

Where Congress granted lands in aid of railways, as in the case of the Chicago and Mobile road in 1850, it declared that, in consideration thereof, the road "should be free of toll or other charge to U. S. troops and property;" and that the mails should be carried upon it "on such terms as Congress shall fix."

The nature of the service performed by the United States railways—as defined in the printed forms of contract used—is as follows:—

1. That the mails (including British, Canada, and other foreign mails) shall be conveyed in a secure and safe manner, free from wet or other injury, in a separate and convenient car, or apartment of a car, suitably fitted up, furnished, warmed and lighted, under the direction and to the satisfaction of the Post Office Department, at the expense of the contractor, for the assorting and safe-keeping of the mails, and for the exclusive use of the Department and its mail agent, if the Department shall employ such agent; and such agent is to be conveyed free of charge. When there is no agent of the Department, the Railroad Company shall designate a suitable person on each train, to be sworn in, to receive and take charge of the mails, and of way-bills accompanying and describing them, and duly deliver the same. And the mail shall be taken from and delivered into the Post Offices at the ends of the route; and also from and into intermediate Offices, provided the latter are not over one-quarter of a mile from a dépôt or station.

2. That if the Company shall run a regular train of passenger cars more frequently than is required by the contract to carry the mails, the same increased frequency shall be given to the mails, and without increase of compensation; and the like as to increased speed of the mail trains, when desired by the Postmaster-General.

3. That the Company shall convey, free of charge, all mail-bags and Post Office blanks; and also all accredited special agents of the Department, on exhibition of their credentials.

In every case of any failure to perform the trip, not beyond their control, there is forfeiture of the pay for the trip; and the loss of a connection, if avoidable, involves a double penalty. Neglect to take or deliver a mail, or allowing one to become wet or injured, are subject to fine. And lastly—the Company are made "answerable for the adequacy of the means of transportation; for the faithfulness, ability and diligence of its agents; and for the safety, due receipt and delivery, as aforesaid, of the mails."

There are 320 railway routes on which the mail is transported, having a total length of 21,330 miles, with an annual mail mileage of 22,777,219 miles—for which the sum of \$2,498,115 is paid—about eleven cents per mile run. The greater number, length and mileage, are in the second and third classes—the average rate for which is 8½ cents per mile run.