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*Sunday Mail Controversy, Postal Reform & Mail Transportation*

Abstract

Some of our earliest work, in 1977, in the first issue of *P.S. a quarterly journal of postal history*,<sup>1</sup> was with the controversy over mail on Sunday. Richard John devoted a chapter in his 1995 *Spreading the News*<sup>2</sup> to what he called “The Invasion of the Sacred” – thoroughly researching the history of what he summarized as the Sabbatarian Movement. Rather than revisit Professor John’s political framework, we address themes of personal freedom, states’ rights and national sovereignty within a postal system’s context.

The Sunday Mail controversies of 1810-17 and 1828-31 publicized an understanding of the post office as a system – for the test of westward expansion and the development of the railroads. Arguments for the primacy of the system centered on national security, and on the prevention of a speculative interval between public and private information. Moral questions of Sabbath observance remained matters for the separate States to decide, and, as a result of the economics of mail contracts and a pragmatic sensibility to local conditions, de facto Sunday-free mails would obtain in many communities. But the mail system would remain free of such moral considerations and, by law (reinforced in 1810) retain the right to a seven-day week schedule.

The general argument for the acceptance of the post office as a system that could accommodate changes in geography and changes in the technologies of transportation underpinned the argument for postal reform: the United States mails could handle greater volume at less cost.

Johnson’s Reports on Sunday Mails

The postal service was the one arm of the federal government with intimate connections to all Americans – so it had enormous political potential.<sup>3</sup>

Consider Richard Mentor Johnson of Kentucky’s extraordinarily active campaign for the Vice Presidency. He first angled for Andrew Jackson’s ticket in the 1832 election, but withdrew when it was clear Martin Van Buren was the favorite. For the 1836 election, Van Buren was the clear Democratic choice for President, but several others were jockeying for the second position. The Democratic National Convention was held in Baltimore, May 20-22 1835, and Johnson followers had at least three campaign bandanas to wave in his favor – each reprinting one of his Sunday Mail reports.<sup>4</sup>

Johnson had defended the transportation and distribution of mail on Sunday as Chairman of the Senate Committee on Post Office and Post Roads in 1829 and then as Chairman of the House Committee on the Post Office and Post Roads in 1830. For his political campaigning these reports were also reprinted on paper,<sup>5</sup> even in a handy pocket-size 1834 edition to reach a broader readership.<sup>6</sup> The two reports were also reprinted as part of an 1833 campaign biography.<sup>7</sup>

[Illus. 1: Portrait of Richard Mentor Johnson by Rembrandt Peale.]

Ely Moore, the “friend of labor,”<sup>8</sup> publicly endorsed Johnson in 1833 claiming that, in protecting the mails from being stopped on Sundays, “He has proved himself the friend of pure religion, by guarding it against a contaminating alliance with politics.” He predicted that the Johnson reports would continue to be read and admired “when the edicts of kings and emperors, and the creeds of councils, shall have been swept from the memory of man.”<sup>9</sup>

Clearly, a great deal of political capital invested Sunday Mails. But what did this controversy have to do with postal reform of 1845?

Johnson had two strong arguments FOR Sunday Mails: the separation of church and state; and expediency. To religionists he said, in effect, you don't want the federal government telling you when or how to observe the Sabbath.<sup>10</sup> Look to the state governments for any protection of religious observance (where also resides, although he didn't say, the power of incorporation for transportation contractors).

For Johnson, transporting the mails "should be regarded simply as a question of expediency" and government should leave decisions over the post office to "the legal discretions of the postmaster general." Underlying this argument was a postal understanding that mail transportation was a matter of design optimized by fixed schedules and smooth flow.

### Mails on Stage Coaches & Postal Reform

[Illus 2: a 'Troy' stage coach, illustration from a version of Johnson's 1830 report printed on silk by William Woody of Baltimore, presumably for the 1835 Democratic Convention. Collection of the Authors]

[Illus 3: Comparison of mail transportation by miles and cost for horse, coach and railroad/steamboat, 1837-1844, prepared by Selah R. Hobbie, First Assistant Postmaster General, from the 1844 annual report. Authors collection.]

The structure of the postal network that Johnson's reports protected owed much to Abraham Bradley's long term as First Assistant Postmaster General (1793-1829) but was formalized under his replacement, Selah R. Hobbie (1829-1851, 53, 54).

The four-horse post coach - big enough for passengers and mail and newspapers – had been the vehicle of choice for mail on the major post routes. The advent of railroads signaled changes in the design of the system which were reflected in portions of the Reform Law of March 3<sup>rd</sup> 1845 that are often overlooked. The introduction of the Star Route system of contract lettings,<sup>11</sup> and the statutory provision for railroads as mail's ultimate vehicle, was part of postal reform.

"Section 18: And be it further enacted, That it shall be the duty of the Postmaster General in all future lettings of contracts for the transportation of the mail, to let the same, in every case, to the lowest bidder, tendering sufficient guaranties for faithful performance, without other reference to the mode of such transportation than may be necessary to provide for the due celerity, certainty, and security of such transportation; nor shall any new contractor hereafter be required to purchase out, or take at a valuation, the stock of vehicles of any previous contractor for the same route."

This freed up the possibility of dropping stage coach contracts where they weren't needed.

"Section 19: And be it further enacted, That to insure, as far as may be practicable, an equal and just rate of compensation, according to the service performed, among the several railroad companies in the United States, for the transportation of the mail, it shall be the duty of the Postmaster General to arrange and divide the railroad routes, including those in which the service is partly by railroad and partly by steamboats, into three classes according to the size of the mails, the speed with which they are conveyed, and the importance of the service; and it shall be lawful for him to contract for conveying the mail with any such railroad company, either with or without advertising for such contract."

On a stage coach, mail was equated with baggage; on a railway train or steamboat it became freight.

[Illus 4: Printed certificate, signed by the holder of 1817 and 1819 patents for improvements in stage coaches: baggage racks and mail box among them. Authors collection.]

In 1845, the postmaster general pointed out that the star route contract provisions had already saved the Department \$250,000. “The most expensive as well as the most important branch of business under control of [the post office] department is the transportation of the mails.” And he stressed the paramount importance of maintaining connections between routes.”<sup>12</sup> However, a contract should go, not to the lowest bid in dollars and cents, but to the lowest bid that gave a mode of conveyance adequate for the mails in respect to the certainty, security, and celerity of their transportation – without regard for passenger accommodation. The cheapest was often not robust enough to embrace changes in the flow of mail.

These arguments had first made by Abraham Bradley in 1831 in defense of more expensive stage coach contracts where necessary. The amount of money critics claimed was squandered was the same quarter of a million dollars saved in 1845.

“An offer to carry in stages, on the same terms, is always considered as a better bid than one to carry in sulkies or on horseback; on the ground that such vehicles are a public convenience and deserve encouragement; also, that on great mail routes, in case of a double or triple mail, they can carry the whole of it on, and in the hope that passengers will increase; and in the end, by joining the two objects, it can be conveyed at less expense. And in many cases it has been judged good policy to accept a stage bid, if one-third higher than the demand for a horse-mail. This preference ought not to be extended to routes where the mail is small, for the establishment of stages is not a constitutional or legitimate object of the General Government.”<sup>13</sup>

#### Lines of Post & Sunday Mail Controversy 1810-1817

The three shorthand asterisks of celerity, certainty, and security were by the postal reform law an explicit guarantee of uninterrupted ‘lines’ of posts.

[Illus. 5: paragraph from the upper right hand corner of “A New and Exact Map of the Dominions of the King of Great Britain on the Continent of North America. Containing Newfoundland, New Scotland, New England, New York, New Jersey, Pensilvania [sic], Maryland, Virginia and Carolina. According the Newest and most Exact Observations by Herman Moll Geographer” 1715. Authors collection.]

The colonial line of posts ran on Sundays – the explanatory paragraph on Herman Moll’s 1715 map has the Western Post setting out from Philadelphia on a Friday and arriving in New York on Sunday night, to continue eastward on Monday morning to meet the Boston post at Saybrook on Thursday (the Boston post having begun at the Northern end of the line of posts which extended, at that time, to Charleston in the South from Piscataway, Maine, in the North).

[Illus. 6: Key to “A Map of the United States. Exhibiting Post Roads & Distances by Abraham Bradley Jun.”<sup>14</sup> The first Sheet Comprehending the Nine Northern States, with parts of Virginia and the Territories North of Ohio. Map of the United States. Exhibiting the Post-Roads, the situations, connections & distances of the Post-Offices Stage Roads, Counties, Ports of Entry and Delivery for Foreign Vessels, and the Principal Rivers. By Abraham Bradley jun.” Collection of the Smithsonian National Postal Museum.]

Moreover, the line of posts of the new Republic ran on Sundays. The Abraham Bradley map of 1796 shows the line of mails across a full weekly schedule, with Sunday as day one. But this line connected all the major centers. And such laws that existed with penalties for travel on Sundays were local and scattershot, and did not affect the cities.<sup>15</sup>

In 1802, the Post Office Department reported on its 1799 experiment with capitalizing a government line of stages between Philadelphia and Baltimore – revealing a new appreciation of the expense involved and a wish to continue to rely on private enterprise.<sup>16</sup> Where a stage line was in place, it made

sense to give it a mail contract – if only to discourage carriage of letters out of the mails. Giving a mail contract to a start-up stage line helped promote the country’s expansion, though such a line had to count on passenger fares not mail contract fees for profit.<sup>17</sup>

In 1800, Distributing Post Offices were introduced.<sup>18</sup> Lines of posts, which had been established between the principal centers of population, were modified to provide for lines of posts among the distribution post offices (which were not necessarily centers of population) – and the postal system became a network. Inasmuch as the principal mails traveled with the celerity of four-horse stage coaches, upon the regularity of the schedule in the security of the passengers, the arrival of the mail was a dramatic event on any day of the week.

[Illus. 7: Plate from a Dutch edition of Isaac Weld, *Travels Through the States of North America and the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada*, during the years 1795, 1796, and 1797. In the London 1800 edition, this engraving appears as “American Stage Waggon” opposite page 34. Authors collection.]

[Illus. 8: a portion of Abraham Bradley’s 1796 map that shows Washington Pa, a Distributing Post Office, on a stage route from Philadelphia through Pittsburgh. Mail from there was batched to Distributing Post Offices at Marietta on the Ohio River, and at Morgantown Va. Wheeling Va and Pittsburgh Pa were added as Distributing Offices by 1826.]

The postmaster at the Distributing Post Office of Washington, Pennsylvania was in 1808 excommunicated by his Presbyterian Synod for receiving and dispatching the mail on a Sunday and, as a courtesy to his patrons which was strongly recommended by the postmaster general, opening his office on that day. In response to the furor over this situation, a new postal law of 1810 required the receiving of mail AND the opening of the post office on every day of the week that the mail arrived.

“... every postmaster shall keep an office, in which one or more persons shall attend on every day on which a mail, or bag, or other packet or parcel of letters, shall arrive, by land or water, as well as on other days, at such hours as the postmaster general shall direct for performing the duties thereof; and it shall be the duty of the postmaster, at all reasonable hours, on every day of the week, to deliver, on demand, any letter, paper, or packet, to the person entitled to or authorized to receive the same.”<sup>19</sup>

The Post Office Department had been mindful – from the beginning - that handling the mails on a Sunday might be a hardship, and had mitigated the law with a regulation that the post office be kept open for just an hour after the mail arrived and was sorted on a Sunday and that such an hour could be after the local religious services.<sup>20</sup>

Policy was to avoid mails arriving in places on a Sunday “except where the omission to transport on that day would break chains of communications.”<sup>21</sup>

[Illus. 9: 1814 contract between the Postmaster General and James Cumming of Williamsport Pa, to cover three routes. 46 and 49 each begin at 6 am on a Sunday (49 serving Bellefonte, among other stops), but 47 – the only one to specify a stage coach – avoids Sundays. Authors collection.]

Still, Congress was bombarded with memorials asking that the new law be changed to prevent the mails from traveling and from being distributed on Sundays. But the Senate, in 1815, cited the mitigating instructions, and voted to keep things as they were.<sup>22</sup>

Congressional arguments centered on the need to keep major communication lines unbroken – during war but also for the continuity and expansion of the postal system.<sup>23</sup>

The view of the progress of the post office as of 1811 displays, at six different times, the development of the measures of the department since its beginnings in 1792. Not only are the numbers

of post offices and the lengths of post roads shown but also a differentiation in terms of modes according to the miles of weekly transportation.<sup>24</sup>

[Illus. 10: Table from the Postal Guide of 1811.]

At first, the miles of weekly transportation of the mails carried in sulkies and on horseback were about the same as for stages, but had grown to a third more by 1811. The total transportation of the mails divided by the length of the post roads indicates a systematic frequency of about 1.4 mails a week – a constant of the system - an integration of modes and frequency which persisted throughout Bradley's tenure in managing the mail transportation contracts.

#### Postal Route Reorganization & Sunday Mail Controversy 1828-1831

In 1825, Abraham Bradley was asked to reorganize the postal routes<sup>25</sup> – and the result was reallocation and an extension of stage routes, with a fresh spate of their dramatic presence in remote places. Opposition to travel on Sundays had intensified in western New York after the Erie Canal insinuated a potent arm of secular commercialism.<sup>26</sup> An opposition Pioneer Line of stages was formed in 1828 to operate between Albany and Niagara Falls through Buffalo six days a week and to observe Sunday rest. The “Old Line” – which had the mail contract - not only operated seven days a week, it also ran at night, employed experienced drivers, gave their horses the best care, and maintained a faster service.<sup>27</sup> Apparently to remain solvent this “Pioneer Line” of stages broke their own protocols,<sup>28</sup> failing completely by 1831: a line of stages had to run continually to serve a commercial market.<sup>29</sup> Stopping on Sunday, for capitalist ventures like transportation lines, meant ‘idle money.’

Yet a second wave of anti-Sunday Mail protest flooded Congress with memorials.<sup>30</sup> Most argued from religious conviction, but many men who signed even these petitions were involved in business.

[Illus. 11: Printed circular petition 1 January 1829, signed by ten men and mailed to members of Congress. Authors collection.]

An 1829 petition circulated to all members of Congress by a group of New Yorkers, which included a former mayor and John Jay's son, argued from a commercial rather than a religious viewpoint – and proposed that closing the postal system for a day would have economic advantages.<sup>31</sup>

On the contrary, the 1829 annual report (Bradley's last, before Hobbie)<sup>32</sup> showed that running post coaches 6 days a week instead of 7 would not save **any** money. In his experience, if a failure of a day's mail occurred, and its bulk was added to the next day's mail, the total was enough to fill a mail coach so that passengers were excluded. Indeed, if Sunday mails were stopped, while purely passenger stage lines continued, and private expresses could be used, the Department could lose between 50 and 100 thousand dollars annually.

Outlined also were all the specific delays that would occur if the transportation of the mail were interrupted on Sundays, and the possible consequences of that – primarily the possibility of private expresses delivering sensitive market information ahead of the mails so that there could be an uneven speculative advantage.

Although he did not use the terms, Bradley showed that a regular interruption of the mails would cause a systematic breakdown. And expediency would be compromised.

An 1832 compilation represents the post office immediately after a 50% increase in mail transportation, inaugurated not only upon a manifold of new post roads but also in terms of facilities (mode and frequency) on post roads already in operation. This report was made in anticipation of lettings in New England and New York for the next year which would, altogether, practically double the postal establishment in miles of mail transportation since Hobbie took over from Bradley.

[Illus. 12: Assistant Postmaster General Hobbie's statistics for the 1832 annual report. <sup>33</sup>]

With respect to Bradley's compilation in 1811, not only is there a new mode of transportation – steamboats – but also a geographic distribution state by state. In the Southern section the stage and horse mails serve equally, in the Northeastern section the stage mails range between three and ten times the horse mails. This inequality is paralleled by an average weekly frequency in the southern section of 1.4 mails per week to 2.6 mails per week in the northeastern section. The picture in the South in 1832 looks very much like the system as a whole in 1811. Systematic progress in terms of frequency and mode favored the Northeast.

Moreover, in respect to the steamboats, a high proportion serve in the South and Southeast although New York has the largest steamboat service over all, even considering that such contracts were made in conjunction with stage mails because of seasonal navigation.

### Postal Reform and Beyond

The above picture of the system in 1832 (illustration 10) was the climax of a postal design serviced by stage coaches as the principal vehicle. Railroads immediately thereafter dominated contract negotiations. They were larger corporations whose refuge was within the states, and whose local capital and clientele resisted blandishments to serve postal schedules. Nonetheless, they had been brought to serve postal design (illustration 3). Postal reform regularized railroad contract protocol.

[Illus. 13: Chart from the 1860 annual report. <sup>34</sup>]

What did the system look like in the period after Postal Reform? In 1860, in addition to the statistics by state, the modes are now designated: “not specified” – which are the Star Routes; “in coach”; “in steamboat”; and “by railroad.” Beginning in 1852, not only are statistics given for the length of postal routes but also their allocation to the various modes of transportation, by state – modal frequencies that provide a nuanced view of postal design.

In 1860 the South and West show a ‘primitive’ organization of the posts, represented by a frequency of about 1.5 mails per week, dominated by the Star Routes which serve most of their post route miles. In New York and New England, the average weekly transportation frequency is 6.1, almost double the modal frequency of coaching systemwide.

Railroads constitute now the majority of transportation dollars and miles of transportation by mode, averaging almost 10 trips per week, but operate only the trunk lines on not a very high proportion of miles of routes served. In some cases, as in Ohio and Illinois where there are practically no miles of transportation by rail or steamboat, the coach miles are high with respect to the unspecified modes. In Massachusetts, however, the majority of the post route miles are by railroad. Fifteen years after Postal Reform, thirty years after Johnson's report, and after sixty years of networking, the postal system is still fitted to the exigent means of transportation.

### Conclusion

What happened to Johnson at that 1835 Democratic Convention in Baltimore? Well, he was nominated to the Jacksonian ticket of Martin Van Buren. He faced competition from three other candidates in the 1836 election, and didn't receive a majority of the electoral college votes – so that he was our nation's first, and only, Vice President to have been elected by the Senate. He was also the first Vice-Presidential candidate to use broad-based and inventive canvassing – elevating ‘pamphleteering’ to a new level.<sup>35</sup> He was wise to capitalize on the national exposure of his role in defending Sunday Mails.

Sunday post office hours, of course, did disappear, beginning in 1910. The Distributing Office system disappeared, beginning in 1859 (replaced, during the Civil War, by Railway Post Office distribution). But the ‘expediency’ argument – that a postal system needed to grow according to its own internal laws of transportation arrangements – held, and accommodated many postal reforms.

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<sup>1</sup> *P.S. a quarterly journal of postal history*, no. 1, Feb. 1977.

<sup>2</sup> Richard R. John, *Spreading the News: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse*, Harvard University 1995.

<sup>3</sup> When President Andrew Jackson elevated the position of Postmaster General to a cabinet post after his 1828 election, political clout increased - see Dorothy Ganfield Fowler, *The Cabinet Politician*, Columbia University 1943.

<sup>4</sup> Few contemporaries believed Johnson actually wrote his reports. Since they show such a nuanced appreciation of the postal system, Johnson’s friend Amos Kendall was suspected, although Leland Winfield Meyer’s biography *The Life and Times of Col. Richard Mentor Johnson of Kentucky* (Columbia University 1932) gamely claimed Johnson was clever enough to have been the sole author. William Stickney’s 1872 *Autobiography of Amos Kendall* (New York 1872), however, had revealed that Kendall believed the writing “doubtless attributable” to the Baptist preacher and postal clerk Obadiah Brown with whom Johnson boarded in Washington.

<sup>5</sup> Joel H. Silbey in *The American Party Battle: Election Campaign Pamphlets 1826-1876* (Harvard 1999) explained: “Pamphlets were a major part of a panoply of campaign documents, from single-page broadsheets and handbills to elaborately compiled textbooks and campaign biographies, that the parties put out each year, and were at the center of the parties’ mobilizing efforts.” Page xii.

<sup>6</sup> *Sunday Mails. Mr. Johnson’s Report on the Transportation of the Mail on Sunday. Stereotype Edition. Boston: published by J.Q. Adams, Investigator Office. 1834.* 12 pages 3.25 x 5.5 inches, sewn. The *Investigator* was a weekly periodical edited by Abner Kneeland dedicated to the “development and promotion of universal mental liberty.” Representative and former President John Quincy Adams was occasionally plagued with the mistaken identification with the Boston printer.

<sup>7</sup> William Emmons, *Authentic Biography of Col. Richard M. Johnson*, NY 1833

<sup>8</sup> “In 1833 he was elected the first president of the newly formed federation of craft unions of the city of New York, the General Trades’ Union . . . , and he edited a paper, the *National Trades’ Union*, which became its official organ.” *Dictionary of American Biography*.

<sup>9</sup> Ely Moore “Tribute to Col. Richard M. Johnson. Author of the Sunday Mail Reports adopted by Congress in 1829 and 1830”, from a speech at Masonic Hall, New York, March 13, 1833, published in Emmons biography (ibid).

<sup>10</sup> The editor of the *Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate*, Utica, January 2, 1830 (who continued support for Johnson’s view throughout the year) reported that Johnson’s report had the backing of the Baptists in Kentucky specifically because “an association of civil and ecclesiastical power or an union of Church and State, [is] one of the greatest calamities which could befall our country . . .” Another popular weekly from New York City, *The Cabinet of Instruction, Literature & Amusement*, wished to remain neutral on the topic, but clearly leaned towards Johnson’s views, giving in its March 27, 1830 issue front page coverage to a synopsis of the report. Editor H. R. Piercy saw Sunday Mails as “the preservation of what may justly be esteemed one of the withes composing the bond of our national union; and a guarantee for the quickest possible conveyance of messages and information, often important to religion and the church, as well as to secular concerns.”

<sup>11</sup> “Report of the Postmaster General December 1, 1845” Doc. 2, pp 850-893. Appendix 6. In responding to questions about route 1025: “The lowest class of routes, the horseback routes, are advertised without any designation of the mode of conveyance, and the bids are usually made in the same way. There are specific bids in four-horse coaches, and in two-horse coaches; also in one-horse vehicles. But the novel species of bids, peculiar to the present lettings and the new law, are those which specify no mode of service, but seem to imply more than horse bids, by engaging to convey the mail with certainty, celerity, and security. They are designated on the books in a particular way, and are hence called, for brevity’s sake, *star* bids.” The concept of Star Routes has been erroneously attributed to an earlier period, as in Hugh V. Feldman *U.S. Contract Mail Routes by Water (Star Routes 1824-1875)*, understandable because the National Archives gave an anachronistic retroactive classification to the ledgers: “Registers for Star Route Contracts 1814-1960” (Vol 021 of 326, Entry 125.)

<sup>12</sup> The PMG was responsible for adjusting “the degree and mode of service – to regulate the connexions between routes, so as to effect a speedy intercommunication between the several parts of the country – to secure contracts for the faithful and punctual performance of the service – to settle questions which constantly arise, involving public and private interests to the amount of some millions of dollars each year – to meet the urgent demands of the public for mail accommodations, which the growth of the country and its rapidly increasing population require.” The PMG report for 1846 reiterated the savings already incurred using the new protocols for the next round of 4-year contract lettings. Cave Johnson emphasized the freeing up of competition now that contractors no longer had to purchase their predecessor’s equipment. Report of the Postmaster General, December 7, 1846, Doc. 1, pp 679-704.

<sup>13</sup> Abraham Bradley was First Assistant Postmaster General from 1793 until ousted by Jackson after the 1828 election. His letter defending the apparent excesses of the contracts entered into by Postmaster General William T. Barry (but critical of

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other aspects, such as failure to implement service that was contracted for on certain routes) was published in the *Independent Chronicle & Boston Patriot*, 31 August 1831, page 2.

<sup>14</sup> Abraham Bradley, Junior, was a lawyer and topographer from Connecticut hired as a clerk in the General Post Office (as the Post Office Department was first known) in 1791. He published several map, beginning with this 1796 version, of the postal routes he devised while acting as First Assistant Postmaster General.

<sup>15</sup> See William Addison Blakely, *American State Papers Bearing on Sunday Legislation*, D.C. 1911.

<sup>16</sup> *Report of the Committee of The Senate of the United States, appointed March 12, 1802, on the subject of Transporting the Mail of the United States*. March 30, 1802. 35 pp. This report outlines the cost of the government stage line between Philadelphia and Baltimore that started in 1799, and projects the cost of extending such. Stage lines were particularly lacking in the Southern states.

<sup>17</sup> See Oliver W. Holmes, "Shall stagecoaches Carry the Mail?" Originally published 1963, reprinted in *A Tribute to Oliver Wendell Holmes*, Washington DC 1972. Holmes quotes Charles Pinckney's 1786 remarks on establishing a line of stages in the South: "the intention of Congress in having the mails transported by stage carriages, was not only to render their conveyance more certain and secure, but by encouraging the establishment of stages to make the intercourse between the different parts of the Union less difficult and expensive than formerly." Holmes adds: "Here was the first mention of a new and powerful motive impelling Congress to the support of the mail stages, a motive that in later periods was to operate in the subsidizing through the post office of other modes of transportation notably the merchant marine and commercial air lines." p. 14.

<sup>18</sup> John, op cit, page 74. See, also, Daniel Y. Meschter "The Postmasters General of the United States IIIa. Joseph Habersham and the Mail Distributing System," *La Posta*, January 2004, pp 31-38. Washington Pa was one of the original 31 distributing offices. The PMG report for 1859, in explaining why the distribution offices were being disbanded, reviewed their history: "Offices of this description were formerly a very valuable, and, in fact, indispensable element in the postal system of the country, owing to its vast extent, and the rapidity with which population spread into new districts, causing cities, towns, and villages to struggle for existence with the forest and prairie, and rendering it impossible to keep pace with the names and locations of the numberless new offices demanded by the habits of a people accustomed to the constant interchange of thought and intelligence. Some offices therefore, had to be designated as the receptacles of correspondence from a section of contiguous country, and for re-mailing and sending it in packages to others of similar functions, more or less distant, thence to be distributed to its destination. In this manner these offices situated in the east and west, the north and south, mutually acted upon each other, and performed useful service. This was when the mails were carried in stages and other vehicles, and when pauses were necessarily made for the refreshment of passengers and the change of animals, allowing at the same time of 'distribution' at the post office."

<sup>19</sup> "An Act, Regulating the Post-Office Establishment" section 9, passed April 30, 1810.

<sup>20</sup> The Post Office Law, with Instructions and Forms, published for The Regulation of the Post-Office. "At Post offices where the mail arrives on Sunday, the office is to be kept open for the delivery of letters, &c. for one hour after the arrival and assorting of the mail; but in case that would interfere with the hours of public worship, then the office is to be kept open for one hour after the usual time of dissolving the meetings for that purpose."

<sup>21</sup> Report Of the select committee, to which was referred sundry petitions, remonstrating against the practice of transporting and opening the mails on the Sabbath, and praying a discontinuance thereof. March 1, 1817. Rep. 3, 9pp. "... in forming arrangements, and fixing times for the arrivals and departures of the mails on the lesser and cross routes, care is taken to avoid the transport of the mail on the Sabbath, except where the omission to transport on that day would break chains of communications, producing great delays to public and private intercourse; and it is the mutual desire of the contractor and the department to avoid running the mail on the Sabbath."

<sup>22</sup> *Report of The Committee to whom was referred the petitions of Numerous citizens of the states of New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, North Carolina, and Ohio, praying the Congress to prohibit the transportation and opening of the mail on the Sabbath*. January 27, 1815. Washington City: printed by Roger C. Weightman, 1815. 4pp. The Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads noted the practice of carrying mails daily on the great roads while trying to avoid Sunday on the lesser routes. Postmasters, however, were only required to open their offices and distribute the mail received, not to accept money or perform other functions. Letter datelined New York 20 April 1817: "I owe you an apology for writing on Sunday, which is the reason I cannot pay the postage." J. Warren Brackett to William Meredith in Philadelphia [authors' collection].

<sup>23</sup> Report of the committee on the Post-Office and Post-Roads, to whom was referred the memorial of the "American Bible Society." January 25, 1817. In denying a request for a free frank: "It has hitherto been (except during the late war,) and the committee believe will continue to be, the policy of the government to apply all the revenue accruing from postages to the extension of post-routes ..." p. 2.

<sup>24</sup> *Table of Post Offices in the United States, with the distances from Washington City, and the names of the postmasters*. (Washington 1811) page 69. Two earlier compilations of similar material are included in *American State Papers*, No. 10 at page 28 includes the data to 1803, and No. 21 at page 40 to 1807.

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<sup>25</sup> *American State Papers, Class VII. Post Office Department.* (Washington 1834), No. 56, pp 120-136, Postmaster General McLean 14 January 1825: "A complete revision of all the mail routes in the Union is believed to be indispensable; and, though a work of great labor, will be accomplished, it is hoped, before the next session of Congress."

<sup>26</sup> See the chapter "Yorker Benevolence" in Whitney R. Cross *The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850*, Cornell 1950.

<sup>27</sup> Their fastest run between Buffalo and Albany was reported September 10, 1828 – 45 hours and 14 minutes including stops. See a full description of these stage line wars, Richard F. Palmer, *The "Old Line Mail": Stagecoach Days in Upstate New York*, 1977.

<sup>28</sup> A letter to the editor of the *Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate*, Utica, Saturday, April 10, 1830, page 119, reported the shocking discovery that the Pioneer "pious line" was operating in Albany and Greenbush on successive Sundays. The editor in the September 25<sup>th</sup> issue, page 309, noted the discontinuance of the Pioneer line of boats and the selling out to the Old Line of the Western route for lack of profitability.

<sup>29</sup> Henry O'Reilly, *Sketches of Rochester; with incidental notices of Western New-York*, Rochester 1838, admits that the backers of the Pioneer Line were financially ruined by the enterprise, but believed that, in moral terms, it had positively affected religious observance, and had led directly to the outpouring of memorials to Congress against Sunday Mails. He refers to Lyman Beecher's Review of Senator Johnson's Report on Sabbath Mails having been republished in Rochester and "sent gratuitously to all parts of the land." Pages 303-304. Isaac Kramnick & Robert Laurence Moore, *The Godless Constitution*, New York, 1996, page 135 claim 100,000 copies were distributed by the organization formed in Rochester by Beecher and Josiah Bissel of the Pioneer Line, the General Union for the Promotion of the Christian Sabbath. Our suspicion is that these numbers refer to a republication in O'Reilly's newspaper which he could freely distribute.

<sup>30</sup> For a digest of geographic distribution of these memorials, a sampling of their content, and a list of selected signatories with their occupations, see *An Account of Memorials Presented to Congress During its Last Session, by Numerous Friends of Their Country and its Institutions; praying that the mails may nor be transported, nor post-offices kept open, on the Sabbath*, New York May, 1829. Authors copies includes on in wraps announcing its availability at the bookstores of Jonathan Leavitt, 182 Broadway and John P. Haven, 142 Nassau Street. 32pp.

<sup>31</sup> Printed circular datelined New-York January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1829. Signed by 10 men, mailed "free" to Hon. Jonathan Harvey, Representative from New Hampshire.

<sup>32</sup> Reprinted in *Niles' Weekly Register*. Third series. No. 25-Vol. XL, Baltimore, Feb. 14, 1829, page 405.

<sup>33</sup> From the Annual Report of the Postmaster General, compiled in *American State Papers. Class VII. Post Office Department.* (Washington 1834), No. 121, page 351.

<sup>34</sup> Report of the Postmaster General, December 1, 1860. Table A, pages 489-90.

<sup>35</sup> We have recorded six different versions of Johnson's Sunday Mails report printed on either muslin or silk – to be used as neckscarves, handkerchiefs, or attached to walking sticks, buggy whips, etc. Given the address changes of Henry Bowen (see the compilation in Patricia Fenn & Alfred P. Malpa, *Rewards of Merit*, Ephemera Society 1994), the printer of the four versions of the 1830 report, it is likely that two different layouts on muslin were produced in 1830 at the very beginning of Johnson's campaign to run in the election of 1832, and then a second muslin version with the same typesetting as one of the above but with a different heading and a note that it would be "sold by David Kimball" produced for the 1836 election campaign. It is our belief that all three silk versions, one by Bowen with the cut of a mail coach, and two by Baltimore printers (one with the same cut) were produced specifically for the 1835 convention in Baltimore. See appendix.