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Report : Mr. Mills

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

FEBRUARY 5, 1895.—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. MILLS, from the Committee on Post-Offices and Post-Roads, submitted the following

REPORT:

[To accompany H. R. 7020.]

The Committee on Post-Offices and Post-Roads report to the Senate House bill 7020, to readjust the salaries and allowances of the postmasters at Guthrie, Oklahoma City, and Kingfisher, in Oklahoma Territory, and adopt the report of the Committee on the Post-Office and Post-Roads of the House of Representatives, and recommend the passage of the bill.

[House Report No. 864. Fifty-third Congress, second session.]

The Committee on the Post-Office and Post-Roads, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 4699) to authorize and direct the readjustment of the salaries and allowances for the postmasters at Guthrie, Kingfisher, and Oklahoma City, in Oklahoma Territory, beg leave to report a bill in lieu thereof, and recommend its passage.

A similar bill was reported from this committee in the Fifty-first Congress and the report thereon stated—

In support of this recommendation your committee state that by proclamation of the President certain lands in the Indian Territory were thrown open to settlement on April 21, 1889; that within a very short time thereafter postmasters were appointed for those places in the Territory, and so great was the influx of population into the cities named that the receipts of those offices from the very first day of their having been opened for business were at a rate exceeding the amount necessary to make them Presidential offices. The law requires that no office shall be made Presidential until the receipts for four successive quarters justify the payment of a salary of \$1,000 per annum to the postmaster. These offices, therefore, although doing a business much in excess of that required to make them Presidential offices, could not be made Presidential until the receipts for four successive quarters had been reported to the Post-Office Department and the necessary steps taken as provided by law.

The postmasters at these various places, therefore, performed labor largely in excess of that required in fourth-class post-offices, and yet the Department was only authorized to pay them the amount authorized by law to be paid to fourth-class postmasters. The Postmaster-General recommends that a bill be passed authorizing him to pay these postmasters the same salary from July 1, 1889, that they will be entitled to under the law readjusting their salaries, to take effect from July 1, 1890, as is shown by the following letter received from the Department:

OFFICE OF THE POSTMASTER-GENERAL,
Washington, D. C., April 30, 1890.

SIR: In reply to your request relative to H. R. bills Nos. 3847, 4757, and 5623, to authorize and direct the readjustment of the salaries and allowances for the postmasters at Guthrie, Kingfisher, and Oklahoma, Ind. T., I beg to state the records show that, under existing law (section 463, Postal Laws and Regulations, edition of

1887, R. S., section 3863), extraordinary allowances for clerk hire have been authorized for each of the said offices; and, under the proviso of section 2 of the act of March 3, 1883, the Auditor will make report for a readjustment of the salaries of the postmasters at these offices on the basis of the receipts of the respective offices for the four quarters ended March 31, 1890, to take effect July 1 next.

It will be observed that, by operation of existing law, there is no necessity for this special legislation. Under the present law, however, there is no provision for a retroactive adjustment of salary, and I am of the opinion that, in justice to the postmasters at these offices, the salary, as shown by the adjustment now in progress, should be made to take effect from the first day of the period which will form the basis of the adjustment; and so I recommend.

Very respectfully,

JNO. WANAMAKER, *Postmaster-General.*

HON. H. H. BINGHAM,
*Chairman Committee on the Post-Office and Post-Roads,
House of Representatives, Washington, D. C.*

Your committee think this is but just and reasonable, as the postmasters at those places have given good service and have received but little compensation therefor. We therefore recommend the passage of the bill, which embraces the objects sought to be accomplished by the three bills.

The following statement, submitted to the committee by the then postmaster at Guthrie, gives full details, showing the justice of this measure. The same situation existed at Oklahoma City and Kingfisher. The statement is as follows:

The Guthrie post-office was established in April, 1889, there being at that time but one post-office in existence, which was at Oklahoma City, to supply all of the territory which embraced Oklahoma Territory. I was notified by telegraph to take possession as postmaster of the Guthrie post-office April 26, 1889. By that time the city of Guthrie had at least 20,000 people in it. The office had been in operation in a tent conducted under the supervision of George M. Christian, assistant superintendent of the Railway Mail Service, from the 22d. When I took possession of the office there was not a building erected; the office was conducted in a tent 10 by 12. There were, at a low calculation, 50,000 letters still in mail bags which had not been opened and about a carload of newspaper mail. It was utterly impossible to house this mail, as tents were scarce, and the United States troops guarded it night and day.

About May 3 I had erected a building into which I moved the post-office. I had at that time a great expense, lumber in those days being worth about \$1 a foot, and placing racks, etc., made at an expense to myself of about \$2,000. The first day we undertook to open and distribute the mail in this building the crowd was so enormous that they broke down the floor and the troops had to be called to remove them. I then cut holes in the side of the building and made five distributing windows, allowing nobody to come inside except ladies and those who desired to purchase stamps. A line formed outside of each of those windows which averaged at least one-half mile in length. The office was open from daylight to dark, the nighttime being used to gradually handle what mail had been previously accumulated. The Department refused, owing to the size of my bond, to furnish me with the necessary supply of stamps to fill the demand. The sale of stamps for the quarter which ended June 30, 1889, amounted to fully \$3,000, one-half of which never appeared upon the records of the office, as they were stamps purchased at Arkansas City, Wichita, and Kansas City, Mo. No record was kept for a long time of the cancellation, because of the fact that it was utterly impossible to keep clerks for that purpose.

The line to which I have referred never broke up even during the nighttime for fully eight months. The records show that the receipts of the first year, running from April 22, 1889, until April, 1890, amounted to about \$12,000. The space which I occupied in the building for the use of the post-office was renting in like buildings throughout the town at from \$65 to \$75 per month. The average time put in in the office by myself during that year was about sixteen hours per day. A bill was introduced in the Fifty-first Congress, at the suggestion of the then Postmaster-General, to authorize him to pay the postmasters at Guthrie, Oklahoma City, and Kingfisher the same salary in 1889 as was by law being paid the other postmasters according to the receipts of the office. These offices were, under the law, classified as fourth class, and the postmasters' salaries were gauged by cancellation to in no event exceed \$1,000. The receipts from box rents alone in my office during the first year were about \$1,000, of which I received nothing whatever. The amount of business done at Guthrie post-office during the first year was the largest business ever done by any fourth-class post-office in the history of the Government. The office was unable to be classified, although it began business in April, 1889, up until July, 1890. In other words, making the first year virtually amount to fifteen months, the bill contemplates merely the placing of the postmasters at these three

offices, who had been put to extraordinary expense, upon the same footing that they would have been placed had the Postmaster-General had any discretion in the matter.

In other words, if the receipts of a post-office are \$12,000 a year the postmaster is entitled by law to a compensation of \$2,400. This bill was calculated to allow these offices which were only fourth class in name the same salaries as every other postmaster who is doing that amount of business receives in the United States. The extra amount of work, inconvenience, etc., are matters which of course do not appear in this calculation, and are matters which perhaps can not be taken into consideration, except as explanatory of the then existing situation. The Department allowed clerk hire to all these offices in keeping with the amount of business ordinarily done in second-class offices, which shows that it was purely owing to the law as it exists that the postmasters were unable to obtain fair recompense for their services.

