

The time of voyages given in the schedule of route is intended to mean "not exceeding" the time stated.

The number of miles for which payment will be made will be determined by the Hydrographer in the Navy Department, and computed by the shortest practicable route on the outward voyage only.

No assignment of contract without the approval of the Postmaster-General will be recognised.

The Postmaster-General will make deductions on account of the omission of voyages, or the failure to perform regular voyages, and impose fines and penalties for delays or irregularities in the performance of the service. He will also, after reasonable notice in writing to the contractor, annul any contract for negligent failure to convey the mails agreeably to contract, or for flagrant violations of the postal laws and regulations applicable to the ocean mail-service, or for a disregard of the provisions of the Act under which this advertisement is issued.

CLASSIFICATION OF VESSELS, ETC.

The vessels to be employed in the performance of the service herein referred to must be American-built steamships, owned and officered by American citizens in conformity with the existing laws, or so owned and officered and registered according to law. They must conform to the conditions prescribed therefor in the Act approved 3rd March, 1891—viz., the second-class shall be iron or steel steamships, capable of maintaining a speed of sixteen knots an hour at sea in ordinary weather, and of a gross registered tonnage of not less than 5,000 tons.

The contract for service on the route above specified is required by law to contain a stipulation that each of the vessels employed may carry passengers with their baggage, in addition to the mails, and may do all ordinary business done by steamships.

In determining the speed of any vessel tendered, the usual test of the Navy Department in such trials will be adopted and conducted by experts, and at the places designated by the Postmaster-General, which shall be reasonably convenient and in sufficient depth of water for the speed to be determined, and upon conditions to be prescribed by him; and the speed developed by the vessel upon such trial shall not be less than the number of knots per hour required for the second class, in the third section of the above-cited Act, and shall be maintained for four consecutive hours.

Vessels to be eligible for service in the second class must combine the capability for speed under the test required, and not less than a gross registered tonnage of 5,000 tons. A speed of a higher class and a tonnage of a lower class, and *vice versa*, will fix the rating in the lower class.

All steamships of the first and second classes hereafter built shall be constructed with particular reference to prompt and economical conversion into auxiliary naval cruisers, and according to plans and specifications to be agreed upon by and between the owners and the Secretary of the Navy, and they shall be of sufficient strength and stability to carry and sustain the working and operations of at least four effective breech-loading rifled guns of a calibre of not less than 6 in., and shall be of the highest rating known to maritime commerce. That these vessels may be promptly converted into auxiliary naval cruisers, it will be necessary for the builders or designers to observe in making the plans that the upper and main decks, when not plated entirely over, shall have a deck stringer-plate of 96 in. in width, running to within about 40 ft. of the ends of the vessel, from which parts it can be reduced in width. Plates of this width will obviate taking up the deck-plating and widening the stringer-plate if at any future time the vessel should be converted into an auxiliary naval cruiser. For the information of builders it is stated that the weight of a 6 in. gun is 10,770 lb., and that the gun-carriage is 6,300 lb., the shield 7,800 lb., and the circle 2,515 lb.

A copy of the calculations of the gross registered tonnage of each vessel must be furnished when the plans are submitted, together with the title of the maritime classification under which the vessel is designed.

Every bid must be made on the condition that the transportation of a mail messenger in charge of the mails, with room for the accommodation of himself and the mails, shall be provided free of charge.

The maximum rates of compensation for the ocean mail-service herein advertised for is 2 dollars per mile for each outward voyage.

No vessel will be employed which receives any other bounty or subsidy from the United States.

During the first two years of any contract term hereunder, one-fourth of the crew employed by the vessel shall be citizens of the United States; during the next three succeeding years, one-third; and during the remaining portion of said contract, at least one-half.

A thorough inspection by a competent naval officer or constructor of any vessel offered, and his report thereon to the Secretary of the Navy, and the approval of the same by the Secretary, are conditions precedent to the acceptance of such vessels by the Postmaster-General.

Contracts will provide that each vessel employed in the service referred to shall take as cadets or apprentices one American-born boy under twenty-one years of age for each 1,000 tons gross register, and one for each majority fraction thereof, who shall be educated in the duties of seamanship, rank as petty officers, and receive such pay for their services as may be reasonable, conformably to the provisions of section 8 of said Act.

Contracts hereunder will contain provisions for the taking and using by the United States as transports or cruisers of any vessels that may be accepted, upon payment to the owners of a fair actual value of the same at the time of the taking, and for the settlement of all disagreements as to said value by the selection of impartial appraisers in accordance with the provisions of section 9 of said Act.

Circulars containing copies of the above-cited Act, a list of the routes, instructions to bidders, and blank forms of proposals with accompanying bonds can be obtained of the Superintendent of Foreign Mails, Post Office Department, after the 2nd January, 1900.

CHARLES EMORY SMITH, Postmaster-General.