

A view of the progress of the Post Office Department.

The several periods referred to.	Number of Post Offices.	Length of the Post Roads.	Weekly transportation of the mail in carriages, furnished for the accommodation of travellers.	Weekly transportation of the mail in sulkies and on horseback.	Amount of the weekly transportation of the mails.	Amount of the yearly transportation of the mails.
		<i>Miles.</i>	<i>Miles.</i>	<i>Miles.</i>	<i>Miles.</i>	<i>Miles.</i>
March 3, 1793,*	195	5,624	8,567	7,662	16,229	845,468
March 3, 1797, -	539	14,226	14,902	19,708	34,610	1,799,720
March 3, 1801, †	957	21,840	24,490	34,380	58,870	3,057,964
January 24, 1803, -	1,283	24,458	30,172	37,228	67,400	3,504,800
January, 1807, ‡	1,848	31,616	41,528	45,000	86,528	4,499,456

GIDEON GRANGER, *Postmaster General.*GENERAL POST OFFICE, *January 12, 1807.*

*Since the 24th January, 1803, the convenience, utility, and security of mail coaches have been extended in different parts of the United States, over post roads to the distance of three thousand and eighty-five miles, where they never had been contemplated previous to that period.

†Since the 3d of March, 1801, the post roads have increased 44½ per cent. The establishment of mail coaches has been increased 69½ per cent. The daily transportation of the mail by stages has increased two thousand four hundred and twenty-seven miles, and the whole daily transportation of the mail has increased three thousand nine hundred and fifty miles.

‡Of which distance it is carried in stages, 2,159,456 miles,
and on horseback, or in sulkies, - 2,340,000 do.

4,499,456 do.

Which proves that the daily progress of the mail exceeds twelve thousand three hundred and twenty-seven miles each day in the year.

NOTE.—For a view of the Post Office Department, for preceding and subsequent years, see Nos. 10 and 24.

11th CONGRESS.]

No. 22.

[2d SESSION.]

REVISION OF THE POST OFFICE LAWS.

COMMUNICATED TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, FEBRUARY 22, 1810.

To the Honorable the House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled, the Postmaster General reports:

That, in obedience to the resolution of the 28th of June last, he herewith transmits a bill for an act, entitled "An act regulating the Post Office establishment," which he has caused to be printed with marginal notes, referring to the various statutes from which he has compiled the same; and, to render more clear what he proposes as additions and amendments to the existing laws, the former are printed in smaller type, and the latter in italics; but the 39th section of the bill ought not to have been in small type, and the italics in the 25th section were unnecessary.

The following contrast will still further lessen the labor of investigation, and give a clear view of the differences between the existing laws and the provisions of the bill. The law authorizes the appointment of one assistant Postmaster General: the bill authorizes the appointment of two, and invests the power of the Postmaster General, in case of a vacancy in that office, in the senior assistant. The law vests no power in the Postmaster General to appoint agents with the right to frank: the bill gives him this power. The law inflicts a fine, not exceeding ten dollars, on any ferryman who shall wilfully detain the mail half an hour: the bill inflicts the same for a wilful detention of ten minutes. The law directs the Postmaster General to publish for contracts in the States where the routes are: the bill extends the direction to the territories.

By the law of the land, a Postmaster is liable to refund what he may receive over legal postage on a letter, although he receives only what was charged thereon, and in the post bill; by the bill, he is exonerated from this demand, unless the letter be opened in his or his clerk's presence. This will be a safeguard to this office and to the officer; and the rights of the citizen are sufficiently secured, as it is made criminal, knowingly, to demand more than legal postage.

The law compels masters of vessels, on arrival at any port, to deliver to the Postmaster of that port all letters directed to any person in the United States, except, &c.: the bill extends this provision to letters addressed to citizens of the territories. It also inflicts a fine, not exceeding one hundred dollars, on any master who shall neglect to comply with this regulation; thereby securing an obedience to the law in cases where the master is not bound to make entry at the custom house.

The law does not prohibit the setting up and maintaining a stage sleigh, and conveying letters, &c. on or near a post route: the bill cures this defect.

The law inflicts a penalty on any person who shall carry letters in a regular packet boat, or other vessel, from one place to another, between which a regular communication *by water* shall be established: in the bill, the words "by water" are omitted, and the prohibition is extended to and from all places between which there is, or may be, a regular communication established by law. Should water mails become necessary, this office has power to create and establish them.

The agents of this office are not by statute liable to any punishment for stealing or embezzling any contract, covenant, or agreement, for the payment of money, or the delivery of any article or thing, &c. &c.: the bill makes

it penal to steal or embezzle either of these writings, and a similar extension is introduced in the next paragraph in relation to the thefts and embezzlements of any other person. The law inflicts a penalty on any mail carrier who shall desert his mail before he delivers it to the next Post Office: the bill compels him to deliver it at the end of his route, or to a known agent of this office employed in transporting the same. The law, in several instances, enjoins whipping as a necessary part of the punishment: in the bill, it is omitted in every instance. Within the last eight years, it is believed this part of the law has never been executed; to retain it, therefore, is a favor to the offender, by lessening the duration of his confinement, as courts are bound to consider whipping a part of the punishment.

In the 20th section of the bill, the courts are empowered to imprison, in one case, three, and, in another, seven, years; where, by law, they are authorized to inflict thirty stripes and two years' imprisonment.

The law inflicts no punishment for injuring the mail, portmanteaus, or locks: the bill inflicts a fine or imprisonment.

The law does not punish aiders or abettors: the bill inflicts on them the same punishment as on the principal offenders.

The law subjects to hard labor all who are sentenced to confinement for stealing, embezzling, or robbing any letter of value, &c. &c.: the bill extends this punishment to those who wilfully destroy the portmanteaus, &c. and to aiders and abettors.

The law vests a discretion in the Postmaster General to demand a quarter's postage upon newspapers in advance: the bill compels him to make this demand.

These additions and alterations, except the first and second, require no further comment.

It is unpleasant to any officer of Government to propose an extension of his powers, but, when he is called by a resolution of Congress to express his opinions as to the advancement of the public interest in the office confided to his care, considerations more important than can result from feelings of delicacy render it his duty to speak without reserve.

From the rapid progress of this establishment, it has become nearly impracticable for the present officers to perform their duties with that promptitude which, from the nature of the service, is essential; and the distance of many parts of the nation from this centre of action renders it impossible, without the aid of known agents, speedily to correct the errors which occasionally will arise.

In 1798, the gross amount of postage was less than two hundred and thirty-three thousand dollars; in 1808, it exceeded four hundred and sixty thousand dollars. When the last general law on this subject was passed, (March, 1799) there were not more than five hundred and fifty Post Offices; now they exceed two thousand. Then there were not sixteen thousand miles of post road; now there are more than thirty-three thousand. Then the mail coaches did not travel over twenty-three thousand miles weekly; now their travel exceeds fifty-one thousand miles. Then the yearly transportation of the mails did not equal two millions of miles; now it equals five millions. Then it required to write from Portland to Savannah, and receive an answer, forty days; now it requires twenty-seven. Then it required thirty-two days between Philadelphia and Lexington, (Kentucky); now it requires sixteen. Then it required forty-four days between Philadelphia and Nashville; now it requires thirty. Then it required, between New York and Canandaigua, twenty days; now twelve. And most, if not all, the other mails, have been expedited proportionably, according to their relative importance.

There were then employed in the General Post Office nine persons; now there are fifteen employed.

He also transmits a bill, entitled "An act to establish post roads," which comprises nearly the whole post roads that are now established by any act of Congress, and all such as, in his opinion, ought to be continued. The roads are exhibited under districts, to facilitate the detection of error; and references to the several connexions are furnished in figures.

In discharging this part of the duty assigned him, he has been influenced, generally, to assume the present state of this establishment by the following considerations:

1st. From the nature of our Government, it becomes a matter of the highest importance to furnish the citizens with full and correct information, and, independent of political considerations, the interests of society will be best promoted, particularly in the interior, by extending to it the facilities of this office. Nor can the seaboard complain, as it puts a profit on all that the interior produces for exportation, and on all it consumes from foreign countries.

2d. The unproductive routes have heretofore been reported, according to law, and have not been discontinued.

3d. The steady increase of postage received from the interior furnishes a reasonable ground to believe that, at a period not very distant, the revenue to be from thence derived will equal the expense of their routes, except the great connecting lines, which are essential to Government. But, although the present condition of the establishment is in general confirmed by the bill, still some few offices will be discontinued, where the expense bears no reasonable proportion to their utility; and, in every instance, by the new roads proposed, greater and more useful facilities are granted to the citizens of the State or territory.

The bill also proposes some new post roads; they may be thus classed:

1. Where the benefit of this establishment can be extended to a considerable portion of citizens without an increase of expenditure.

2. Where there is reason to calculate that the products of the route will equal, or nearly equal, the expenditure it will occasion.

3. Where salt works and other factories have been established, which are of great public convenience and utility.

Where new counties have been formed, and new seats of justice established; and the Postmaster General submits to the consideration of Congress whether it would not have a tendency to facilitate the views of Government, and to lessen the applications to Congress, if the Postmaster General was authorized by law to run a mail from the nearest Post Office to any new seat of justice which hereafter may be established, in case such seat of justice should not be on any existing post road.

The various applications to Congress for post roads have been before this office for consideration. They embrace a great extent of roads, and would require a large additional expenditure, which, at this time, this office is not in a condition to bear. The bill embraces every new road which, in the opinion of the Postmaster General, ought now to be established. If Congress should grant these routes, it may become necessary to increase the postage, or to furnish funds directly from the treasury, or to reduce the number or speed of the mails on the present routes.

It is essentially necessary for this office to be furnished with two additional rooms; and the Postmaster General takes the liberty to remark that the extra compensation allowed to the Postmaster of this city by the act of May, 1802, ought to be continued; and that a striking difference exists between the provision made for this office and that for the other offices, which doubtless has arisen from this consideration: that the labors of most of the other offices have diminished or remained stationary, while in this office they have increased nearly one hundred and fifty per cent. The difference is this: In the other offices, the full amount of the salary of the clerks is estimated in favor of the officers in the general grant, and the fifteen per cent. enables the officer to reward superior merit, and to defray the expenses of any extra services which might become necessary; but, in this office, the fifteen per cent. is a constituent part of the regular salaries of the clerks, and no fund remains subject to the discretion of the Postmaster General, either to defray the expenses of extra services, or to furnish the common evidence of approbation to the gentlemen by him employed, to which evidence it is believed they are as fully entitled as their brethren in any other office.

No law exists by which a witness residing in one district can be compelled to attend any court in another district, in support of any criminal prosecution, or by which the public prosecutor can avail himself of the testimony of such witness. This defect very seriously threatens the interests of this office and of those who, through it, transact their business. There are now two prosecutions pending for robberies of the mail, and no reasonable doubt remains of the guilt of the accused; yet this office, at great expense, has unsuccessfully labored to produce the conviction of the offenders. At present, our principal security is, that this defect is not generally known.

But, as it extends to all other offences, as well as to those against the Post Office laws, the Postmaster General believed it to be improper in him to introduce any provision on the subject in the Post Office bill. He, however, solicits Congress to provide some suitable remedy. All which is respectfully submitted.

GIDEON GRANGER, *Postmaster General.*