

Proviso.

wood, as may be necessary for the construction of the said road: *Provided*, That the grants herein contained, as well of the use of the public lands as of the materials for the said road, shall cease and determine, unless the same shall be begun within the period of two years from the date of this act, and completed within a period of six years.

APPROVED, March 3, 1837.

STATUTE II.

March 3, 1837. CHAP. LXXV.—*An Act to give the approval and confirmation of Congress to three several acts of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Wisconsin incorporating banks.*

Acts confirmed
with certain
limitations, &c.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the following acts of the Territorial Legislature of the Territory of Wisconsin, viz: an act entitled "An act to incorporate the stockholders of the Bank of Milwaukee," an act entitled "An act to incorporate the stockholders of the Miners' Bank of Dubuque," and an act entitled "An act to incorporate the stockholders of the Bank of Mineral Point," be, and the same are hereby severally and respectively approved and confirmed by Congress, with the following limitations and conditions, that is to say: that neither of said banks shall issue bills or notes for circulation, until one-half of the amount of their respective capitals shall have been actually paid in; and that, to enable the directors named in the said charters respectively to comply with this limitation and restriction, they shall be authorized to make calls, according to the provisions contained in the said charters, to an amount not exceeding, at any one time, forty per cent. upon the whole stock subscribed by each stockholder, and shall not be restricted to ten per cent. at any one call, as is provided in the said charters; and that neither of said banks shall have any authority to enlarge or augment its capital, or to make it larger, at any time, than the sum of two hundred thousand dollars, without the consent and approbation of Congress previously obtained; and that neither of the said banks shall, at any time, owe, either by bond, bill, note, or other contract, over and above its actual deposits, an amount to exceed twice the amount of its capital stock actually paid in, instead of the limitation in this respect contained in the said charters respectively; and that each of the said banks shall have complied with all the requirements of their respective charters, as altered, modified, and restricted by this act, so as to enable them to commence the business of banking, and shall actually have commenced banking on or before the first day of January next, or their charters, or the charters of such of them as shall have failed to comply with this limitation, shall be void and of no effect; and the acceptance of said acts of incorporation, by the grantees or stockholders respectively, shall be deemed and taken as acceptances, subject to the conditions and limitations herein prescribed; and any infringement upon, or violation of, the provisions and requirements of this act, or of the limitations and restrictions therein contained, on the part of either of the said institutions, shall forfeit its charter, and put an end to its corporate powers and privileges.

APPROVED, March 3, 1837.

RESOLUTIONS.

March 2, 1837. No. 1. *A Resolution to enable the Postmaster General more readily to change the commencement of the contract year in the Post Office Department.*

Postmaster
General author-

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the Postmaster General be, and he is hereby, authorized and empowered to let the contracts for the transportation of the mails in those sections of the United States

where they expire on the thirty-first days of December, eighteen hundred and thirty-seven, eighteen hundred and thirty-eight, and eighteen hundred and thirty-nine, respectively, for four years and six months, so as to cause them to terminate on the thirtieth day of June, eighteen hundred and forty-two, eighteen hundred and forty-three, and eighteen hundred and forty-four, to the end that the contract may commence on the first day of July, instead of the first day of January.

APPROVED, March 2, 1837.

ized to make contracts which expire on 31st December, 1837, '8, and '9, and terminate on 30th June, 1842, '3, and '4.

No. 2. *A Resolution granting a pension to Susan Decatur, widow of the late Stephen Decatur.*(a) March 3, 1837.

Resolved, by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That Mrs. Susan Decatur, widow of the late Commodore Stephen Decatur, be paid from the navy pension fund a pension for five years, commencing from the thirtieth of June, eighteen hundred and thirty-four, in conformity with the provisions of the act concerning naval pensions and the navy pension fund, passed thirtieth June eighteen hundred and thirty-four, and that she be allowed from said fund the arrearages of the half-pay of a post captain, from the death of Commodore Decatur to the thirtieth of June, eighteen hundred and thirty-four, together with the pension hereby allowed her, and that the arrearage of said pension be vested in the Secretary of the Treasury in trust for the use of the said Susan Decatur: *Provided,* That the said pension shall cease on the death or marriage of the said Susan Decatur.

To be paid from the navy pension fund, a pension for five years, &c.

Act of June 30, 1834, ch. 134.

Proviso.

APPROVED, March 3, 1837.

(a) On the 3d of March, 1837, Congress passed an act giving to the widow of any officer who had died in the naval service of the United States, authority to receive, out of the navy pension fund, half the monthly pay to which the deceased officer would have been entitled under the acts regulating the pay in the navy, in force on the 1st day of January, 1835. On the same day, a resolution was adopted by Congress, giving to Mrs. Decatur, widow of Captain Stephen Decatur, a pension for five years, out of the navy pension fund, and in conformity with the act of 30th June, 1834, and the arrearages of the half-pay of a post captain, from the death of Commodore Decatur, to the 30th June, 1834; the arrearages to be vested in trust for her by the Secretary of the Treasury. The pension and arrearages, under the act of 3d March, 1837, were paid to Mrs. Decatur on her application to Mr. Dickerson, the Secretary of the Navy, under a protest by her, that by receiving the same she did not prejudice her claim under the resolution of the same date. She applied to the Secretary of the Navy for the pension and arrears, under the resolution, which were refused by him. Afterwards, she applied to Mr. Paulding, who succeeded Mr. Dickerson as Secretary of the Navy, for the pension and arrears, which were refused by him. The Circuit Court of the County of Washington, in the District of Columbia, refused to grant a mandamus to the Secretary of the Navy, commanding him to pay the arrears, and to allow the pension under the resolution of March 3d, 1837. Held, that the judgment of the Circuit Court was correct. *Decatur v. Paulding*, 14 Peters, 497.

In general, the official duties of the head of one of the executive departments, whether imposed by act of Congress or by resolution, are not mere ministerial duties. The head of an executive department of the government, in the administration of the various and important concerns of his office, is continually required to exercise judgment and discretion. He must exercise his judgment in expounding the laws and resolutions of Congress, under which he is from time to time required to act. If he doubts, he has a right to call on the Attorney General to assist him with his counsel; and it would be difficult to imagine why a legal adviser was provided by law for the heads of departments, as well as for the President, unless their duties were regarded as executive, in which judgment and discretion were to be exercised. *Ibid.*

If a suit should come before the Supreme Court which involved the construction of any of the laws imposing duties on the heads of the executive departments, the Court certainly would not be bound to adopt the construction given by the head of a department. And if they supposed his decision to be wrong, they would, of course, so pronounce their judgment. But the judgment of the Court upon the construction of a law, must be given in a case in which they have jurisdiction; and in which it is their duty to interpret the act of Congress, in order to ascertain the rights of the parties in the cause before them. The Court could not entertain an appeal from the decision of one of the Secretaries, nor revise his judgment in any case where the law authorized him to exercise his discretion or judgment. Nor can it, by mandamus, act directly upon the officer, or guide and control his judgment or discretion in the matters committed to his care, in the ordinary discharge of his official duties. The interference of the Court with the performance of the ordinary duties of the executive departments of the government would be productive of nothing but mischief; and this power was never intended to be given to them. *Ibid.*