

Act of 23 February 1861

Statute I, Chap. XIII. – An Act to prescribe the Rates of Postage in the Confederate States of America, and for other purposes.

Source: *The Statutes at Large of the Provisional Government of the Confederate States of America*, pages 34-36.

Published: Richmond, 1862.

Mandated prepayment of postage

Established postage rates for:

- Letters
- Drop letters
- Circulars, pamphlets and periodicals
- Newspapers
- Books
- Packages
- Letters carried by private express

Established fee for advertised letters

Abolished

Franking privilege, except for Postmaster General, his chief clerk, auditor of the Treasury for the Post Office Department and postmasters

Registration system

Authorized the Postmaster General to enter into arrangement for transmission of mail between foreign governments

Postmaster General to provide stamps in the denominations 2, 5 and 20 cents

Rates of postage established.	<i>The Congress of the Confederate States of America do enact, That</i>
On single letters.	from and after such period as the Postmaster General may by proclamation announce, there shall be charged the following rates of postage, to-wit: For every single sealed letter, and for every letter in manuscript or paper of any kind, upon which information shall be asked for or communicated in writing, or by marks or signs, conveyed in the mail for any distance between places within the Confederate States of America, not exceeding five hundred miles, five cents; and for any distance exceeding five hundred miles, double that rate; and every letter or parcel not exceeding half an ounce in weight shall be deemed a single letter, and every additional weight of half an ounce, or additional weight of less than half an ounce, shall be charged with an additional single postage; and all packages containing other than printed or written matter—and money packages are included in this class—shall be rated by weight as letters are rated, and shall be charged double the rates of postage on letters; and all drop letters, or letters placed in any post-office not for transmission, but for delivery only, shall be charged with postage at the rate of two cents each; and in all the foregoing cases the postage must be pre-paid by stamps; and all letters which shall hereafter be advertised as remaining over or uncalled for in any post-office, shall be charged with two cents each in addition to the regular postage, both to be accounted for as other postages of this Confederacy.
What deemed a single letter.	
What packages rated by weight.	
Drop letters.	
Postage pre-paid by stamps.	
Additional postage on letters advertised.	
Postage on newspapers sent from the office of publication to subscribers.	SEC. 2. <i>And be it further enacted, That all newspapers not exceeding three ounces in weight, sent from the office of publication to actual and bona fide subscribers, shall be charged with postage as follows, to-wit: The postage on the regular numbers of a newspaper published weekly, within the State where published, shall be six and one-half cents per quarter; and papers published semi-weekly, double that rate; and papers published thrice a week, treble that rate; and papers published daily, six times that rate; and the postage on all newspapers to actual subscribers without the State where published, shall be charged double the foregoing rates. And periodicals sent from the office of publication to actual and bona fide subscribers, shall be charged with postage as follows, to wit: The postage on the regular numbers of a periodical not exceeding one and a half ounces in weight and published monthly, within the State where published, shall be three cents per quarter; if published semi-monthly, double that rate; and for every additional ounce or fraction of an ounce, double the foregoing rates shall be charged; and periodicals published quarterly or bi-monthly shall be charged one cent an ounce; and the postage on all periodicals without the State where published shall be double the above specified rates; and regular subscribers to newspapers and periodicals shall be required to pay one quarter's postage in advance. And there shall be charged upon every other newspaper, and each circular not sealed, handbill, engraving, pamphlet, periodical and magazine, which shall be unconnected with any manuscript or written matter, not exceeding three ounces in weight, two cents; and for each additional ounce or fraction of an ounce, two cents additional; and in all cases the postage shall be pre-paid by stamps. And books, bound or unbound, not weighing over four pounds, shall be deemed mailable matter, and shall be charged with postage, to be pre paid by stamps, at two cents an ounce for any distance. The publishers of newspapers or periodicals may send to each other, from their respective offices of publication, free of postage, one copy of each publication.</i>
On periodicals so sent.	
On other newspapers and periodicals, circulars, handbills, engravings, etc.	
On books, bound or unbound.	
Publishers may send publications to each other, free of postage.	

SEC. 3. *And be it further enacted*, That it shall be the duty of the Postmaster General to provide and furnish to all deputy postmasters, and to all other persons applying and paying therefor, suitable postage stamps and stamped envelopes, of the denomination of two cents, five cents, and twenty cents, to facilitate the pre-payment of postages provided for in this act; and any person who shall forge or counterfeit any postage stamp provided or furnished under the provisions of this or any former act, whether the same are impressed or printed on or attached to envelopes or not, or any die, plate, or engraving therefor, or shall make or print, or knowingly use or sell, or have in his possession, with intent to use or sell, any such false, forged or counterfeited die, plate, engraving or postage stamp, or who shall make or print, or authorize or procure to be made or printed, any postage stamps of the kind provided and furnished by the Postmaster General as aforesaid, without the especial authority and direction of the Post Office Department, or who, after such postage stamps have been printed, shall, with intent to defraud the revenues of the Post Office Department, deliver any postage stamps to any person or persons, other than such as shall be authorized to receive the same by an instrument of writing, duly executed under the hand of the Postmaster General and the seal of the Post office Department, shall, on conviction thereof, be deemed guilty of felony, and be punished by a fine not exceeding five hundred dollars, or by imprisonment not exceeding five years, or by both such fine and imprisonment; and the expenses of procuring and providing all such postage stamps and letter envelopes as are provided for or authorized by this act, shall be paid, after being adjusted by the Auditor of the Post-Office Department, on the certificate of the Postmaster General, out of any money in the treasury arising from the revenues of the Post Office Department.

Deputy postmasters, and other persons, to be furnished with postage stamps and stamped envelopes.

Penalty for forging or counterfeiting postage stamps.

Or for making, using or possessing, forged or counterfeited dies, plates, etc.

Or for delivering postage stamps without authority.

SEC. 4. *And be it further enacted*, That it shall be the duty of every postmaster to cause to be defaced, in such manner as the Postmaster General shall direct, all postage stamps of this Confederacy attached to letters deposited in his office for delivery, or to be sent by mail; and if any postmaster sending letters in the mail, with such postage stamps attached, shall omit to deface the same, it shall be the duty of the postmaster, to whose office such letter shall be sent for delivery, to deface the stamps and report the delinquent postmaster to the Postmaster General. And if any person shall use or attempt to use in pre-payment of postage any postage stamps which shall have been before used for like purposes, such person shall be subject to a penalty of fifty dollars for every such offence, to be recovered in the name of the Confederate States of America in any court of competent jurisdiction.

Postmasters to deface postage stamps attached to letters.

Penalty for omission.

Penalty for using postage stamps that had been before used.

SEC. 5. *And be it further enacted*, That from and after the day when this act goes into effect the franking privilege shall be abolished: *Provided*, That the Postmaster General and his chief clerks and Auditor of the Treasury for the Post Office Department shall be and they are hereby authorized to transmit through the mail, free of postage, any letters, packages or other matters relating exclusively to their official duties or to the business of the Post Office Department; but they shall, in every such case, endorse on the back of the letter or package to be sent free of postage, over their own signatures, the words "Official Business." And for any such endorsement falsely made, the person so offending shall forfeit and pay three hundred dollars. *And provided further*, The several deputy postmasters throughout the Confederate States shall be and hereby are authorized to send through the mail, free of postage, all letters and packages which it may be their duty or they may have occasion to transmit to any person or place, and which shall relate

Franking privilege abolished.

Exception in favor of certain officers in the Postoffice Department

and deputy postmasters.

Penalty on these officers for making false endorsements on letters, etc.

Act establishing letter registration system, repealed.

Express and other chartered companies prohibited from carrying letters unless postage pre-paid.
Penalty for violation.

Transmission of mails between the territories.

exclusively to the business of their respective offices or to the business of the Post Office Department but in every such case the deputy postmaster sending any such letter or package shall endorse thereon, over his own signature, the words "Post Office Business," and for any and every such endorsement falsely made, the person making the same shall forfeit and pay three hundred dollars.

SEC. 6. *And be it further enacted*, That the third section of an act entitled "An act further to amend an act entitled 'An act to reduce and modify the rates of postage in the United States, and for other purposes, passed March third, eighteen hundred and fifty-one,'" approved March 3d, 1855, whereby the letter registration system was established, be and is hereby repealed, from and after the day when this act goes into effect.

SEC. 7. *Be it further enacted*, That no letters shall be carried by the express or other chartered companies, unless the same shall be pre-paid by being enclosed in a stamped envelope of this Confederacy; and any company violating the provisions of this act shall forfeit and pay the sum of five hundred dollars for each offence, to be recovered by action of debt in any court of this Confederacy having cognizance thereof, in the name and for the use of this Confederacy.

SEC. 8. *Be it further enacted*, That the Postmaster General of the Confederate States be and is hereby authorized to make all necessary arrangements for the transmission of mails between the territories of this and other governments, subject to the approval of the President, until postal treaties can be effected.

APPROVED February 23, 1861.