

MAIL ROUTE ON PUGET'S SOUND.

[To accompany bill H. R. No. 142.]

MAY 28, 1856.

Mr. HERBERT, from the Committee on the Post Office and Post Roads, made the following

REPORT.

The Committee on the Post Office and Post Roads, to whom was referred House bill No. 142, establishing a mail route on Puget's Sound, in Washington Territory, have had the same under consideration, and submit the following report:

In 1852, '53, and '54, mail-routes were established, by special acts of Congress, upon the waters of Puget's Sound, in Washington Territory, and postmasters were appointed.

Proposals have, at various times, been invited by the Postmaster General, and bids received, and a few towns on the routes hereinafter mentioned were supplied with mail facilities.

The commercial interests and relations existing between the various towns on the sound demand, necessarily, such mail facilities as will enable the business community thereof to have free intercourse with each other, and opportunities for interchange of their various commodities.

The resources of Washington Territory offer to the settler or man of business, or to those engaged in navigating the Pacific coast, the strongest inducements for the extension of their business, not only with home ports, but with those of the Sandwich Islands, Australia, China, Callao, Valparaiso, and all the South American ports.

Its lumber interests are not only of vital importance to the prosperity of the inhabitants of Washington Territory, but to those commercially interested in San Francisco and other home ports, as also the foreign ports above mentioned.

From the numerous mills at Olympia, Steilacoom, Seattle, Port Orchard, Port Gamble, Port Ludlow, and Bellingham Bay, and the extensive coal-fields on the waters of the sound, are daily shipped large quantities of lumber and other productions of the Territory.

During the last year, six thousand tons of coal were shipped from Bellingham Bay, and as the mines or fields are just being developed, it is but reasonable to calculate or suppose that the amount will be doubled or trebled during the present year. One hundred or more vessels, principally owned in San Francisco, are engaged in transport-

ing the products of these Territories to San Francisco and other Pacific seaports; and in the prosecution of this large and rapidly increasing trade, the regularity with which our commercial correspondence, (to say nothing of the individual wants of a constantly growing community,) upon which this trade is based, built up and excluded, becomes a necessity.

There are at the present time no mail facilities upon its waters, and nearly all the business, shipping and commercial, on this magnificent inland sea, is carried on below Olympia; and at certain seasons of the year, all communication, even that by canoe and boats, is cut off.

A weekly mail to be carried by steamer to all parts of the sound, is the chief want of the inhabitants, and of those having commercial or business intercourse with the Territories.

The collection district is situated one hundred and ten miles below Olympia, and, as is frequently the case, after a vessel has received her cargo at any of the ports on the sound, for China, the Sandwich Islands, or Australia, the merchants, owners, or consignors have been compelled, in consequence of their inability to send the requisite information to the captain by mail, to have the vessel come to San Francisco for orders, losing thereby two or three weeks' time.

Communications of vast importance pecuniarily, sent from San Francisco to Puget's Sound, have frequently been so long in transitu, that the vessels to which they were sent have loaded and cleared for their ports of destination before they arrived, causing serious loss to the owner or consignor; showing, conclusively, that mail facilities are requisite and necessary upon those waters, to enable those engaged in their navigation and trade to discharge their business with promptness and creditable despatch.

It has ever been, and the committee do not doubt that it will continue to be, the true interest of our government to countenance and uphold the enterprise of such of her citizens as shall engage in opening new avenues of trade in her new territories, and assist with "material aid" in the extension of our now world-wide commerce.

The value of this service to Washington Territory would be incalculable, and should not be estimated with the profit or loss to our postal department.

The security which would be thus offered to our commerce, and to individual enterprise on the northwest coast, by the presence of these steamers and display of our national flag, would not only greatly serve in keeping the Indians (never so troublesome there as now) in subjection, but give an impetus to the settler, to enterprise and commerce, extend the blessings of civilization to those comparatively new countries, which could not fail to redound to the credit of our government, and materially enhance the prosperity of the whole country.