

accounts of long standing, the delinquent Postmasters, and their sureties, have been found insolvent, and the costs of suit have been consequently paid by the Department. To avoid, as far as possible, a useless expenditure of this kind, the attorney of the United States is now requested, when an account of some years' standing is sent to him for collection, not to commence suit, if, on inquiry, he shall find that the principal and his surety are insolvent. To issue process in such a case would subject the Department to a bill of costs, without answering any valuable object to the public. In a short time all demands against delinquent Postmasters will be in suit, where there exists any probability that more than the costs can be collected.

The improvement which has been made in the revenue of this Department, for the past year, authorizes the opinion that it will be able to meet an increased expenditure, by affording additional mail accommodations on established routes, or by transporting the mail on new routes which Congress may think proper to establish.

There are many routes, now in operation, which require a greater expenditure than any advantage arising to the public would seem to justify. If these were discontinued, and other routes of more general utility established, the public convenience would be greatly promoted, without adding to the expenditure of the Department. A judicious revision of the mail routes, and of the law regulating the Post Office Department, will enable it, in a very short time, not only to send the mail into every populous neighborhood of the Union, but to give every accommodation which may be desirable to the important commercial points.

The money lately appropriated by Congress to repair so much of the mail route, from Nashville, in Tennessee, to New Orleans, as passes through the Indian country, and which was placed, by your direction, at the disposition of this Department, has been applied to the object intended, except five hundred and ninety dollars and six cents.

As a small sum of money was to be expended in repairing a road of great length, and as the public interest required that the repairs should be made the whole extent, so as to remove all obstructions to the transportation of the mail, it was deemed important, before the commencement of the work, to ascertain the nature and extent of those obstructions. This was done by the person appointed to make the repairs; and, in making them, streams of water, which were occasionally rendered impassable to the mail, by high water, were bridged; and swamps, which were also sometimes impassable, were causewayed. The work, it is believed, has been faithfully executed, and at such places on the route as most required it.

After the work was done the money was paid, on the valuation of two practical men who were recommended to the Department as well qualified for that purpose. They were instructed to examine minutely the manner in which the work had been performed, with a view to its permanency and the object designed, and to report what sum would be a reasonable compensation for it.

The balance of the appropriation, which remains unexpended, will be applied in making some additional repairs during the present winter.

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

JOHN McLEAN.

The PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

18th CONGRESS.]

No. '55.

[2d SESSION.

## POST ROUTE FROM NEW ORLEANS TO WASHINGTON.

COMMUNICATED TO THE SENATE, DECEMBER 15, 1824.

SIR:

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT, *December 15, 1824.*

In obedience to a resolution of the Senate of the United States, adopted at their last session, requiring the Postmaster General to report to the "Senate, at the present session, the most practicable post route from New Orleans to Washington City," I have the honor to state, that the route on which the mail has been transported, for several years past, from this city to New Orleans, is by the way of Fredericksburg and Abingdon, in Virginia; Knoxville and McMinnville, in Tennessee; Huntsville, Rushville, and Pikeville, in Alabama; Columbus, Jackson, Fort Gibson, Washington, Natchez, and Woodville, in Mississippi; thence, by St. Francisville and Baton Rouge, to New Orleans. This route is estimated to be 1,380 miles, and requires a travel of twenty-four days.

The military road, as it is called, from Columbus, in Mississippi, to Madisonville, in Louisiana, is on nearly a direct line from the former to New Orleans, and much nearer than the road by the way of Washington and Natchez. But this road is represented to be so much out of repair as to render the regular transportation of the mail upon it impracticable. The bridges and causeways have fallen into decay; and, in many parts, the entire space, opened for the road, has become filled with young growths of timber.

Some years since, a contract was made by this Department to transport the mail to New Orleans from this city, by Salisbury, in North Carolina, Spartanburg, in South Carolina, Athens and Fort Hawkins, in Georgia, and Fort Stoddart, in Alabama; the distance being computed at 1,260 miles. But there were so many obstructions on this route, arising from streams of water and other causes, that it was found impracticable to perform the contract, and it was abandoned.

There is a mail route from Knoxville, in Tennessee, by the way of Kingston, in the same State, Bennettville, Cahawba, and St. Stephen's, in Alabama, to New Orleans; which makes the distance from Washington to that place 1,222 miles. But the obstructions on this route are known to be nearly as great as on the route by the way of Athens and Fort Hawkins.

The post route to New Orleans, which passes through the capitals of the Southern States, is estimated at 1,312 miles. This distance might be reduced to 1,100 miles, if no greater deviations from a direct line were made than would be necessary to obtain good ground for a road, and to pass through Richmond, Raleigh, Columbia, and Milledgeville, and thence by Coweta and St. Stephen's, to New Orleans. A part of the Alabama and Mississippi mail, and the mail from the South to New Orleans, are transported on this route. But, in the winter and spring seasons of the year, the numerous streams of water, over which there are neither bridges nor ferries, present insurmountable obstacles to the regular and rapid transmission of the mail on this route.

On a direct line from Washington to New Orleans the distance is 960 miles. This line passes near Warrenton, Charlottesville, Lexington, Big Lick, Grayson court-house, in Virginia, Ashville, in North Carolina; thence, through the Indian country by Cahawba and St. Stephen's, in Alabama, to Pearlton, near Lake Borgne; thence to New Orleans.

The northwestern part of North Carolina, through which this line passes, is so mountainous as to render a deviation to the south or north, in constructing a road, indispensable. A deviation to the north, so as to avoid the mountains, will pass by or near Fotheringay, Wythe court-house, Christiansburg, and Abingdon, in Virginia, Knoxville, in Tennessee; thence, through the Tennessee valley, by Cahawba, to New Orleans, on nearly a straight direction.

This route is estimated at 1,056 miles, including ten per cent. for the variation from a straight line, from Washington to Knoxville; thence to New Orleans; and is believed to be the nearest direction practicable for a post road from Washington to New Orleans. The variation, so as to pass by Knoxville, would not increase the distance more than six miles. A deviation to the south, so as to avoid the principal mountains, would pass near Salem, in North Carolina, Greenville, in South Carolina, and Athens, in Georgia. This route would not vary, at any one point, more than sixty miles from a direct line, and would not increase the distance, by a line passing through the above places, more than seven miles.

The route by the way of Warrenton, Abingdon, and Knoxville, affords great facilities for the construction of a mail road. Through Virginia and Tennessee the materials are abundant for the formation of a turnpike; and through the States of Alabama and Mississippi, it is believed, from information which has been obtained, that in no part of the Union can an artificial road of the same length be constructed at less expense. On this part of the route the general face of the country is level, and the soil well adapted to the formation of a solid road. Some information has been communicated to this Department on this subject, but it does not come strictly within the scope of the resolution. If a substantial road were made, in this direction, to New Orleans, the mail could be transported to that place from this city in eleven days. If the road were to pass through the capitals of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, it could be conveyed in less than twelve days.

The route on which the mail is now transported to New Orleans, although more circuitous than some others, in the present condition of the roads, is the safest and best. There are many obstructions on it, but they are less numerous than on any other. Greater celerity and safety are given to the mail on this route than could be given to it on any other to New Orleans; and it passes through, and supplies, many important towns and villages and thickly settled parts of the country.

In the winter and spring seasons of the year, the mail on this route, as on all others in the same parts of the country, is sometimes entirely obstructed by high waters; and, when this is not the case, it is frequently much injured by the mail horses swimming creeks and through swamps of considerable extent. The friction, from the movement of the mail horses, is certain to destroy all newspapers that become wet, and, not unfrequently, letters are much obliterated. When the mail is a considerable time immersed in water, as has often been the case on this route, it is impossible to secure it perfectly from injury.

The Department now pays at the rate of fifty-two dollars and seventy-six cents a mile for the transportation of the mail, three trips in each week, to New Orleans. On a good turnpike road it could be conveyed in a stage as often, and in less than half the time, at the same expense. And, what is a most important consideration, the utmost security would be given to the mail by such a transportation, and a very considerable increase to the receipts of the Department.

I have the honor to be, respectfully, your obedient servant,  
JOHN McLEAN.

HON. JOHN GAILLARD.

18th CONGRESS.]

No. 56.

[2d SESSION.]

EXTENT OF THE SEVERAL MAIL ROUTES, AND THE EXPENSE OF TRANSPORTATION.

COMMUNICATED TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, JANUARY 14, 1825.

SIR:

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT, *January 14, 1825.*

In obedience to a resolution of the House of Representatives of the United States, at their last session, requiring the Postmaster General to "lay before the House a statement of the extent of each post route in the United States, the number of miles the mail is annually transported on each route, with the annual expense of transporting the same thereon," I have the honor to transmit the enclosed report.

The difference which appears in the extent of post roads, as stated in this report, and in my report of last year, arises from the numerous corrections of distances which have been made in the past year. In many cases it has been found that parallel routes have been established so near to each other, that the transportation of the mail upon one of them is all that the public convenience requires. In other cases, routes have been established precisely on the same ground of other routes, differing only a few miles in distance, and in the names of places, for their commencement and termination.

These facts, together with the inaccurate estimates of distances, which are always to be expected on new routes, and especially those established in the new States, will satisfactorily account for the discrepancy between this report and the one made last year.

A complete revision of all the mail routes in the Union is believed to be indispensable; and, though a work of great labor, will be accomplished, it is hoped, before the next session of Congress.

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

The Hon. HENRY CLAY,  
*Speaker of the House of Representatives.*

*A statement of the extent of each post route in the United States, the number of miles the mail is annually transported on each route, with the annual expense of transportation under existing contracts.*

No.	Routes.	How often carried in a week.	Extent of miles.	Annual transportation.	Expense per year.
1	New York city to East Hampton, New York,	-	Once,	120	} \$1,115 00
2	New York to Sag Harbor,	-	Once,	133	
3	Included in No. 4.	-			
4	Jamaica to Oyster Bay,	-	Once,	28	156 00
5	Brooklyn to Flatsbush,	-	Thrice,	4	1,248
5a	Richmond to Castleton,	-	Once,	8	832
6	New York to Albany, New York,	-	Thrice,	154	48,048
7	New York to New Paltz, and New Paltz to Albany,	-	Thrice,	164	51,168
8	Albany to Sheffield,	-	Thrice,	55	17,160
9	Hudson, New York, to Sheffield, Massachusetts,	-	Once,	28	2,912
					Paid on 160