

Act of 15 March 1861

Statute I, Chapter XLIX – An Act vesting certain Powers in the Postmaster General

Source: *The Statutes at Large of the Provisional Government of the Confederate States of America*, pages 66-67.

Published: Richmond, 1862.

Postmaster General authorized to continue current contracts in the event he is not prepared to take over the operation of the postal system in the Confederate States.

On a date set by the Postmaster General conveyance of all mail in the Confederate States is prohibited except that which he authorizes

March 15, 1861.

CHAP XLIX.—An Act vesting certain Powers in the Postmaster General.

The Postmaster General authorized to renew, provisionally, the contracts under which the postal service is now performed, and to continue in office the postmasters and other officers.

The Congress of the Confederate States of America do enact, That in the event of a discontinuance of the postal service in any of the Confederate States, as now carried on by the government of the United States, before the Postmaster General of this Confederacy shall have prepared the new service, under the provisions of the act already passed by this Congress, it shall be lawful for the said Postmaster General to renew, provisionally, the contracts under which the service is now performed, and to continue in office the several postmasters and other officers now employed in such postal service, until he is prepared to replace said service and said officers by new contracts and appointments.

And to advertise and enter into contracts for carrying the mail.

SEC. 2. That the Postmaster General, at a time to be fixed by him, is hereby authorized to advertise and enter into contracts for carrying the mail with due celerity, certainty and security, on the post routes within the Confederate States, other than railroads and steamboats, in accordance with the acts passed by this Congress.

Conveyance of mails, except by his authority, prohibited.

SEC. 3. That after such contracts shall have been entered into, on and after a day to be designated by the proclamation of the Postmaster General, all conveyance of mails within the limits of the Confederate States, except by authority of the Postmaster General, is hereby prohibited.

SEC. 4. *Be it further enacted*, That the Postmaster General have power to issue circular instructions to the several postmasters and other officers still performing service under the appointment of the United States, in order to enforce the rendition of the proper accounts and payment of the moneys collected by them per account of the United States, until the Postmaster General shall have issued his proclamation announcing that the former service is discontinued and is replaced by the new service organized under the authority of this government.

To issue circular instructions to postmasters and other officers performing service under the appointment of the U. S.

SEC. 5. That it shall be lawful for the Postmaster General to allow express and other chartered companies to carry letters and all mail matter of every description, whether the same be enclosed in stamped envelopes or pre-paid by stamps or money; but if the same be pre-paid in money, the money shall be paid to some postmaster, who shall stamp the same paid, and shall account to the Post-Office Department for the same, in the same manner as for letters sent by the mail; but if prepaid by stamps, then the express or other company receiving such letters for delivery shall obliterate such stamps, under the penalty of five hundred dollars for each failure, to be recovered by action of debt in any court having jurisdiction thereof, in the name of the Postmaster General, for the use of the Confederate States; but if said letters or mail matter shall be received by such express or other company, not for delivery, but to be mailed, then the matter so carried shall be pre-paid at the same rate that the existing law requires it to be paid from the point where it may be received by such company to the point of its destination, and the postmaster, where such company may mail the same, shall deface the stamps upon the same.

May allow express and other chartered companies to carry letters and other mail matter.

Regulations concerning the pre-payment of postage on letters, etc., sent by companies.

SEC. 6. *Be it further enacted*, That each agent of any company who may carry letters under the provisions of this act, shall be required to take an oath that he will faithfully comply with the law of the Confederate States relating to the carrying of letters or other mail matter and obliterating postage stamps, which oath may be administered by any justice of the peace, and shall be in writing, and signed by such agent or messenger, and filed in the Post-Office Department.

Oath required of agent of the company.

APPROVED March 15, 1861.