

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.*