi Territory, is laid down from actual survey. All other parts are laid down from the best maps and documents I could procure.

I am distressed that I have not been able to write to the Secretary of the Treasury before now. As soon as I am able to ride, I will leave this place for the Mississippi Territory, when I will immediately write to him, if want of health should not render it impossible. In the mean time, I see no way in which the survey of the United States' land can be done by an honest man, who values his own reputation and the good of his country, unless Congress will consent to allow a compensation to deputies, which may, in certain cases, be extended to at least eight dollars per mile.

I will, hereafter, send an account of my expenses; at present it must give place to matters of more importance. With the utmost economy, it amounts to more than three hundred dollars for myself and companion.

Accept assurances of my esteem and affectionate wishes for thy happiness.

ISAAC BRIGGS.

THOMAS JEFFERSON, *President of the United States.*

9th CONGRESS.]

No. 18.

[1st Session.]

### CLAIM OF A MAIL CONTRACTOR FOR ADDITIONAL ALLOWANCE.

COMMUNICATED TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, MARCH 3, 1806.

The Postmaster General, in obedience to the order of the House of Representatives, passed on the 28th day of February last, on the petition of Henry Weist, of Baltimore county, Maryland, respectfully reports:

That the said Henry Weist did transport the mail of the United States from the city of Baltimore to Carlisle, from the 1st day of October, 1803, to the 1st day of October, 1804, and that he hath received no pecuniary consideration therefor; and he further reports that, for the year next preceding the 1st of October, 1803, the said Weist, and one Henry Clapsaddle, were joint contractors for the transportation of the mail between the same places; during which year, a misunderstanding arose between said partners, which terminated in an irreconcilable disagreement; that, on the 1st day of July, 1803, the said route being then to be let, from October 1st, 1803, to October 1st, 1804, the said Clapsaddle and Weist personally attended at the General Post Office, and all endeavors by the Postmaster General and others to terminate their differences being rendered fruitless by the passions of the parties, the Postmaster General declared that he considered them both good contractors, and that that one should have the contract who would perform the service on the best terms for the United States: whereupon, the said Clapsaddle offered to perform the service for fifty dollars per annum, and the said Weist offered to perform the same service for the benefit that would accrue to him from being entrusted with the carriage of the mail; and thereupon the Postmaster General decided that the said Weist was entitled to the contract, upon which, the said Weist entered into covenant and bond with the General Post Office to convey the said mail for the term of one year, "for and in consideration of the benefit that will accrue to said Weist from said mail," as will appear by his original covenant and bond, now in the General Post Office.

Upon this statement of facts, it is the opinion of the Postmaster General that the said Henry Weist is not entitled to any pecuniary compensation for said service, and that his petition ought not to be granted. All which is respectfully submitted.

GIDEON GRANGER, *Postmaster General.*

GENERAL POST OFFICE, *March 3d, 1806.*