

Act of 27 February 1861

An Act Establishing Certain Post Roads

This Act has a deceiving title. While most of the text is about post roads the last 18 sections are changes to and additions to the existing postal laws.

Of most interest to postal historian are Sections 6 through 10 which address postal rates.

Postmaster General Blair prepared instructions to postmasters that address the Act of 27 February 1861. This can be found under Resources / Historic Archives / United States / US Post Office Department.

CHAP. LVII. — *An Act establishing certain Post Routes.*

February 27, 1861.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the following be established as post roads :

Post-routes established. See *post*, pp. 206, 207. Alabama.

ALABAMA.

From Louisville, Barbour county, to Indigo Head, Coffee county.

SEC. 2. *And be it further enacted,* That the Postmaster General shall be and he is hereby authorized to procure and furnish letter sheets with postage stamps impressed thereon, (combining in one both a sheet and envelope,) and to adopt such other improvements as may be deemed advisable, from time to time, in connection with postage stamps or stamped envelopes for letters or newspapers, subject to the provision that such stamps or envelopes shall be sold at the cost of procuring and furnishing the same as near as may be, and to all other provisions of the eighth section of an act of Congress entitled "An act to establish certain post roads and for other purposes," approved August thirty-first, eighteen hundred and fifty-two.

Letter-sheets with postage-stamps impressed thereon may be furnished.

1852, ch. 113, § 8. Vol. x. p. 141.

SEC. 3. *And be it further enacted,* That the penalty of fifty dollars, provided by section eighth of an act of Congress entitled "An act to establish certain post roads and for other purposes," approved March third, eighteen hundred and fifty-three, shall apply as well to the using of a stamp cut from a stamped letter or newspaper envelope as to the re-use of the envelope entire.

Penalty for using stamp cut from envelop.

1853, ch. 146, § 8. Vol. x. p. 256.

SEC. 4. *And be it further enacted,* That the fourth section of the act of Congress approved fifth August, eighteen hundred and fifty-four, entitled "An act making appropriations for the service of the Post Office Depart-

1854, ch. 270, § 4. Vol. x. p. 583.

ch. 270, § 4, (vol. x. p. 588,) continued to Aug. 5, 1860.

Messenger in office of Assistant Postmasters General. Vol. xi. p. 145.

Advertised letters, when to be returned as dead. 1825, ch. 64, § 26. Vol. iv. p. 109. 1851, ch. 20, § 5. Vol. ix. p. 590. Proviso. Post, p. 703.

Proviso.

Unclaimed money from dead letters, how applied. Post, p. 703.

Report to be made.

Postage on dead letters returned.

Postage by private ship.

Post, p. 706.

Proviso.

Inconsistent provisions repealed.

Postage to be paid by regular dealers in newspapers, &c., on such papers.

Letter and newspaper delivery by carriers in New York. Post, pp. 708, 704.

ment during the fiscal year ending the thirtieth June, eighteen hundred and fifty-five," be and the same is hereby continued from the fifth day of August, eighteen hundred and fifty-eight, to the fifth of August, eighteen hundred and sixty.

SEC. 5. *And be it further enacted*, That the joint resolution of Congress of eighteenth August, eighteen hundred and fifty-six, which provides that there shall be "one principal messenger in each of the bureaus of the several Executive Departments, at an annual salary of eight hundred and forty dollars each," shall be understood to embrace within its true scope and meaning the offices of the three Assistant Postmasters General, entitling each to a messenger at an annual salary of eight hundred and forty dollars.

SEC. 6. *And be it further enacted*, That letters which have been advertised under existing laws (vide section twenty-six, act of March three, eighteen hundred and twenty-five, and section five, act of March three, eighteen hundred and fifty-one) shall be returned to the Post Office Department as dead letters if unclaimed two months after the date of the advertisement: *Provided*, [That] letters at seaports intended for persons on board of certain designated vessels expected to arrive, and letters specially marked to be retained a longer period, shall be excepted from the operation of this act: *And provided further*, That said letters shall be returned under regulations to be prescribed by the Postmaster General.

SEC. 7. *And be it further enacted*, That the unclaimed money from dead letters, now appropriated to the use of the Department, under section twenty-six, act of March three, eighteen hundred and twenty-five, may be exclusively applied in future to promote the efficiency of the dead letter office, by providing for a more careful examination of letters, and the return of a larger number to the writers (whether with or without valuable enclosures): *Provided*, [That] said officer shall make a detailed report of his proceedings to Congress during the next session thereof.

SEC. 8. *And be it further enacted*, That upon all letters returned from the dead letter office there shall be charged the usual rates of postage, to be collected on delivery, and accounted for by postmasters in the same manner as other postages.

SEC. 9. *And be it further enacted*, That every letter or packet brought into the United States, or carried from one port therein to another in any private ship or vessel, shall be charged with five cents, if delivered at the post office where the same shall arrive; and if destined to be conveyed by post to any place, with two cents added to the ordinary rates of postage: *Provided*, That upon all letters or packets conveyed in whole or in part by steamers or steamships over any route upon which, or between ports or places between which, the mail is regularly conveyed in other vessels under contract with the Post Office Department, the same charge shall be levied, with the addition of two cents a letter or packet, as would have been levied if such letter or packet had been transmitted regularly through the mail.

SEC. 10. *And be it further enacted*, That all acts or parts of acts inconsistent with the provisions of the preceding section of this act be, and the same are hereby, repealed.

SEC. 11. *And be it further enacted*, That it shall be lawful for persons known as regular dealers in newspapers and periodicals to receive by mail such quantities of either as they may require, and to pay the postage thereon, as they may be received, at the same rates as regular subscribers to such publications: *Provided*, That the Postmaster General be authorized to establish a daily or semi-daily delivery of letters and newspapers by carriers, throughout a circuit of nine miles from the City Hall, in the City of New York, under the supervision of the Postmaster of New York, whenever, in his judgment, the revenue from such service shall defray the expense thereof.

SEC. 12. *And be it further enacted*, That maps, engravings, lithographs, or photographic prints, on rollers or in paper covers; books, bound or unbound, phonographic paper, and letter envelopes, shall be deemed mailable matter, and charged with postage by the weight of the package, not in any case to exceed four pounds, at the rate of one cent an ounce, or fraction of an ounce, to any place in the United States under fifteen hundred miles, and at the rate of two cents an ounce, or fraction of an ounce, over fifteen hundred miles, to be prepaid by postage stamps.

Maps, engravings, &c., mailable matter.
Postage thereon.
Post, p. 704.

SEC. 13. *And be it further enacted*, That cards, blank or printed, blanks in packages weighing at least eight ounces, and seeds or cuttings, in packages not exceeding eight ounces in weight, shall also be deemed mailable matter, and charged with postage at the rate of one cent an ounce, or fraction of an ounce, to any place in the United States under fifteen hundred miles, and at the rate of two cents an ounce or fraction of an ounce, over fifteen hundred miles, to be prepaid by postage stamps.

Cards, &c., seeds, &c., mailable matter.
Postage.
Post, p. 704.

SEC. 14. *And be it further enacted*, That the act of third of March, eighteen hundred and fifty-five, entitled "An act further to amend the act entitled 'An act to reduce and modify the rates of postage in the United States, and for other purposes,'" passed March third, eighteen hundred and fifty-one, be and the same is hereby so modified as to require the ten cent rate of postage to be prepaid on letters conveyed in the mail from any point in the United States east of the Rocky Mountains, to any State or Territory on the Pacific, and from any State or Territory on the Pacific to any point in the United States east of the Rocky Mountains. And all drop letters shall be prepaid by postage stamps.

Postage between east of Rocky Mountains and Pacific.
1855, ch. 173.
Vol. x. p. 641.
On drop-letters to be prepaid by stamps.

SEC. 15. *And be it further enacted*, That the Postmaster General is hereby authorized and directed to advertise for proposals for the daily transportation of the entire mail, overland, between Saint Joseph, Missouri, or some other point on the Missouri river, connected by railroad with the East, which may be selected by the contractor, and Placerville, California, over the central route, the bids to be received till the first Monday of April, eighteen hundred and sixty-one, and the service to commence July first, eighteen hundred and sixty-one, or as soon thereafter as possible, and to terminate July first, eighteen hundred and sixty-five. And the Postmaster General is hereby directed to award the contract to the lowest responsible bidder furnishing ample guarantees of his ability and disposition to perform his contract: *Provided*, That the amount of his bid shall not exceed eight hundred thousand dollars per year: *Provided*, That the contractor shall supply Denver City and Great Salt Lake City at least semi-weekly without extra charge: *And provided, further*, That the letter and newspaper mail shall be carried through in twenty days, and the pamphlet, magazine, periodical, and public document mail in thirty-five days. But the Postmaster General may authorize the carrying of said pamphlet, magazine, periodical, and public document portion of the mail by steamship route, at least semi-monthly to San Francisco, if desired by the contractor, and if said service is performed at the contractor's expense: *And provided, further*, That the contractor shall not be required, in addition to the letter mail, to carry more of the newspaper mail by the twenty days schedule than will make the average weight of the whole mail one thousand pounds per day; and the remainder, if any, of the newspaper mail shall be carried on the thirty-five day schedule above provided for.

Overland mail to California.
Proposals to be advertised.

See *post*.
Ch. 73, § 9, p. 205.

Contract to lowest responsible bidder.
Maximum of bid.

Denver City, &c.

Time of letter &c. mail.

Pamphlet, &c. mail.

Weight of newspaper mail limited.

SEC. 16. *And be it further enacted*, That the Postmaster General is hereby directed to extend the existing mail contract on route eight thousand and seventy-six, in the State of Texas, so that it will expire with connecting route twelve thousand five hundred and seventy-eight, known as the Butterfield route, provided it can be done at an additional expense not exceeding eighty thousand dollars per annum, and provide for a semi-weekly connection with the city of New Orleans, but the Post-

Mail-route 8076 in Texas.

The Butterfield route.

Newspaper postage between east of Rocky Mountains and Pacific, &c.

Cost of service, how paid.

Letter postage between east of Rocky Mountains and the Pacific.

Steamers between New York and San Francisco.

Service on certain routes, how to be paid.

master General shall have the same authority over this route as over all others; and after said daily overland mail has gone into operation, the postage between any State or Territory east of the Rocky Mountains, and any State or Territory on the Pacific, on each newspaper, periodical, unsealed circular, or other article of printed matter, not exceeding three ounces in weight, shall be one cent, and for every additional ounce, or fraction of an ounce, one cent additional.

SEC. 17. *And be it further enacted*, That the cost of the service on the routes named in this act shall be paid, after annual appropriation, by the Secretary of the Treasury, upon the certificate of the Postmaster General. And that the rate of letter postage between any State or Territory east of the Rocky Mountains, and any State or Territory on the Pacific coast, shall be ten cents per half ounce.

SEC. 18. *And be it further enacted*, That the Postmaster General is authorized to provide temporary steamship service by the nearest and most expeditious route between New York and San Francisco, at a cost not exceeding three hundred and fifty thousand dollars a year, reserving to the Government the privilege of annulling the contract, after the commencement of the overland service, upon sixty days' notice.

SEC. 19. *And be it further enacted*, That the cost of the service authorized in the three preceding sections of this act, and that now performing on the inland routes numbered eight thousand nine hundred and eleven, twelve thousand eight hundred and one, twelve thousand five hundred and seventy-eight, and eight thousand and seventy-six, shall be paid, after annual appropriation, by the Secretary of the Treasury, upon the certificate of service from the Postmaster General, except so far as appropriations may already have been made for such service.

APPROVED, February 27, 1861.
