

were turnpiked the entire distance, the crossing of the Susquehannah at Havre-de-Grace, which is more than a mile wide, will always impede, and frequently stop, the progress of the mail. High winds sometimes render an attempt to cross extremely hazardous; but floating ice, in the winter and spring seasons, forms the most serious obstacle. Although the utmost exertions are always used by experienced ferrymen, the boat is frequently several hours in crossing with the mail. The time of crossing at this season is in the night, and frequently the darkness is so great that the ferrymen have no other guide than the sounding of horns. The Northeast, Big Elk, and Little Elk are often impassable on this route immediately after a heavy rain. These streams rise suddenly, and their currents are so rapid when swollen, that to cross them is very dangerous. Last winter, in crossing them, as well as the Susquehannah, the mail was near being lost several times. At one time one of the stage horses was drowned, and the others, with the mail, were saved by very great exertions.

The only effectual remedy to avoid delays at these rivers would be to construct bridges over them. Northeast, Big Elk, and Little Elk might be bridged at a small expense, but a bridge over the Susquehannah, at Havre-de-Grace, if practicable, could not be seriously contemplated by any one, when the bridge at Port Deposit stands only six miles above. This bridge has been constructed at an expense of about one hundred and eighty thousand dollars, and is represented to be of good materials and superior workmanship. When it was built, a turnpike road was contemplated to it from Baltimore, on nearly a direct line; thence, by the way of Newark to Staunton, through which the present mail route passes. By actual survey, this route, from Staunton to Baltimore, is about one mile shorter than the road by Havre-de-Grace.

The "Baltimore and Rock Run Turnpike Company," after constructing the bridge at Port Deposit, ceased further to prosecute their designs. No part of the turnpike has been made. Several roads lead from Baltimore to this bridge, and thence to intersect the present mail route eastwardly; but it is understood that none of them are in a condition to admit of stages.

From Staunton to Baltimore, on the route surveyed by the way of the bridge, it is fifty-seven miles and a half. It will not, however, be necessary to construct a road the whole of this distance, should it be deemed proper to establish the great mail route by the way of the bridge. The Baltimore and Havre-de-Grace turnpike runs nearly on the proper direction to the Great Gunpowder, a distance from Baltimore of thirteen miles; from thence to the bridge, the ground is represented to be level, and such as will admit of a road at a small expense. From the bridge to Staunton is twenty-six miles. To pass from the bridge, by the way of Elkton, would increase the distance to Staunton four miles. Should this route be preferred, it would be only necessary to make a road from the bridge to Elkton, a distance of about seventeen miles.

The road from Elkton to Staunton has been turnpiked. If a road of thirty-five or six miles in length, estimating the distance on both sides of the Susquehannah, were constructed, and bridges thrown over Big Elk and Little Elk, all obstructions to the rapid and regular transmission of the mail between Baltimore and Philadelphia would be removed. The road from the bridge at Port Deposit to Elkton would cross the Northeast creek at Gilpin's bridge.

The distance from Baltimore to Philadelphia, by the way of Port Deposit bridge and Elkton, would not be increased over the present mail route more than three miles.

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

JOHN McLEAN.

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

To the honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States in Congress assembled: The petition of the undersigned citizens of the State of Maryland respectfully sheweth:

That your petitioners, in common with a great portion of the citizens of the States east and south of Maryland, experience great inconvenience, and are liable to great commercial injury and loss, from the delays which frequently occur, during every winter season, in the transmission of the mail between Philadelphia and Baltimore, chiefly on that part of the post road in this State, and more particularly from the difficulty of crossing the river Susquehannah, when its passage is impeded by ice. Your petitioners have reason to believe that such delays could be wholly prevented if a change were made in the course of the post road, so that the Susquehannah might be passed over by a bridge; and that, by such a change, the road would be formed upon much better ground, would be more easily kept in repair, and the distance shortened. Your petitioners conceive that such a change in the post road from Baltimore to Philadelphia would, if properly constructed, be so beneficial to a large portion of the citizens of the United States, and so generally useful as an internal improvement, as to justify their expectation that it may be effected at the expense and under the direction of the General Government. They therefore respectfully pray that an adequate appropriation may be made for the purpose, to be applied in such a manner as you in your wisdom shall deem best calculated to produce the desired effect.

And your petitioners will ever pray.

19th CONGRESS.]

No. 58.

[1st Session.]

CONDITION OF THE POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT.

COMMUNICATED TO CONGRESS, BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, DECEMBER 6, 1825.

SIR:

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT, *November 24, 1825.*

I have the honor to submit to you the following statement respecting the condition of this Department.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JOHN McLEAN.

The PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

As stated in my report of the 17th November, 1823, there was a deficiency of receipts to meet the current expenses of this Department, for the three years preceding the 1st April, 1823, of \$262,821 46.

The same report stated the expenditures as exceeding the receipts for the year ending on the 1st July, 1823, by \$55,540 39.

The expenditures for the year ending 1st July, 1824, amounted to - - - \$1,169,198 91

There was received for postage during the same time, - - - 1,156,811 56

\$12,387 35

Which shows a balance of expenditure over the receipts of twelve thousand three hundred and eighty-seven dollars and thirty-five cents.

The receipts for the year ending 1st July, 1825, were	-	-	-	-	\$1,252,061 32
The expenditures were	-	-	-	-	1,206,584 42
					<u>\$45,476 90</u>

Leaving a balance of receipts above the expenditures of forty-five thousand four hundred and seventy-six dollars and ninety cents.

The following will show the increase of receipts for the years specified:

For the year ending 1st July, 1823, the receipts were	-	-	-	-	\$1,114,345 12
For the year ending 1st July, 1824,	-	-	-	-	1,156,811 56
					<u>\$42,466 44</u>
The receipts for the year ending 1st July, 1824, as above,	-	-	-	-	\$1,156,811 56
The receipts for the year ending 1st July, 1825, were	-	-	-	-	1,252,061 32
					<u>\$95,249 76</u>

In making the contracts in the fall of the year 1823, there was a reduction of expenditure, though an increase of mail accommodation was given of \$47,821 12. This sum may, therefore, be added to the increased receipts, as it was an augmentation of the means of the Department.

Increase of the year ending 1st July, 1824,	-	-	-	-	\$42,466 44
Increase of the year ending 1st July, 1825,	-	-	-	-	95,249 76
Reduction of expenditure,	-	-	-	-	47,821 12
					<u>\$185,537 33</u>

Showing an improvement in the pecuniary affairs of the Department, for the year ending 1st July, 1825, compared with the year ending 1st July, 1823, of one hundred and eighty-five thousand five hundred and thirty-seven dollars and thirty-two cents.

Since my report of the 30th November, 1824, contracts have been made for an additional transportation of the mail of 1,033,703 miles, annually. Six hundred and thirteen thousand and twenty-four miles of this transportation will be effected in stages; the residue on horseback, or in sulkeys.

This service has been contracted for at an expense of \$58,012 42. As almost the whole of this expense has been incurred since the 1st of July last, but a small part of it appears in the expenditures for the year ending on that day.

In my last report, the increased transportation of the mail since the 1st July, 1823, up to that time, was stated at 495,118 miles. Three hundred and seventy-four thousand two hundred and seventy miles of this distance the mail is conveyed in stages.

The increase of the transportation of the mail, since the 1st July, 1823, amounts to 1,528,821 miles, annually, a distance nearly equal to one-sixth of its annual transportation throughout the Union previous to that time, and only falling short about 200,000 miles per annum of its entire conveyance in the year 1797.

Such has been the accession of receipts for postage, that the additional expenditure required by this extension of the mail will be met without difficulty; and if Congress should think proper to relieve the Treasury from all charge on account of this Department, the usual appropriations may be drawn from its own funds.

Since the 1st July, 1823, there have been established 1,040 post offices, a greater number than existed in the Union in the year 1801.

Suits have been commenced on the balances standing against late postmasters before the 1st July, 1823, where there existed any probability of collecting the whole or a part from the principal or his sureties.

It was stated in the report of 17th November, 1823, that there was due to the Department, from postmasters, late postmasters, and contractors, on the 1st July, 1823, \$391,994 59; and in the same report it was estimated that not more than \$250,000 of this sum could be collected. The progress that has since been made in adjusting these balances goes to confirm the accuracy of this estimate.

The amount, therefore, due to the Department on the 1st July last, the greater part of which must be realized from the old balances, by the sale of property on execution, may be stated at

To this sum should be added the excess of receipts over the expenditures for the year ending 1st July, 1825, after deducting therefrom \$12,387 35, the deficiency of receipts to meet the expenditures for the previous year,	-	-	-	-	\$250,000 00
					33,089 55
					<u>\$283,089 55</u>

A law was passed at the last session of Congress, authorizing the Postmaster General, under certain restrictions, to discontinue any mail route which shall have been in operation three years, and the receipts on which do not equal one-fourth of the expense. As this provision does not take effect until three years after the passage of the act, it affords no immediate relief from the expenditure of money on unproductive routes.

With the exception of some routes which connect important districts of country, the expenditure ought always to bear a just proportion of the receipts. No fairer criterion of the inutility of a mail route can be afforded than its failure to pay a reasonable proportion of the expense.

On some routes, the mail bag is often carried when it does not contain a single letter or newspaper; and where this is not the case, the expense of transporting the mail, on many routes, is from ten to twenty times greater than the receipts. Both the justice and policy of such expenditures may well be questioned. A discontinuance of unproductive routes, which afford little or no accommodation, would save from \$40,000 to \$50,000 annually. This sum, judiciously appropriated, would give much public accommodation, and would be the means of increasing the receipts of the Department.

Some losses of money transmitted in the mail have occurred within the past year, but it is believed that the sums have been smaller, and the instances more rare, than have taken place within the same period for many years; and it is a fact important to be known that, for eighteen months past, very few depreddators upon the mail have escaped detection. By permitting the large portmanteaus to be opened only at the important offices, and having them secured by locks differing from those used on the waybags, greater safety has been given to the mail.

In the operations of this Department, there are between 15 and 20,000 agents employed. That these should all act with the promptitude and decision of a well-disciplined military corps, is not to be expected; but it is believed that, with some exceptions, they exhibit an energetic attention in the discharge of their multifarious duties, creditable to themselves, and advantageous to the public. The quarterly returns of postmasters are now made with great punctuality, and they seldom fail to pay the drafts of the Department.