

**OCEAN STEAM  
NAVIGATION AND  
THE OCEAN POST**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649660308

Ocean Steam Navigation and the Ocean Post by Thomas Rainey

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**THOMAS RAINEY**

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# OCEAN STEAM NAVIGATION

AND THE

## OCEAN POST.

BY THOMAS RAINEY.



NEW-YORK:

D. APPLETON & CO., 346 & 348 BROADWAY.

TRÜBNER & CO.,  
PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON.

1853.

*233. h. 74.*

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ENTERED, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1857, by  
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DEDICATED,  
IN TOKEN OF  
RESPECT AND ESTEEM,  
TO THE  
HON. AARON VENABLE BROWN  
POST MASTER GENERAL  
OF THE  
UNITED STATES.





## P R E F A C E .

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IN offering to the Government and the public this little volume on Ocean Steam Navigation and the Ocean Post, I am conscious of my inability to present any new views on a subject that has engaged the attention of many of the most gifted statesmen and economists of this country and Europe. There is, however, no work, so far as I am informed, in any country, which treats of Marine Steam Navigation in its commercial, political, economic, social, and diplomatic bearings, or discusses so far the theory and practice of navigation as to develop the cost and difficulties attending high speed on the ocean, or the large expense incurred in a rapid, regular, and reliable transport of the foreign mails.

It has been repeatedly suggested to the undersigned by members of Congress, and particularly by some of the members of the committees on the Post Office and Post Roads in the Senate and House of Representatives, that there was no reliable statement, such as that which I have endeavored to furnish, on the general topics connected with trans-marine steam navigation, to which those not specially informed on the subject, could refer for the settlement of the many disputed points brought before Congress and the Departments. It is represented that there are many conflicting statements regarding the capabilities of ocean steam; the cost of running vessels; the consumption of fuel; the extent and costliness of repairs; the depreciation of vessels; the cost of navigating them; the attendant incidental expenses; the influence of ocean mails in promoting trade; the wants of commercial communities; the adaptation of the mail vessels to the war service; the rights of private enterprise; and the ability of ocean steamers generally to support themselves on their own receipts.

While this is true, there is no work on this general subject to which persons can refer for the authoritative settlement of any of these points, either absolutely or proximately; and while a simple statement of facts, acknowledged by all steamship-men, may tend to dispel

much misapprehension on this interesting subject, it will also be not unprofitable, I trust, to review some of the prominent arguments on which the mail steamship system is based. That system should stand or fall on its own merits or demerits alone; and to be permanent, it must be based on the necessities of the community, and find its support in the common confidence of all classes. I have long considered a wise, liberal, and extended steam mail system vitally essential to the commerce of the country, and to the continued prosperity and power of the American Union. Yet, I am thoroughly satisfied that this very desirable object can never be attained by private enterprise, or otherwise than through the direct pecuniary agency and support of the General Government. The abandonment of our ocean steam mail system is impossible so long as we are an active, enterprising, and commercial people. And so far from the service becoming self-supporting, it is probable that it will never be materially less expensive than at the present time.

It has been my constant endeavor to give the best class of authorities on all the points of engineering which I have introduced, as that regarding the cost of steam and high mail speed; and to this end I have recently visited England and France, and endeavored to ascertain the practice in those countries, especially in Great Britain.

I desire to return my sincere acknowledgments for many courtesies received from MR. CHARLES ATHERTON, of London, England; ROBERT MURRAY, Esq., Southampton; and HON. HORATIO KING, of Washington, D. C.

THOMAS RAINEY.

NEW-YORK, *December 9, 1857.*

## THE ARGUMENT.

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1. *Assumed (SECTION I.) that steam mails upon the ocean control the commerce and diplomacy of the world ; that they are essential to our commercial and producing country ; that we have not established the ocean mail facilities commensurate with our national ability and the demands of our commerce ; and that we to-day are largely dependent on, and tributary to our greatest commercial rival, Great Britain, for the postal facilities, which should be purely national, American, and under our own exclusive control :*
2. *Assumed (SECTION II.) that fast ocean mails are exceedingly desirable for our commerce, our defenses, our diplomacy, the management of our squadrons, our national standing, and that they are demanded by our people at large :*
3. *Assumed (SECTION III.) that fast steamers alone can furnish rapid transport to the mails ; that these steamers can not rely on freights ; that sailing vessels will ever carry staple freights at a much lower figure, and sufficiently quickly ; that while steam is eminently successful in the coasting trade, it can not possibly be so in the transatlantic freighting business ; and that the rapid transit of the mails, and the slower and more deliberate transport of freight is the law of nature :*
4. *Assumed (SECTION IV.) that high, adequate mail speed is extremely costly, in the prime construction of vessels, their repairs, and their more numerous employées ; that the quantity of fuel consumed is enormous, and ruinous to unaided private enterprise ; and that this is clearly proven both by theory and indisputable facts as well as by the concurrent testimony of the ablest writers on ocean steam navigation :*
5. *Assumed (SECTION V.) that ocean mail steamers can not live on their own receipts ; that neither the latest nor the anticipated improvements in steam shipping promise any change in this fact ; that self-support is not likely to be attained by increasing the size of steamers ; that the propelling power in fast steamers occupies all of the available space not devoted to passengers and express freight ; and that steamers must be fast to do successful mail and profitable passenger service :*