The bill extending the time and
increasing the number of trips on
My contract overland mail contract
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Congress the latter part of July or
early in March 1861. Under the
act of Congress it became the duty
of the Hon Montgomery Blair
P.M. Genl in President Lincolns
Cabinette to execute the necessary
orders to carry out the act of Congress
Early in March accompanied by
the Hon J.A. Grow I called on the P.M.
who at once ordered the Clerk in
charge of my route to make out
the necessary orders and hand
them to me that day. He then said
to Mr Grow and myself you come
down to-morrow and take
dinner with me to-morrow and
I will sign the orders then
on the next day the Hon David
Wilmot R.E. Denison J.A. Grow and
myself went out to Glen Springs
as requested by the P.M. Genl
on our arrival we found a number
of the cabinette then discussing
the all important question of that
time of War or no War
after dinner the P.M. Genl signed
the orders and we returned to the city

on the following day I called at the P.O. Dept the orders were properly intend on the books and copies given to me. a few days after I called on the P.M.Genl to bid him goodly and told him I intended to leave that night for my home in Texas
He said to me you must not go tonight as I have a special invitation from President Lincoln to call on him that night. He said you come to my house at 8 P.M. and I will go with you to the White House. I called as requested and we at once went to the White House I was taken into the cabinette room and introduced by the P.M.Genl to Pres Lincoln and all the members of the Cabinette who were there apparently waiting for us. The President asked me to take a seat at the big Table next to him. He then said to me you have been highly recomended to me as a reliable man by the P.M.G the. Hon G A Grow and others. and that you are an old citizen of Texas and about to return to your home and my object in wishing to see you was I desire to entrust to you a secret message to Gov Houston. I said yes Mr President. I should have left tonight but for his invitation to call on him. which was a great

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pleasure to me. He then asked me a great many questions when I was born when I went to Texas what I had been doing then how I liked the state and what was the public sentiment in Texas in regard to the prospects of a war. All of which I answered to the best of my ability He then said to me that the message was of such importance that before handing it to me he would read it to me. Before reading the message he said this is a confidential and secret message no one besides my Cabinet and myself know anything about it and we are all sworn to secrecy. That he would swear me in as one of his Cabinet. and then said to me in a peculiar way hold up your right hand which I did and he said now consider yourself a Member of my Cabinet He then read the message explaining his meaning at times as he was reading it The message was written in his bold hand on large sheets of paper and consisted of several pages and was signed A. Lincoln. I cannot give the exact words of the message but the substance was as follows. It referred first to the surrender by Gen Twiggs of the U.S. Troops Forts and property in Texas. to the rebels and referred

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to appoint Gov Houston a Major Genl
in the U.S. army in case he would accept
and authorize him to take full
command in Texas take charge of
all Govt property and such of the
old army as he could get together
and to recruit 100,000 men if
possible and call Texas in the Union
and that in case he did accept
he would support him with the
whole power of the Govt both of
the army and navy. after hearing the
message and I suggested to the President
that it was of such importance that
perhaps he had better send it by some
Govt official. He said no that those
Texas would hang any official caught
with that paper. I replied that they would
hang me too if they caught me with
that message, He replied I do not
wish to have you hung and if you
think there is so much danger I will
not ask you to take it. although I am
anxious to get it to Gov Houston as
soon as possible and as you live
in Texas and about to return I was
in hopes you would take it. I replied I
will take the message as your personal
request it with much pleasure and
deliver safely to Gov Houston
only stipulating that it should
remain as one of your communications

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which he assured me should be done.
I remained there until about midnight
the question of war or no war was
discussed by different members of the
Cabinetto. Mr Seward said there would
be no war the President said he hoped
and prayed that there would not be a
war. I said to Mr Seward that as he
knew Congress had extended my overland
mail contract one contract term and
doubled the service that to put the increased
service in operation would cost me over
$50,000. which would be lost in case of
war. Mr Seward said to me there did
be no war go ahead and put on the
increased service. you can no risk in
doing so. he said that Humphry
Marshall and some others whose names
I have forgotten had left Washington
a few days before that to go into
the border and hold public Meetings
and assure the south to meet the
north and have a national convention
for the purpose of amending the
Constitution which he had no doubt
would be done and that so far as
he was individually concerned he
would prefer giving the southern
brethren the parchment and there
unto to an amendment to the Constitution
to suit themselves rather to have a
civil war. He said in all probability

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some arangments could be made to pay for the slaves and the gradually gradual abolishment of slavery
I left for home the next night and went direct to Austin the capital of Texas Gov Houston had been deposed by the rebel authorities before my arrival but he was still in the Gov Mansion. I arrived in austin about one o clock in the night and went direct to the Gov Mansion. as I was anxious to deliver the message to the Gov as soon as possible The Gov was up packing getting ready to move. He met me at the door and took me into his office. He asked me a great many questions in regard to the conduction of public affairs in Washington about the prospects of war &c &c
I told him I had a sent message from Presdent Lincoln for him that upon delivering it I expected his answer that he would keep it a secret I told him of my interview with the President and how he had sworn me in as one of his Cabinette. He laughed and said that was just like Lincoln. I then gave him the Message. He read it over 2 or 3 times standing under the Gas Lights then turning to me he held the paper in his right hand and repeated the words by Late at least a dozen times. in a loud tone of voice

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He said to me you recollect a letter between Sen Rusk and myself in Gen Russ rooms at the Kirkwood Hotel soon after the passage of the Kansas and Nebraska act in which Sen Rusk censured me for my vote on that act and for my refusal to resign my seat in the U.S. Senate when asked to do so by the Legislature as you was present and went with me to my rooms at Willards Hotel and we found there Gov Bell N.C. Gov Cobb Ga. and Gov Shorter Ala. and that I predicted to them what would be the result of the passage of the Kansas & Nebraska act. I said I recollected distinctly what he predicted which repeated as follows. That the abolitionists would Elect the President. that South Carolina would be the first to secede to be followed by all the slave holding States that the most bloody drama in the history of the world would follow that the north had the army & navy that they had the men and the money that they would blockade our ports and throw South inland with a large army and as they took and occupied territory they would hold it and that finally they would overrun the South abolish slavery and put the South under

military rule that he feared that some victorious Genl might with a big army at his back declare himself dictator his only hope was in good sense of the common people. He said that the authority came to late that had he had it before Genl Twigs surrendered he might have carried out the Presidents wishes but that then it was impossible as confederate troops were being mustered in every town in the state and that should he make the effort it would inaugurate a fratricidal war in Texas which he would not be guilty of and would injure the union cause. He asked me to make a note of his prediction and see if it did not come true which I did at the time. He said a bloody war was inevitable that it must come and that I would probably live to see which the prediction of Mr Seward or himself would be nearest to the truth

Feb 9th 1897.

G. H. Giddings

Of San. Antonio

Texas

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Life of Lincoln
1899 edition
See also-
Giddings, G. H.

G. H. Giddings

The bill extending the time and increasing the number of trips on my southern overland mail contract via El Paso to California passed Congress the latter part of Feby or early in March 1861. Under the act of Congress it became the duty of the Hon. Montgomery Blair P. M. Genl in President Lincoln's Cabinet to execute the necessary orders to carry out the act, of Congress. Early in March accompanied by the Hon. G. A. Grow I called on the P. M. G. who at once ordered the clerk in charge of my route to make out the necessary orders and hand them to me that day. He then said to Mr. Grow and myself "you come down to Silver Springs and take dinner with me tomorrow and I will sign the orders then." On the next day the Hon[s] David Wilmot, R. E. Fenton, G. A. Grow and myself went out to Silver Springs as requested by the P. M. Genl

On our arrival we found a number of the Cabinet there discussing the all important question at that time of War or no War.

After dinner the P. M. Genl signed the orders and we returned to the city

On the following day I called at the P. O. Dept and the orders were properly entered on the books and the papers given to me. A few days after I called on the P. M. Genl to bid him goodby and told him I intended to leave that night for

my home in Texas

He said to me "you must not go tonight as I have a special invitation from President Lincoln to call on him that night. He said you come to my house at 8, P. M. and I will go with you to the White House." I called as requested and we at once went to the White House I was taken into the Cabinet room and introduced by the P. M. Genl to Pres Lincoln and all the members of the Cabinet who were there apparently waiting for us. The President asked me to take a seat at the big Table next to him. He then said to me "you have been highly recommended to me as a reliable man by the P. M. G. the Hon G.A.Grow and others, and that you are an old citizen of Texas and about to return to your home, and my object in wishing to see you was I desire to intrust to you a secret message to Gov Houston." I said "yes, Mr President, I should have left tonight but for this invitation to call on him, which was a great pleasure to me." He then asked me a great many questions, when I was born, when I went to Texas, what I had been doing there, how I liked the State and what was the public sentiment in Texas in regard to the prospects of a war. All of which I answered to the best of my ability

He then said to me that the message was of such importance that before handing it to me he

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Thereupon, the Convention deposed ~~Houston~~ him, putting in his place provisionally, the Lieutenant-Governor.

A few days after Lincoln's inauguration ~~the~~ news of conflict between Houston and the Convention ~~was known in~~ reached Washington. ~~The President~~ Lincoln was anxious that an assurance of Federal aid should be given to Houston, but the difficulty of getting any message to Texas at that day was extreme, especially if it should be suspected that the bearer was a Federal agent. There was, however, at that moment in Washington, a Texan well known to the Congressmen of the day and intimately acquainted with one of the members of Mr. Lincoln's cabinet, Postmaster General Blair. This man was George H. Giddings, who for several years had held the contracts for the El Paso route to California. ~~Mr. Giddings was by birth a Pennsylvanian. In 1840 he had followed a brother to Texas. He had served in the Mexican war, and after the cessation of hostilities had gone into business in the State. In 1854 he had taken the first mail contract let by the Government. The route was from Houston to San Antonio. These routes gradually extended until he was carrying mail from New Orleans to San Pedro, about 30 miles from Los Angeles.~~ The business connected with his government contracts had caused him to spend his winters for several years in Washington. In the winter of 1860 and '61 he had been in the city and had secured the passage of a bill extending his mail contracts.

When the question of sending some communication to Houston came up in Mr. Lincoln's cabinet, the Postmaster General suggested that as Mr. Giddings was soon returning

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to the State, it might be possible to send the message by him. Mr. Lincoln decided to see Mr. Giddings at once. The meeting was arranged by Mr. Blair and on the very day that Houston was deposed by the Convention, ~~and the Lieutenant-Governor put in his place~~, Mr. Giddings started for Texas with a message from the President. The story of this secret mission has never been told in print before. It was prepared by Mr. Giddings at the request of an old friend, Hon. Galusha A. Grow, of Pennsylvania, and is here published through the courtesy of Mr. Giddings.

The bill extending the time and increasing the number of trips on my southern overland mail contract via El Paso to California passed Congress the latter part of February or early in March 1861. Under the act of Congress it became the duty of the Hon. Montgomery Blair, Postmaster General in President Lincoln's Cabinet to execute the necessary orders to carry out the act. Early in March accompanied by the Hon. G. A. Grow I called on the Postmaster General who at once ordered the clerk in charge of my route to make out the necessary orders and hand them to me that day. He then said to Mr. Grow and myself

"You come down to Silver Springs and take dinner with me tomorrow and I will sign the orders then."

On the next day the Hons. David Wilmot, R. E. Fenton, G. A. Grow and myself went out to Silver Springs as requested by the Postmaster General. On our arrival we found a number of the Cabinet there discussing the all important question at that time of War or no War. After

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dinner the Postmaster General signed the orders and we returned to the city.

On the following day I called at the Post Office Department and the orders were properly entered on the books and the papers given to me. A few days after I called on the Postmaster General to bid him goodby and told him I intended to leave that night for my home in Texas.

"You must not go" he said to me, "as I have a special invitation from President Lincoln for you to call on him tonight. You come to my house at 8 P. M. and I will go with you to the White House."

I called as requested and we at once went to the White House. I was taken into the Cabinet room and introduced by the Postmaster General to President Lincoln and all the members of the Cabinet who were there apparently waiting for us. The President asked me to take a seat at the big Table next to him. He then said to me "You have been highly recommended to me as a reliable man by the Postmaster General the Hon. G. A. Grow and others. They tell me that you are an old citizen of Texas and about to return to your home. My object in wishing to see you is that I desire to intrust to you a secret message to Governor Houston." I said "Yes, Mr. President, I should have left tonight but for this invitation to call on you, which was a great pleasure to me."

He then asked me a great many questions, where I was born, when I went to Texas, what I had been doing there, how I liked the State and what was the public sentiment

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in Texas in regard to the prospects of a war. All of which I answered to the best of my ability.

He then said to me, that the message was of such importance that before handing it to me he would read it to me. Before beginning to read he said "This is a confidential and secret message. No one besides my Cabinet and myself know anything about it and we are all sworn to secrecy. I am going to swear you in as one of my Cabinet." And then he said to me in a jocular way "Hold up your right hand" which I did. "Now" said he, "consider yourself a member of my Cabinet."

He then read the message explaining his meaning at times as he was reading it. The message was written in big bold hand on large sheets of paper and consisted of several pages. It was signed A. Lincoln. I cannot give the exact words of the message but the substance was as follows.

It referred first to the surrender by General Twiggs of the U. S. Troops, forts and property in Texas, to the rebels, and offered to appoint Governor Houston a Major General in the U. S. Army in case he would accept. It authorized him to take full command in Texas, taking charge of all Government property and such of the old army as he could get together and to recruit 100,000 men if possible, and to hold Texas in the Union. In case he did accept the President promised to support him with the whole power of the Government both of the Army and Navy. After hearing the message read I suggested to the President that it was of such importance that perhaps he had

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better send it by some Government official.

"No" he said. "Those Texans would hang any official caught with that paper." I replied that they would hang me, too, if they caught me with that message.

"I do not wish to have you hung" he replied, "and if you think there is so much danger I will not ask you to take it, although I am anxious to get it to Governor Houston as soon as possible. As you live in Texas and are about to return I was in hopes you would take it."

"I will take the message with much pleasure" I replied, "as you personally request it, and will deliver it safely to Governor Houston only stipulating that it shall remain as one of your Cabinet secrets." This he assured me should be done.

I remained there until about midnight the question of war or no war was discussed by different members of the Cabinet. Mr. Seward said there would be no war the President said he hoped and prayed that there would not be a war. I said to Mr. Seward that as he knew Congress had extended my overland mail contract one contract term and doubled the service, that to put the increased service in operation, would cost me over $50,000, which would be lost in case of war, and I asked him what I better do.

"There will be no war" Mr. Seward said, "go ahead and put on the increased service. You will run no risk in doing so." He said that Humphry Marshall and some others whose names I have forgotten, had left Washington a few days before that to go into the border and hold public

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meetings and ask the South to meet the North and have a National Convention for the purpose of amending the Constitution. He had no doubt, he said, that this would be done and that so far as he was individually concerned he would prefer giving the Southern brothers the parchment and let them enter the amendment to the Constitution to suit themselves rather than have a civil war. He said in all probability some arrangements would be made to pay for the slaves and the gradual abolishment of slavery.

I left for home the next night and went direct to Austin the capital of Texas. Governor Houston had been deposed by the rebel authorities before my arrival but he was still in the Governor's Mansion. I arrived in Austin about one o'clock in the night and went direct to the Governor's Mansion, as I was anxious to deliver the message to the Governor as soon as possible. The Governor was up packing getting ready to move. He met me at the door, "Sonny" he said,- he always called me Sonny - "you are welcome, come in and tell me the news." He took me into his office and asked me a great many questions in regard to the condition of public affairs in Washington about the prospects of war, &c., &c.

I told him I had a secret message from President Lincoln for him and that before delivering it I required his promise that he would keep it a secret. I told him of my interview with the President and how he had sworn me in as one of his Cabinet. He laughed and said that was just like Lincoln. I then gave him the message. He read it over two or three times leaning on his crutches

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under the gas lights. Then turning to me he raised his right hand in which he held the paper above his head and brought it down at least a dozen times, repeating the words "too late, too late" in a loud tone of voice.

"You recollect" he said to me, "a little altercation between Senator Rusk and myself in General Rusk's rooms at the Kirkwood Hotel in Washington soon after the passage of the Kansas and Nebraska Act in which Senator Rusk censured me for my vote on that Act and for my refusal to resign my seat in the U. S. Senate when asked to do so by the Texas Legislature? You were present and went with me to my rooms at Willard's Hotel and we found there Governor Bell, M. C., Governor Cobb, M. C. and Governor Shorter, M. C., you remember that I predicted to them what would be the result of the passage of the Kansas and Nebraska Act." I said I recollected distinctly.

What he had predicted on that occasion he now repeated as follows:- That the abolitionists would elect the President, that South Carolina would be the first to secede to be followed by all the slave holding States, that the most bloody war in the history of the world would follow, that the North had the army and navy, that they had the men and the money, that they would blockade our ports and move South inland with a large army and as they took and occupied territory they would hold it and that finally they would overrun the South, abolish slavery and put the South under Military rule, that he feared that some victorious General might with a big army at his back declare himself dictator. His only hope, he said,

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was in the good sense of the common people.

The authority from President Lincoln came too late, he said, had he had it before General Twiggs surrendered he might have carried out the President's wishes, but that now it was impossible. Confederate troops were being mustered in every town in the State. Should he make the effort it would inaugurate a fratricidal war in Texas which he would not be guilty of. It would only injure the Union Cause. He asked me to make a note of his prediction and see if it did not come true and I did at the time. He said a bloody war was inevitable that it must come and that I would probably live to see whether the prediction of Mr. Seward or himself would be nearest to the truth.

Feby. 9th, 1897.

G. H. GIDDINGS,

of San Antonio, Texas.

See [illegible]

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