

US Postal Laws & Regulations

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Star routes

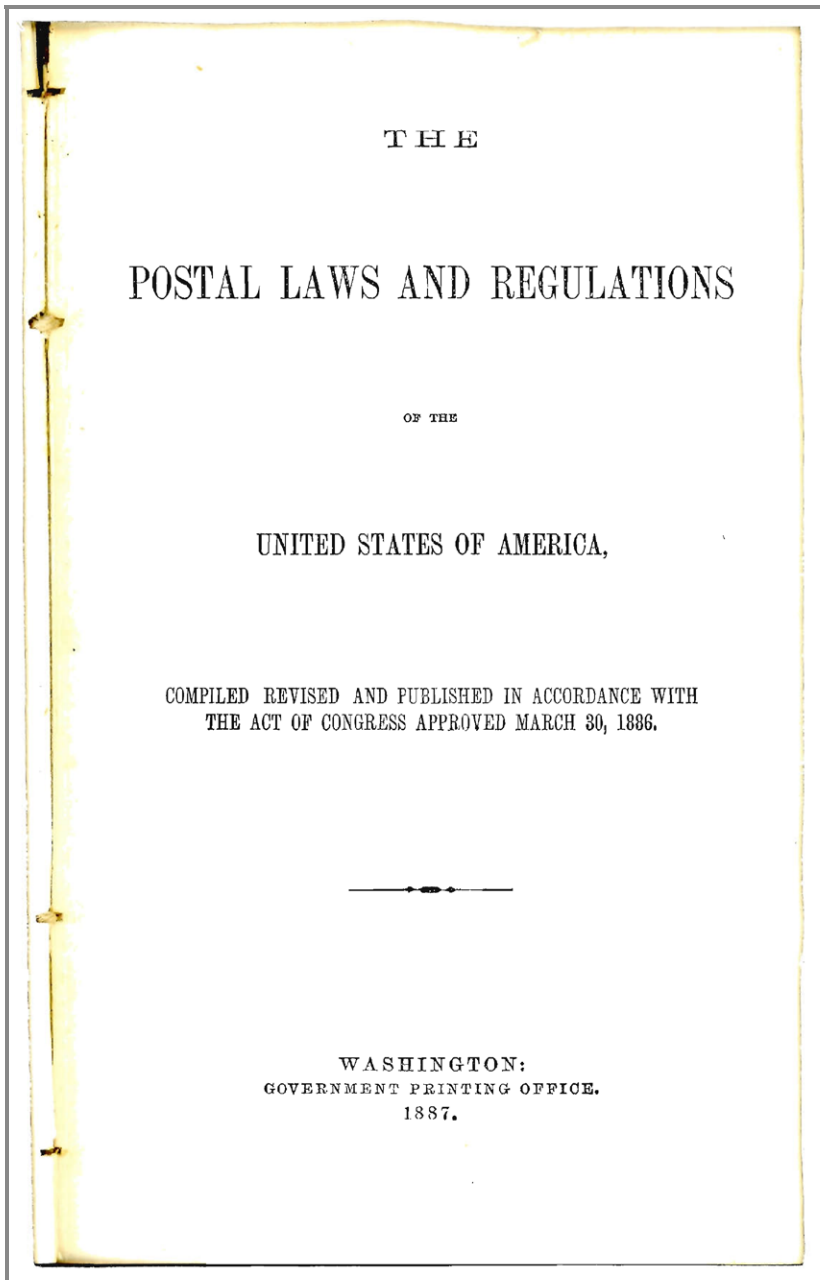


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and seizures extends to their papers thus closed against inspection, wherever they may be. Whilst in the mail they can only be opened and examined under like warrant, issued upon similar oath or affirmation, particularly describing the thing to be seized, as is required when papers are subjected to search in one's own household. No law of Congress can place in the hands of officials connected with the postal service any authority to invade the secrecy of letters and such sealed packages in the mail; and all regulations adopted as to mail matter of this kind must be in subordination to the great principles embodied in the fourth amendment of the Constitution."

Sec. 507. Postmasters not to give Information Respecting Mail Matter.—Postmasters and all others in the service are forbidden to furnish information concerning mail matter received or delivered, except to the persons to whom it is addressed or to their authorized agents or post-office inspectors. A disregard of this regulation will render the offender liable to removal. Postmasters may, however, when the same can be done without interference with the regular business of the post-office, furnish to officers of the law, to aid them in discovering a fugitive from justice, information concerning the postmarks and addresses of letters, but must not delay or refuse their delivery to the persons addressed.

Sec. 508. Penalty for Unlawfully Detaining Mail Matter.—Any postmaster who shall unlawfully detain in his office any letter or other mail matter, the posting of which is not prohibited by law, with intent to prevent the arrival and delivery of the same to the person to whom it is addressed, shall be punishable by a fine of not more than five hundred dollars, and by imprisonment for not more than six months, and he shall be forever thereafter incapable of holding the office of postmaster. (R. S., § 3890.) (See section 1447.)

Sec. 509. Time of Closing the Mails.—All letters brought to any post-office half an hour before the time for the departure of the mail shall be forwarded therein; but at offices where, in the opinion of the Postmaster-General, more time for making up the mail is required, he may prescribe accordingly, not exceeding one hour. (R. S., § 3840.)

Mails at first-class post-offices are to be closed not more than one hour and at all other offices not more than half an hour before the schedule time of departure of trains, unless such departure is between the hours of 9 P. M. and 5 A. M., when they can be closed at 9 P. M.

This regulation does not apply to the post-office at New York City, and any office may be exempted therefrom by special order. At fourth-class offices the mails should not be closed until it becomes necessary, allowing a reasonable time for delivery at the train or to the carrier on star routes.

Sec. 510. Opening and Closing at Intermediate Offices on Star Routes.—Seven minutes are allowed for opening and closing the mails at all intermediate offices on star routes, where no time is specified. Should this time

be too short at any post-office, the postmaster should apply to the Second Assistant Postmaster-General for an enlargement. On railroad and steamboat routes there is to be no more delay than is necessary to receive and deliver the mails.

Sec. 511. Who to Have Access to Mails.—Postmasters will permit no person, except his duly sworn assistant, clerks, letter carriers, and post-office inspectors to have access to any mail matter in his office, or to the mail locks or keys. This prohibition extends especially to mail contractors and their drivers. Mails should not be made up or handled within reach of persons not authorized to handle them; and such persons should be excluded from the room appropriated to the use of a post-office while the mails are being opened or made up.

Sec. 512. Postmasters Cannot Remit Overcharges on Mail Matter.—A postmaster has no authority to remit penalties or overcharges on mail matter. In cases where the observance of this rule would seem to work injustice, he will advise the party aggrieved to appeal to the Third Assistant Postmaster-General, keeping, if possible, such memorandum of the facts that he may make report thereon if required. Pending appeal the mail matter involved should remain in the post-office awaiting instructions of the Department. (See section 561.)

Sec. 513. Postmasters must Collect and Examine Waste Paper.—The postmaster, or one of his assistants, before the post-office is swept or cleared, should collect and examine the waste paper which has accumulated therein, in order to guard against the possibility of loss of letters or other mail matter which may have fallen on the floor or have been intermingled with such waste paper during the transaction of business. (See section 484.)

Sec. 514. Signal Service Weather Reports.—Signal Service weather reports are to be treated in all respects like letter mail, whether sent by officers of the Service under penalty envelopes, or sent by private persons and prepaid by stamps. Postmasters and railway postal clerks will use the utmost care to forward them promptly. Postmasters receiving them for posting should immediately post them up in a conspicuous place.

Sec. 515. No Mail Matter to be Solicited.—Every postmaster at a fourth-class office is forbidden, on pain of removal, to solicit from any person residing or doing business within the delivery of any other post-office, or from any agent of such person, the deposit for mailing at his office of any mail matter, or to enter into any agreement, or to have any understanding, with any person whatever, whereby, either for or without consideration, matter to be sent through the mails is procured to be mailed at the office of such postmaster.

tance, name of railway or steamboat line between which and the post-office the route is established, and the dates inclusive on and between which the service is performed, and a statement of all failures to make trips, all failures by the fault of the messenger to make connections, and all other irregularities or delinquencies for which a fine or deduction should be imposed, and specifying the resulting delay or damage, if any, and the dates thereof.

Sec. 770. Employment of Temporary Mail-Messenger Service.—If temporary service becomes necessary, in any emergency, after mail-messenger service has been authorized on any route, postmasters will employ it, but at no higher rate of compensation than that received by the messenger in whose place the temporary service may be employed, and will immediately report to the Second Assistant Postmaster-General the facts and reason for such employment, and solicit, if necessary, authority for payment thereof by the postmaster immediately. Where such service becomes necessary prior to the establishment of mail-messenger service, the postmaster will apply to the Second Assistant Postmaster-General for authority to employ the same.

Sec. 771. Payment for Mail-Messenger Service.—All mail-messengers are paid by warrant on the Treasury direct from the Department. No payments on this account will be made by any postmaster, unless he receives special instructions from the Department.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX.

TRANSPORTATION ON STEAMBOAT AND STAR-ROUTES.

Sec. 772. Term of Contracts.—No contract for carrying the mails shall be made for a longer term than four years, and no contract for carrying the mails on the sea shall be made for a longer term than two years. (R. S., § 3956.) (See sections 84 and 804.)

Sec. 773. Who may not be Interested in Mail Contracts.—No postmaster, assistant postmaster, or clerk employed in any post-office shall be a contractor or concerned in any contract for carrying the mail. (R. S., § 3850.)

Postmasters are also liable to dismissal from office for acting as agents of contractors or bidders, with or without compensation, in any business, matter, or thing relating to the mail service. They are the agents of the Department, and cannot act in both capacities.

Sec. 774. Division of the United States into Contract Sections.—The United States is divided into four contract sections. A general letting for one of these sections occurs every year, and contracts are made

at such general lettings for four consecutive years, commencing on the first day of July. The sections and their current contract terms are—

1. Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, District of Columbia, Virginia, and West Virginia; current term, July 1, 1885, to June 30, 1889.

2. North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Kentucky; current term, July 1, 1884, to June 30, 1888.

3. Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, and Missouri; current term, July 1, 1887, to June 30, 1891.

4. Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, Indian Territory, Kansas, Nebraska, Dakota, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Idaho, Washington, Oregon, Nevada, and California; current term, July 1, 1886, to June 30, 1890.

Sec. 775. Miscellaneous Mail Lettings Defined.—The lettings for service upon new mail routes, established pursuant to law in any contract division of the United States during a contract term, and upon routes where the contractor has failed or abandoned his contract, are denominated miscellaneous mail lettings. Such lettings are made under advertisement to cover the mail service on such routes until the expiration of the contract term, when the service, if continued, is embraced in the general mail letting.

ADVERTISEMENT OF MAIL LETTINGS.

Sec. 776. Notice of Mail Lettings; how Given.—That before making any contract for inland mail transportation, other than by railroads and steamboats, except for temporary service, as provided for in [sections 796, 797, 798] an act approved August eleventh, eighteen hundred and seventy-six, amendatory of subsections two hundred and forty-six and two hundred and fifty-one of section twelve of an act approved June twenty-third, eighteen hundred and seventy-four, the Postmaster-General shall cause to be published, in not exceeding ten newspapers published in the State or Territory in which such service is to be let, one of which shall be published at the seat of Government of such State or Territory, once a week, for six consecutive weeks preceding the time of letting, a notice in displayed type, not to exceed six inches of space in one column of a newspaper, of the following purport:

Mail lettings—Notice to contractors.

POST-OFFICE DEPARTMENT,
Washington, D. C., — —, 18—.

Proposals will be received at the Contract Office of this Department until — a. m., of — —, — —, 18—, for carrying the mails of the United States, upon the routes, and according to the schedule of arrival and departure, specified by the Department, in the State (or Territory) of — —, from — —, 18—, to — —, 18—. Lists of routes, with schedules