

DAILY, per year, in advance \$10.00
Semi-weekly, published on Wednesdays in the season
of Congress, \$5.00
Weekly, \$3.00
Five copies of the DAILY, for one year, \$45.00
For copies of the SEMI-WEEKLY, \$20.00
For copies of the WEEKLY, \$10.00
No postage for clubs on WEEKLY.

VOLUME IV.

"LIBERTY, THE UNION, AND THE CONSTITUTION."

NUMBER 200.

CITY OF WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 6, 1854.

TO OUR SUBSCRIBERS.

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PUBLIC DOCUMENT.

POSTMASTER GENERAL'S REPORT.

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT.

The whole number of post offices in the United States on the 30th of June, 1854, was 23,548. Of this number 257 are the annual commissions from which amount to one thousand dollars or upwards, and the appointments at these offices are therefore made by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, agreeably to the provisions of the act of 1836. The number of offices established during the last fiscal year was 1,842, and the number discontinued 614, showing a net increase in one year of 1,228. The number of which the sites and names have been changed in the course of the year was 429. The number of postmasters appointed during the year was 8,618. Of these, 4,185 were appointed to fill vacancies caused by resignations; 1,977 by removals; 120 by deaths; 294 by change of names and sites; and 1,842 on establishment of new offices.

The total number of offices on the 1st of December, 1854, was 25,292.

On the 30th June last there were in operation 6,697 mail routes.

The number of contracts was 5,167.

The length of these routes is estimated at 219,935 miles.

The total annual transportation of mails was 63,387,000 miles, costing \$4,520,676, and divided as follows: viz., 21,267,693 miles by modes not specified, at \$1,699,933, about 8 cents per mile; 39,296,503 miles by coach, at \$1,240,005, about 6 cents per mile; 15,433,393 miles by railroad, at \$1,758,610, about 11 cents per mile; and 6,389,511 miles by steamboat, at \$488,138, about 8 cents 4 mills per mile.

Compared with the services of the 30th June, 1853, there is an increase of 1,494,463 miles of transportation, or about 2 1/2 per cent, and of \$134,708 cost, being about three per cent.

The increase of railroad service is 2,446,684 miles, and the expense \$157,281, being 10 per cent, in transportation, and not quite 1 per cent, in cost.

The increased transportation by modes not specified is 37,157,105, or about 1 per cent, at a cost of \$37,520, or 1.33-100 per cent.

The transportation by coaches is less by 439,796 miles, or about 2 per cent, though at an increased cost of \$23,157, or 6.88-100 per cent.

The unprecedented extension of railroads superseded much coach service. The increased cost for a diminished amount of service may be accounted for from the fact that the new contracts in New England and New York, commencing 1st July, 1853, were made at largely-enhanced rates, increasing the aggregate expense, while the amount of service was largely reduced.

The steamboat transportation during the past year was 6,389,511 miles, or 15 1/2 per cent, at a reduced cost of \$143,230, or 27-10 per cent.

This is accounted for by the discontinuance of service between Wilmington, North Carolina, and Charleston, South Carolina, Savannah, Georgia, and Charleston, and Detroit, Buffalo, and the suspension of service on the Arkansas and White rivers, owing to the failures of the contractors.

Several steamboat routes were also dispensed with at the terminations of new contracts for New England and New York.

The portions of service in the foregoing estimates chargeable to California are 591,630 miles of annual transportation, costing \$142,933, and varying but slightly from last year.

Steamboat transportation 169,110 miles, at \$21,000. Coaches 174,025 miles, at \$35,185. Modes not specified, transportation 258,485 miles, at \$86,748.

In Oregon the service is as follows: Steamboat, 38,938 miles, at \$11,900. Modes not specified, 99,988 miles, at \$2,151. Total transportation 138,926 miles, at \$14,051.

The annual transportation by steamboat was increased 10,760 miles during the year without additional pay.

The following table exhibits the extension of railroad service during the year, separately, in five groups of States:

Table with 4 columns: Length of route, Miles of annual transportation, Additional cost, and Total cost.

The letters for the year embraced the States of Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, Texas, Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, Iowa, Wisconsin, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, California, and the Territories of Oregon, New Mexico, Utah, Washington, and Nevada.

It is of very great importance that kind relations should always exist between the Post Office Department and the different railroad companies, because when this is the case the public interests are always better served. It has been, and will be, my effort to preserve these relations free from all obnoxious demands for services, which will always be refused; and when a schedule is arranged, not by the department alone, because it has no power, but by the joint action of the department and the company, who always have regard to the local business of the road, the public interest will be served in his duty who would not exact a conformity thereto. Unless such were the case, there would be no order or regularity in the mail system, and the inattention of the company would be seriously disturbed. When a line is laid, afterwards good cause be shown, it is always remedied; but it is not asserting too much to say that every delay of the mail causes embarrassment, and not injury, to business. That therefore every effort should be made to prevent such a delay, and manufacturer and farmer rely upon the mail principally for their remittances. All classes of our citizens anxiously await the arrival of their letters and newspapers; and if, through any accident, they are delayed, the Postmaster General is justly held responsible for the delay.

By the act of 24 July, 1836, it is provided that contracts shall be made on the lowest bid. In order to guard the department against the imposition of the form of a bid as prescribed by the regulations. A guarantee is likewise provided from the act, by which two responsible persons undertake that if the party bidding be accepted, he will execute the contract in conformity with the proposed, with good and sufficient securities. A certificate is then required to be signed by a postmaster, judge, or clerk of record, who certifies to the sufficiency of the guarantors. Notwithstanding these precautions, irresponsible persons have frequently been known to contract for performing the service, but with the sole object of selling out their bid. Failing to find a purchaser, they refuse to enter into the contract, and when inquiry is made into the sufficiency of the guarantors, in order to institute an action against them, it is discovered that they are pecuniarily worthless. On failures of this description the contract is awarded to the next lowest bidder; but as he is not bound by his bid, after the acceptance of the lowest bidder, it is frequently happened that he declines to accept the contract, and the department is thus obliged to pay much more for the service than it could have been had for, or than it is really worth. Such instances occurred frequently at the last year.

There are now no great mail lines in operation which to connect the proposed one at Cairo. The time is, however, not distant when the necessary connections will be effected by the completion of the Illinois Central route to Cairo, and of the Ohio and Mississippi road to its point of intersection with the Illinois Central. I am informed that by the 1st of January the Illinois Central will be completed, and that by the 1st of July the Ohio and Mississippi road will make its eastern connection with the Illinois Central. This chain of railroads, when the Atlantic at various points and the Mississippi river, thus completed, will attract large and important mails which are now conveyed on other routes, and most material to enhance the importance of a steamboat route between Cairo and New Orleans. It is reasonable to anticipate such an increase of trade and travel in the same direction as will go very far towards sustaining a line of boats, thus reducing the cost of mail service.

The only chain of railroads now in operation, which would be from this department, is the one which I deem it my duty not to enter into a contract now, but await developments so soon to be expected, enabling me to negotiate terms much more advantageous both to the public and to the contractor.

In the mean time mails are regularly conveyed as heretofore, by the trip between Louisville and New Orleans, and St. Louis and New Orleans.

There were in operation on the 30th September last 239 railroad routes; their aggregate length was 16,211 miles, and the cost of mail transportation thereon was \$1,927,747 80. Add to this the cost paid to independent routes and local agents, and the whole cost of this service will be \$2,106,240 80.

In adjusting the rate per mile to be paid these railroads great difficulties continue to exist. The principle which should regulate their pay seems to be, that the rate should be the same for all, and that the government should not ask or expect them to perform for it any service at a price less than that which they are entitled to receive for the Post Office Department; but, on the contrary, it has always maintained—and this has been ever the great cause of difficulty between the department and the companies—its right to pay for the service of the railroads at a price less than that which they are entitled to receive for the service of the Post Office Department. It is not, however, to be understood that the government is to pay for the service of the railroads at a price less than that which they are entitled to receive for the service of the Post Office Department. It is not, however, to be understood that the government is to pay for the service of the railroads at a price less than that which they are entitled to receive for the service of the Post Office Department.

The revenue, as above stated, includes the balance against the department of \$1,282,643, resulting from our postal account with Great Britain, Prussia, and Bremen for the last fiscal year.

The expenditures of the department for the past year, including payments for foreign postage, were, as already stated, \$5,774,424 12.

The revenue of the year, including foreign postage and the appropriation for free matter, amounted to \$4,555,286 22.

Deficiency, 1,219,137 90.

To the deficiency above stated should be added the balances due and unpaid to the London and Bremen offices up to the 1st of July last, less the amount of the Prussian office up to the same period, 13,465 40.

Less balances due from the Prussian office 1st January, 1853, 123,483 23.

Total deficiency for 1854, 1,755,221 33.

The deficiency for the year ending June 30th, 1853, as stated in my report of last year, was \$2,117,078 20. In the year 1854 the deficiency, as stated above, was 1,755,221 33.

Difference in favor of 1854, 361,756 97.

One of the results of the great activity and expansion which have prevailed in the general business operations of the country during the past year is manifest in an extraordinary increase of the Post Office revenue; and that it may be seen in which branch this increase has mainly arisen, the revenue of the past and preceding year is here presented in a comparative statement from which the foreign postage are excluded.

Table comparing Revenue of 1853 and Revenue of 1854.

Total increase of 1854, \$70,239 48, or 15-100 per cent.

If from the letter postage and stamps sold in each year the foreign balances be deducted, there will appear an increase over 1853 of 39-100 per cent; while the revenue from newspapers and pamphlets in 1854 seems to have fallen off nearly 1 per cent.

But the general account of "stamps sold" is necessarily so kept as to embrace not only the one-cent blue stamps and stamped envelopes, but also the one-cent blue stamps, which are generally used to prepay transient newspapers, printed circulars, and dropped letters, and occasionally upon domestic and foreign correspondence.

Therefore, to arrive at a proper estimate of the revenue from printed matter, it is necessary to accord to it its due proportion of the stamps sold. If we admit 75 per cent. of the average amount of the blue stamps, sold in the last three years to belong to the revenue from printed matter, then the condition of the revenue derived from that branch

Alabama, at \$35,000 per annum, which are not included in the foregoing statements. The amount of pay for Orleans and St. Francisville, between New Orleans and St. Francisville, at \$23,000. It is proper, therefore, to add for the new regular service \$41,320, which, with the \$35,000 on the Alabama river route, will increase the cost of the service for the current year, making the whole additional cost of the new contracts \$76,320. To these must also be added the cost of additional route agents, local agents, and mail messengers, appointed since 1st July, amounting to \$7,928.

There are in service on the 30th June last 236 route agents, at \$1,000 per annum; 21 local agents, at \$15,490 per annum; and 968 mail messengers, at \$92,181 80 per annum; making a total cost of \$289,221 80 per annum to be added to the other cost of transportation to Cairo, and of the Ohio and Mississippi road.

Pursuant to the act of Congress of 5th August, 1851, I invited proposals on the 31st August for conveying mails from Cairo, Illinois, to New Orleans, and back, daily, in steamboats.

Only one bid was received within the prescribed time, (6th November); and that being for \$200,000, I did not feel myself at liberty to accept it. A second bid at a much more reasonable rate was received after the regular time had expired.

There are now no great mail lines in operation which to connect the proposed one at Cairo. The time is, however, not distant when the necessary connections will be effected by the completion of the Illinois Central route to Cairo, and of the Ohio and Mississippi road to its point of intersection with the Illinois Central. I am informed that by the 1st of January the Illinois Central will be completed, and that by the 1st of July the Ohio and Mississippi road will make its eastern connection with the Illinois Central. This chain of railroads, when the Atlantic at various points and the Mississippi river, thus completed, will attract large and important mails which are now conveyed on other routes, and most material to enhance the importance of a steamboat route between Cairo and New Orleans. It is reasonable to anticipate such an increase of trade and travel in the same direction as will go very far towards sustaining a line of boats, thus reducing the cost of mail service.

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which the attention of my predecessors has frequently been directed. Letters, instead of having one or, at most, two distributions, have been distributed four or five times before their arrival at the destined point. The consequence has been that the distribution and delivery commissions have almost consumed the postage; but the worst evil arising from this practice has been that great delays have been occasioned, which have always been the subject of just complaint. To distribute mail matter properly requires a minute knowledge of mail arrangements, and this the department alone can have. If the postmasters at the various distributing post offices were permitted to make their own distribution schemes, with their necessarily imperfect knowledge, great mistakes must occur, and, instead of a letter being mailed direct to the distribution office to which it belongs, it would be mailed from point to point along the route until it reached its destined point. To prevent these delays, and at the same time to possess myself of the local knowledge of the postmasters at the distributing post offices, I caused to be forwarded to me the different schemes of distribution. Some of them I found quite perfect, but the great majority of them were very defective, and my only surprise has been that greater delays in the delivery of letters have not taken place. I am now having prepared distribution schemes for every distributing office in the country, allotting to each its proper distribution.

When the complete postal system, as the existing point can, by turning to his scheme and looking to the counties and towns in each State allotted to the various distributing offices, be enabled to mail direct, the department will likewise have the important matter of distribution under its exclusive control, and when new mail arrangements are made, by railroad or otherwise, which would change the course of distribution, the different offices can be instructed accordingly. Much, however, remains to be done. Every distribution causes delay, and this must necessarily take place under our present system one or twice, which is one great cause of complaint that letters do not reach their point of destination as soon as passengers. When the letter is from one distributing office to another the mailing is direct, and if sent on its proper course, it is no good reason for any delay. The mailing, indeed, should be direct from every post office in the United States to another, but this under our present system I view as impracticable. With our existing regulations, which prevent the direct mailing of letters, and which have addressed all letters for his own State or Territory, and all letters for post offices in other States and Territories, which should not pass through a distributing office on their proper route to the office of destination, rigidly enforced, and the new schemes of distribution, in operation at the various distributing post offices, I trust to be able to give to our mails greater speed and regularity.

The Auditor reports the expenditures of the department for the last fiscal year at \$5,774,424 12, for the following objects, viz:

Table of expenditures of the department for the last fiscal year.

Compensation to postmasters, \$1,707,708 29.

Extra compensation to postmasters by the act of March 3, 1851, 34,790 97.

Ship, steamboat, and way letters, 15,549 67.

Transportation of the mails, including the mails to Bremen, Havre, and Havana, and the mails across the Isthmus of Panama, 5,012,381 50.

Office furniture for post offices, 5,929 30.

Advertising, 103,869 57.

Mail bags, 48,861 57.

Blanks, 78,176 81.

Mail locks, keys, and stamps, 10,670 77.

Mail depositions and special agents, 10,200 00.

Clerks for office of postage, 621,135 29.

Official letters received by postmasters, 44,742 32.

Postage stamps, 13,654 57.

Stamped envelopes, 47,418 77.

Postage stamps sold by private mail, 1,000 00.

Payments to letter carriers, 135,968 52.

Compilation of post routes, 1,000 00.

Miscellaneous payments, 15,617 00.

Payments for British mails, 94,341 39.

Total, 8,577,424 12.

The expenditures of the current year ending June 30, 1854, owing to causes not within the control of the department, are as follows:

In my report of the 1st December last, I had the honor to state that the commissions allowed to postmasters by the 6th section of the act to establish certain post-roads, &c., approved 3d March, 1853, had proved insufficient to defray the expenses of the present system of mail service necessary to their efficient administration; and to remedy a state of things so injurious to the service, I then recommended the restoration to the Postmaster General of the power to regulate the rates of postage, and to ask an enlargement and modify the rates of postage, approved March 1851, so that he might have it in his power to allow to the postmasters at such distributing offices the means necessary to defray expenses. At the same time I took occasion to state that the present system of postage, as established by the act of the 3d of March, 1851, was not only a source of great expense, but was also a source of great injury to the service. It was, therefore, my duty to recommend that the power to regulate the rates of postage, and to ask an enlargement and modify the rates of postage, approved March 1851, should be restored to the Postmaster General, and that he should be authorized to allow to the postmasters at such distributing offices the means necessary to defray expenses. At the same time I took occasion to state that the present system of postage, as established by the act of the 3d of March, 1851, was not only a source of great expense, but was also a source of great injury to the service. It was, therefore, my duty to recommend that the power to regulate the rates of postage, and to ask an enlargement and modify the rates of postage, approved March 1851, should be restored to the Postmaster General, and that he should be authorized to allow to the postmasters at such distributing offices the means necessary to defray expenses.

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