

POST OFFICE OPERATIONS—1833.

LETTER

FROM

THE POSTMASTER GENERAL,

TRANSMITTING

A report of the operations of the Department for the year 1833.

JUNE 30, 1834.

Read, and laid upon the table.

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT, *June 28, 1834.*

SIR: In obedience to a resolution of the House of Representatives, adopted on the 24th day of December, 1833, I have the honor to transmit herewith two statements; the first exhibiting the nett amount of postage received in each State and Territory during the year ending March 31, 1833; the second, the amount expended by the department for the transportation of the mail in each State and Territory during the year 1833; at the close of which the reductions in the expense of mail transportation, reported to the President on the 30th of November, 1833, took effect.

In submitting these statements, I deem it not improper that they should be accompanied by remarks explaining the manner in which the results given were obtained; and showing the impracticability of ascertaining accurately the share of any particular State either in the revenues or the disbursements of this department.

The Post Office Department is wholly national in its character. It sprung early from the union of the States, and was designed to meet the new exigencies which resulted from that union, and bind them more closely together. A review of its history will accordingly show that this department was founded in national views, and that it is national in its design, its structure, and its mode of operations.

A resolve of Congress, of July 26, 1775, ordained the establishment of the Post Office and the appointment of a Postmaster General. A line of posts was established from Falmouth, in New England, to Savannah, in Georgia.

The Congress was afterwards invested, by the articles of confederation, with the authority to establish post roads; which authority was subsequently confirmed to the General Government by a clause in the present constitution. On the 22d of September, 1787, an act was passed

[Gales & Seaton, print.]

continuing the Post Office Department as it had existed during the confederation.

The first post road act passed under the present constitution, (20th of February, 1792,) established one route from Wiscasset, in Maine, to Savannah, in Georgia. In the same act various other routes were established, passing from one State into another. In many of the subsequent acts of Congress for the establishment of post roads, routes will be found passing through parts of two or more States. Thus it will be seen that, in its legislation on the subject of post roads, Congress has exercised its powers with a view to the whole Union, and has not confined its action to particular States, nor appeared to be influenced by sectional views. Its regulations likewise, in the acts for the organization and government of the Post Office Department, are uniform throughout the Union. The rates of postage, the privilege of franking, the rights and duties of postmasters, are every where the same.

The practical operations of the department will be found as little sectional as the laws which regulate it. As these regard the Union and its Territories, for the purposes of the Post Office Department, as one country, so that is believed to be the best administration of the affairs of the department which shall pay equal regard to the claims of every section. State lines are not noticed by the mails, and until they shall become impediments in their passage, and a necessity shall arise for the charge of a new postage on a letter when it passes from one State into another, it will be impracticable to say what is the share of any State in the revenues and disbursements of the department.

The revenue of the department is the nett postage on letters, newspapers, and pamphlets carried in the mail. The books of the department only show at what offices this postage is received: yet, in regard to any particular office, nothing exists by which it can be ascertained where the service, for which the postage was received, was performed by the department; nor can it be stated how much of the postage collected in any State accrued upon services performed in that State, and how much upon services performed elsewhere in the Union. Any post office may collect the postage upon letters to and from any other post office in the United States. How would it be possible to ascertain the proportion of the postage collected at New York city, for example, which accrued upon the carriage of letters to and from that office within the State of New York? Much of the postage that is received by the department in one State, is paid by the citizens of other States. The receipts in the great commercial cities are swelled by amounts ultimately charged by the persons paying them to their Southern and Western correspondents.

Such is the intimate connexion existing between every part of the system of posts, that it can in no case be precisely ascertained what amount of revenue the department receives from any one post route. The proceeds of the offices upon it may be stated, yet these, it will be seen, do not afford a correct criterion of its value. In some respects they would be less, in others greater, than the real product of the route. The accounts of a post office do not show by what route the mail matter, upon which it has collected postage, was brought to it. At least one office on every route in the United States is situated also upon another route, and the principal offices, at which the greatest part of the revenue is collected, receive the mail by various routes. The sum of the postages therefore

collected by the offices upon any route must, in this view, always more or less exceed the sum which was directly received for the carriage of the mail upon that route.

There are many routes essential as continuous parts of a long line of communication, the offices upon which are of insignificant value, the principal part of the postages earned upon the route appearing in the proceeds of distant offices, perhaps in other States. The cost of the transportation of the mail upon routes of this kind would often appear greatly disproportioned to the value of the route if this value be judged of solely by the proceeds of the offices upon the route: yet it would be hasty, in every case of this kind, to conclude that the route should be discontinued, because it may be essential as a link of communication between distant and important points. The mail from New Orleans to Washington city passes over many routes. Upon some of these the offices are of insignificant value, because the way mail is small; but the great mail passes over these routes, and the postage received upon it, though collected at other points, is, in part, earned upon them, and is the return to the department for its expenditure upon them.

The various routes established by Congress constitute a network, covering the face of the country to all its extremities. Each route imparts and receives utility from its connexion with the others; each acts more or less as a feeder for those immediately joined to it; while the whole system, created without regard to the limits of States or Territories, extends its ramifications wherever population exists, and is not susceptible of being sectionally considered.

The accounts of the department, either of receipts or disbursements, are not kept by States. The first are entered to the credit of the offices from which they are derived; the expenses appear by the routes upon which they are incurred. It has already been seen that the receipts of the offices in a State may not properly be assumed as the amount of its contributions to the department. It will now appear that the expenditures of the department cannot be apportioned among the States; and this for various reasons, some respecting the manner in which the post routes are laid off, and others growing out of the intrinsic nature of the operations of the department.

A large number of the routes lie in two States, and a part of them in more. These routes are advertised for contract as of the State in which they commence, and the expenditure for the carriage of the mail upon them is placed to the account of that State in the accompanying statement. This was the only practicable course that could be adopted, for it cannot be ascertained precisely how much of the expense of a route lying in several States should be apportioned to each State. The second statement, therefore, may be taken as affording not an accurate estimate of the expenditure of the department in each State, but as near an approximation to it as can be made.

There are other difficulties in the way of an accurate estimate of the expenditure of the department in each State and Territory, such as the joining of several routes lying, perhaps, partly in one State, and partly in another, in one contract, upon which a gross sum is paid, which serves to show the impracticability of the effort to obtain a perfect result, such as is contemplated by the resolution.

The object of the resolution seems to be, to have a comparison insti-

tuted between the revenues derived by the department from a State, and the expenditures of the department in the same. It has already been seen that even in regard to a single post route its value and cost cannot be compared; and this results chiefly from the fact that the expenditure of the department upon any route may be, and often is returned in scattered postages at distant points, of which no accurate estimate can be made. Much greater is the difficulty of comparing the cost and the value of all the routes in any particular State; and this is the comparison, if any, which should be made, for it has been seen that a State cannot in justice claim, as its contributions to the department, the whole amount of postage received in its post offices; neither should it be charged with the whole amount paid for the transportation of the mail within it, because a proportion of that amount should be set down to the correspondence which passes through the State, the postage on which is paid elsewhere. Some of the States are so situated, that much of the money paid for the transportation of the mail in them is for the carriage of mails destined for offices in other States. New Jersey, lying between Philadelphia and New York, is traversed by one of the heaviest mails in the United States, the cost of which, though set down to New Jersey, is incurred chiefly for the benefit of citizens of other States. Thus the expenditure on account of a mail is placed to the account of one State, and much the greater part of the postage derived from it appears in the accounts of other States.

In the foregoing remarks, it will appear that the operations of this department are what the laws meant they should be, uniform, and connected over the face of the country; that the mail facilities or the revenues to the department of States or Territories, *as such*, are not considered, and cannot be, because it is impracticable to separate them from the general system of revenue or disbursement; and that such, happily, is the intimate connexion existing between all the parts of the post route system, that the benefits of an expenditure for mail transportation in one part of the country are felt not there alone, but wherever there is correspondence with it, or through it.

I have the honor to be,

Very respectfully,

W. T. BARRY.

To the Hon. JOHN BELL,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

STATEMENT exhibiting the net amount of postage received in each State and Territory of the United States during the year ending the 31st of March, 1833.

STATES AND TERRITORIES.	Amount.
Maine, - - - - -	\$40,824 53
New Hampshire, - - - - -	21,329 71
Vermont, - - - - -	22,685 56
Massachusetts, - - - - -	154,444 45
Rhode Island, - - - - -	17,686 44
Connecticut, - - - - -	48,341 39
New York, - - - - -	400,694 05
New Jersey, - - - - -	30,365 07
Pennsylvania, - - - - -	229,305 28
Delaware, - - - - -	6,390 98
Maryland, - - - - -	81,577 73
District of Columbia, - - - - -	15,731 71
Virginia, - - - - -	109,990 16
North Carolina, - - - - -	35,722 53
South Carolina, - - - - -	58,004 34
Georgia, - - - - -	75,420 07
Florida Territory, - - - - -	7,306 45
Alabama, - - - - -	37,682 58
Mississippi, - - - - -	22,430 93
Louisiana, - - - - -	46,718 43
Arkansas Territory, - - - - -	3,733 11
Tennessee, - - - - -	41,402 33
Kentucky, - - - - -	49,511 44
Ohio, - - - - -	86,171 84
Michigan Territory, - - - - -	9,615 72
Indiana, - - - - -	13,146 48
Illinois, - - - - -	12,350 88
Missouri, - - - - -	17,648 52
Grand total, - - - - -	\$1,701,332 71

STATEMENT exhibiting the cost of transporting the mail in each
State and Territory of the United States during the year 1833.

STATES AND TERRITORIES.	Amount.
Maine, - - - - -	\$56,443 88
New Hampshire, - - - - -	38,818 96
Vermont, - - - - -	23,208 66
Massachusetts, - - - - -	84,426 36
Rhode Island, - - - - -	6,193 48
Connecticut, - - - - -	35,850 80
New York, - - - - -	225,505 39
New Jersey, - - - - -	53,801 70
Pennsylvania, - - - - -	198,575 46
Delaware, - - - - -	11,106 00
Maryland, - - - - -	99,201 72
Virginia, - - - - -	234,219 00
North Carolina, - - - - -	100,129 80
South Carolina, - - - - -	123,515 20
Georgia, - - - - -	100,624 76
Florida, - - - - -	14,294 60
Alabama, - - - - -	161,056 39
Mississippi, - - - - -	23,971 64
Louisiana, - - - - -	18,331 84
Michigan Territory, - - - - -	20,137 00
Ohio, - - - - -	124,136 66
Kentucky, - - - - -	96,399 68
Tennessee, - - - - -	76,727 36
Indiana, - - - - -	46,593 52
Illinois, - - - - -	31,826 88
Missouri, - - - - -	15,427 68
Arkansas, - - - - -	12,665 00
Dollars, - - - - -	2,033,189 42