

ELUSIVE POSTAL HISTORY OF HALE & COMPANY 1843-1845

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It is likely that the Independent Mail era began with the posting of the handbill shown in Figure 1 in a public counting house in Boston, Massachusetts on December 6, 1843. This original handbill is dated December 5, 1843 with a signed manuscript December 6, 1843 notation at the bottom.

Hale and Company was the largest and most successful of the independent mail companies. They advertised that they had 110 offices and 1100 employees. Many of these offices were actually part of Hale's conjunctive agreement network and likely not under their direct control.

It is purported that Hale & Company carried 50,000 to 60,000 letters a day, and if accurate, was a significant percentage of the east coast mail, causing a great deal or revenue loss to the government postal system. This revenue loss eventually caused the postal system to lower their rates effective July 1, 1845, putting the independent mail companies out of business.

With this large volume of mail it is not surprising that 2,000 to 3,000 letters carried by Hale & Company have survived. **However, many of the markings are very elusive and this exhibit will visit some of these including stamps, town cancels, manuscript markings, handstamps and conjunctive uses**

**FOREIGN LETTER
OFFICE,
13 Court Street,**

In connection with **HALE'S FOREIGN LETTER
OFFICE..NEW YORK**

LETTERS will be forwarded for the *London, Liverpool, & Havre Packets*: for **South America, W. Indies, & all other Foreign Ports**, at 18 3-4 cts.

Letters for New York,
Will be forwarded by **SPECIAL MESSENGER
DAILY, at 6 1-4 cents.**

Letter Bags will be closed at 20 minutes to 4.
Office, 13 Court St. Boston, } **JAS. W. HALE,**
58 Wall St. N. York. } **W. B. KIMBALL,**
December 5, 1843.

PLEASE TACK THIS UP.

*From a list of our countrymen this day Dec 6 -
Jas. W. HALE
Boston, Mass.*

Figure 1. Hale & Company Handbill, December 5, 1843.

STAMPS

Hale & Company created six different stamps, 75L1 through 75L6. In a census of 1810 Hale letters, 650 (36%) had stamps affixed. Of these 650, 130 (20%) are 75L1, 80 (12%) are 75L2 and 440 (68%) are 75L5. There are three 75L3's known, none on cover. One 75L4 is known, also not on cover. Only one **75L6** is known and is shown below in Figure 2.

This letter is dated June 22, 1844 from Boston, Massachusetts to New York City, New York. The overprint that creates the 75L6 reads "Office/23 State St". This overprint shares the stamp with a Boston rectangular forwarding handstamp. In the spring of 1844 Hale moved their Boston office from 13 Court Street to 23 State Street and the overprint may have been applied to show this new address.



Figure 2. 75L6 Letter Dated June 22, 1844, Boston to New York City

STAMPS

The vast majority of Hale letters bear just one stamp. A very small number bear two stamps and letters with three or more stamps can be counted on one hand. Figure 3 shows a letter from Richmond, Virginia to New York City, New York dated December 7, 1844 with a strip of four 75L1's. Since Hale did not have an office in Richmond this letter was likely carried privately to the Philadelphia office. The manuscript "P" cancel often appears on letters with stamps originating in the Philadelphia office.



Figure 3. Strip of Four 75L1's Richmond to New York City Dated December 7, 1844.

Figure 4 shows a letter from Boston, Massachusetts to New York City, New York dated July 20, 1844 that bears three precanceled 75L5's. Hale pioneered the use of precancels either for accounting purposes or for labor saving in canceling the large volume of mail.



Figure 4. Three Precanceled 75L5's Boston to New York City Dated July 20, 1844.

TOWN MARKINGS

Hale & Company had 33 offices, most of which had forwarding handstamps with the town name. Ten of these are notable for having very few surviving examples or are very unusual in design. These include Brooklyn, Danvers, Holliston, Marblehead, Nantucket, Pittsfield, Pottsville, Schuylkill Haven, Stonington and Wareham.

Figure 5 shows a letter from **Brooklyn**, New York to Boston, Massachusetts dated December 6, 1844 with the very distinctive Brooklyn eagle forwarding handstamp. There is a manuscript notation “Mailed late for the 7th” indicating the letter arrived in the Brooklyn Hale office after the mail bags for Boston had departed. Although there are nine known examples of this handstamp, most are very faint.



Figure 5. Brooklyn Eagle Forwarding Handstamp to Boston Dated December 6, 1844.

Figure 6 shows an undated letter from **Danvers**, Massachusetts to Brooklyn, New York. Just four of the Danvers forwarding handstamps are known, all used in a two month period from August 13 to October 2, 1844. This is one of only three Hale letters known with a Brooklyn destination.

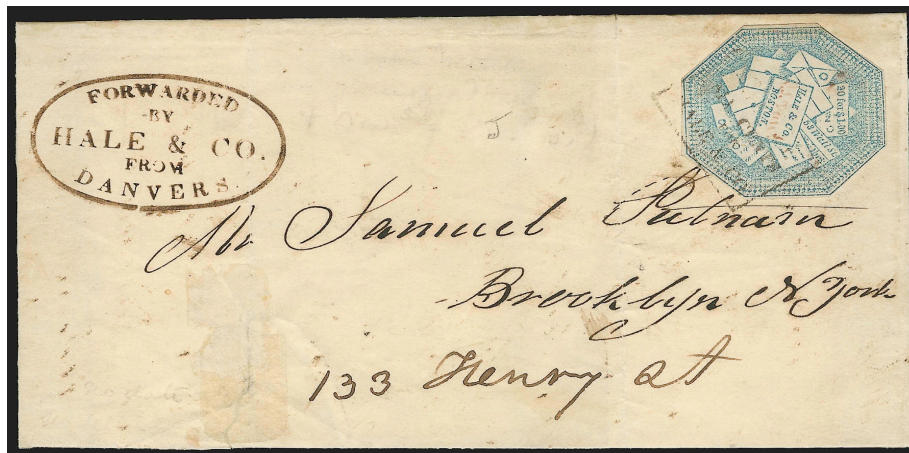


Figure 6. Danvers to Brooklyn, Undated

TOWN MARKINGS

Figure 7 shows a letter from **Holliston** to Andover, Massachusetts dated January 27, 1845. This is the only known example of this handstamp and is an unlikely location for a Hale office as the town is very small with little industry. No Hale advertisements mention Holliston.



Figure 7. Holliston to Andover Massachusetts Dated January 27, 1845.

A letter from **Marblehead**, Massachusetts to New York City, New York dated November 8, 1844 is shown in Figure 8. Hale's agent in Marblehead was John Gilloy but no office address has been found. Seven letters are known originating in Marblehead but only the letter in Figure 8 bears the "Marblehead" manuscript notation.



Figure 8. Marblehead to New York City Dated November 8, 1844.

TOWN MARKINGS

Figure 9 shows a letter from **Nantucket** to Andover, Massachusetts dated January 27, 1845. Nine letters are known originating in Nantucket and there is strong evidence that Hale's New Bedford agent Amos Bates provided this service. The handstamp resembles many of the Hale forwarding handstamps except the town name is in manuscript form. Four letters with this handstamp are known used for just two months from January 10, 1845 to March 3, 1845.



Figure 9. Nantucket to Andover Massachusetts Dated January 27, 1845.

The Hale office in **Pittsfield**, Massachusetts had just one handstamp and is shown in the Figure 10 letter to Rochester, New York dated July 30 1844. Just three examples of this handstamp are known used just two days from July 29 to July 30 and all are faint impressions. This letter is one of only two Hale letters with a Rochester destination.



Figure 10. Pittsfield to Rochester Dated July 30, 1844.

TOWN MARKINGS

Figure 11 shows a letter from Pottsville to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania dated October 8, 1844. Just three of these handstamps are known used for just two weeks from September 24 to October 8, 1844.

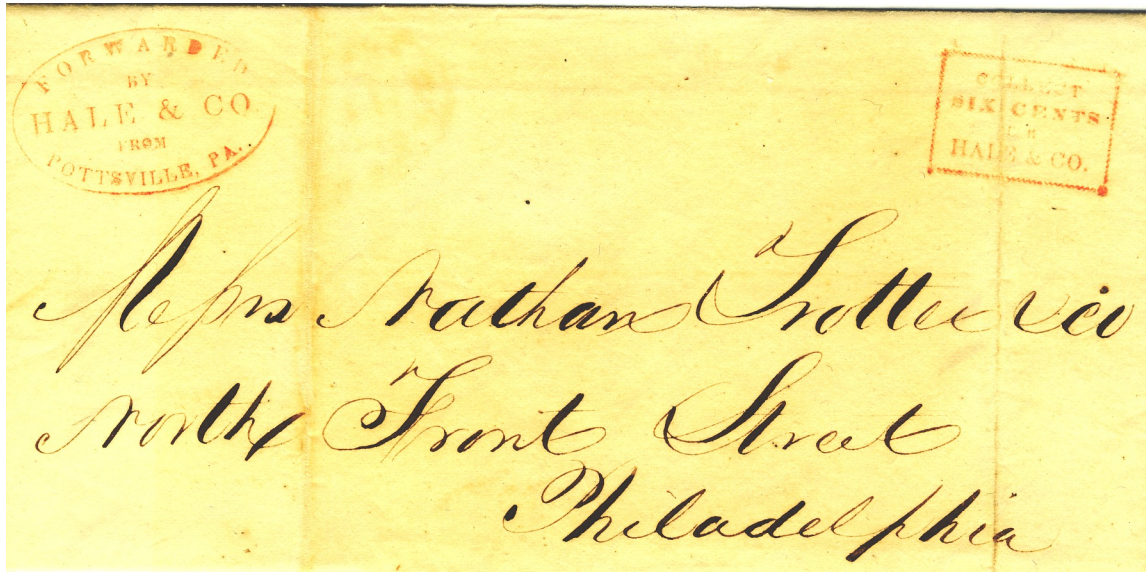


Figure 11. Pottsville to Philadelphia Dated October 8, 1844.

The only known example of the **Schuylkill Haven**, Pennsylvania forwarding handstamp is shown in Figure 12 in a letter from Wilkes-Barre to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania dated August 22, 1844. The letter bears three 75L1's and was probably carried privately to the Hale office in Schuylkill Haven.



Figure 12. Wilkes-Barre to Philadelphia Dated August 22, 1844.

TOWN MARKINGS

The Hale Stonington forwarding handstamp, a large rectangle, is a unique design in the Hale system. Just six examples are known used for three months from February 2 to May 24, 1845. Figure 13 shows a letter from Lyme, Connecticut to New York City, New York dated April 1, 1845. It is not clear why this letter was not posted in the Hale New London office that was closer to Lyme.

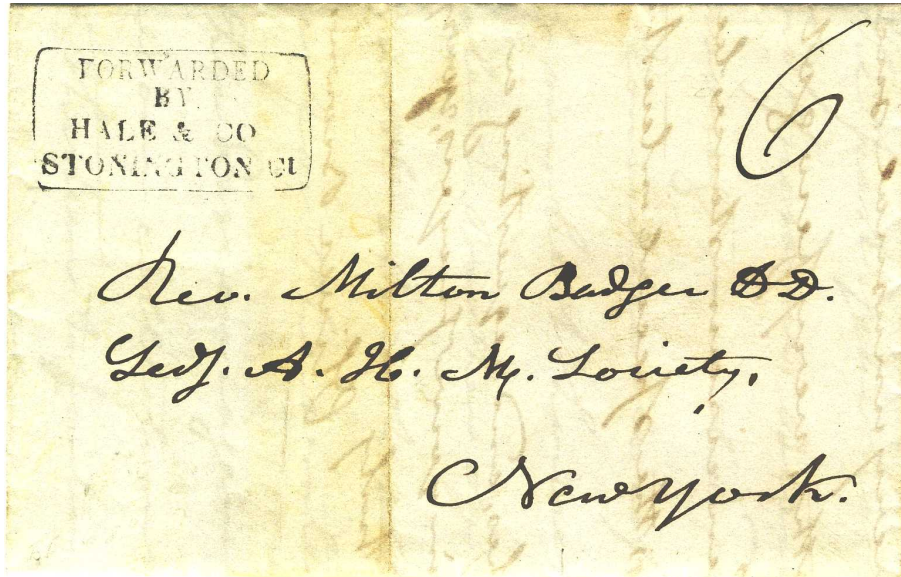


Figure 13. Lyme to New York City Dated April 1, 1845.

Figure 14 shows a letter from **Wareham** to New Bedford, Massachusetts dated April 15, 1845 and shows the only known example of the Wareham forwarding handstamp. As with the Nantucket handstamp shown previously, the town name is in manuscript form and likely was carried by Amos Bates, Hale's agent in New Bedford.

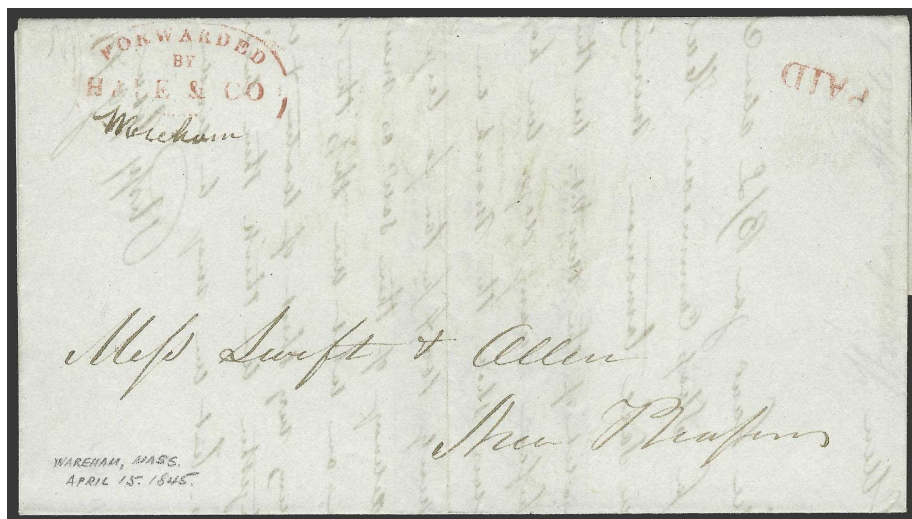


Figure 14. Wareham to New Bedford Dated April 15, 1845.

MANUSCRIPT MARKINGS

While there are many manuscript markings on Hale letters the two shown here are notable for their intended use and very few known examples. Just three Hale letters are known with “Way” manuscript markings. Figure 15 shows a letter from Northampton, Massachusetts to New York City, New York dated August 3, 1844 with the notation “Collect 7 Way”.

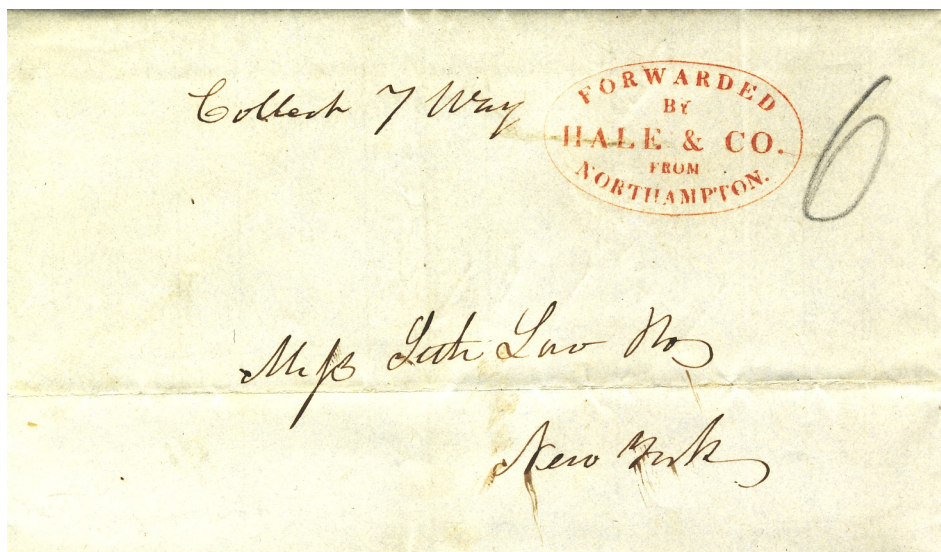


Figure 15. Way letter from Northampton to New York City Dated August 3, 1844.

A rate of 3 cents is the only known special rate in the Hale system. It was in use between Hale offices along the Connecticut River in Massachusetts. Only three examples of this special rate are known. This special rate is shown in Figure 16 on a letter from Greenfield to Springfield, Massachusetts dated October 28, 1844.

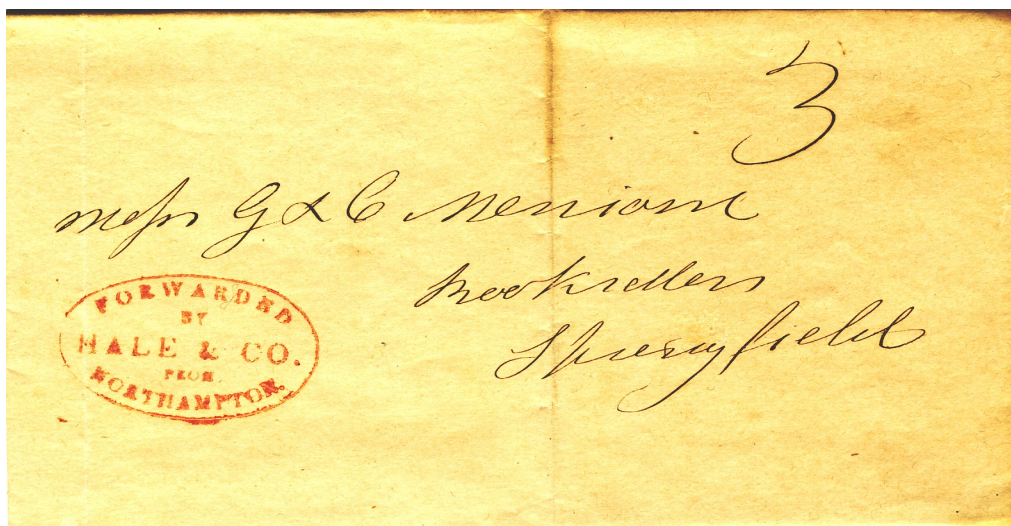


Figure 16. “3” Rated Letter From Greenfield to Springfield Dated October 28, 1844.

HANDSTAMPS

There are 87 different known Hale handstamps. Many of them saw very considerable use but there are a few that saw such little use some went undetected for many years. Here are five of these seldom seen handstamps.

The first is actually a family of forwarding handstamps that bear month and day dates. The date range is from April 26 to May 21 in 1845. The number known is shown below. Perhaps there are other dates still to be found. What is curious is what purpose these dated handstamps served. No other Independent Mail company used dated handstamps. By April 26 Hale knew he would close his company because of the new much lower postal rates that would take effect on July 1, 1845. The mystery remains unsolved.

April 26	Saturday	3
April 28	Monday	3.
April 29	Tuesday	2.
April 30	Wednesday	2.
May 1	Thursday	1
May 3	Saturday	3.
May 5	Monday	1
May 8	Thursday	1.
May 9	Friday	1.
May 10	Saturday	1.
May 12	Monday	1.
May 19	Monday	2.
May 21	Wednesday	1.

Figure 17 shows a letter with the **May 21** date in the forwarding handstamp. The letter is from Boston, Massachusetts to New York City, New York dated May 21, 1845. This handstamp is almost identical to a much more common Boston forwarding handstamp except the word "FROM" is replaced with the date.



Figure 17. May 21 Handstamp From Boston to New York City Dated May 21, 1845.

HANDSTAMPS

A second Boston Hale forwarding handstamp is notable for its **size**, very few known examples and its short period of use. Figure 18 shows a letter from Boston, Massachusetts to New York City, New York dated April 5, 1845 that bears this striking forwarding handstamp. Only six examples are known, all used in a five week period from March 18 to April 24, 1845.



Figure 18. Boston to New York City Dated April 5, 1845.

New York City used large rectangular forwarding handstamps very early in Hale's New York City office. There are two of these, one with 19 known examples has four lines and all the letters are vertical. The second is almost identical to the first except the letters are **slanted** to the right and only one example is known and appears on the letter in Figure 19 from New York City, New York to Boston, Massachusetts dated January 10, 1844.



Figure 19. New York City to Boston Dated January 10, 1844.

HANDSTAMPS

Hale carried his own mail to and from Portland, Maine and therefore it is surprising that no forwarding handstamps have been found. The only Portland office handstamp, “**P.O. PAID**”, is shown in Figure 20 in a letter from Portland, Maine to Providence, Rhode Island dated October 4, 1844. Only one example of this handstamp is known.



Figure 20. P.O. PAID Handstamp Portland to Providence Dated October 4, 1844.

Penny Post Paid markings were used to indicate that a fee had been paid at origin for delivery to the addressee at the destination. Hale used four different Penny Post Paid handstamps, two in Boston, one in New Bedford and one in New York City. All saw very limited use. Figure 21 shows the New York City handstamp on a letter from New York City, New York to Boston, Massachusetts dated April 5, 1845. Only four examples of this handstamp are known.

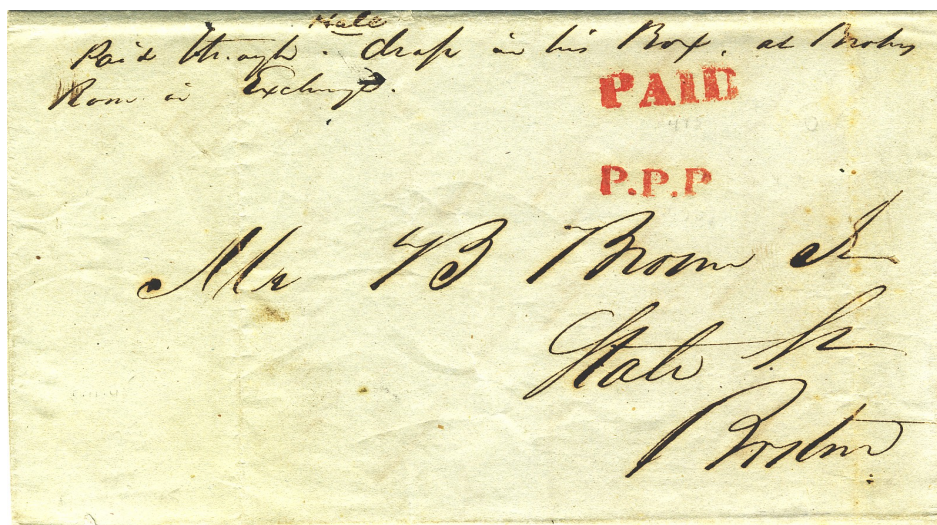


Figure 21. Penny Post Paid Handstamp New York City to Boston Dated April 5, 1845.

CONJUNCTIVE USE

Hale had 33 offices across the northeast from Boston to Baltimore and likely carried his own mail in the lucrative Boston to New York City to Philadelphia business corridor. Although Hale claimed to have 110 offices and 1100 employees many of them were actually other independent mail companies with whom Hale had agreements for carrying mail. Some carried considerable volumes of mail like Jerome in Maine, Crofoot in Newburyport, and Brainard and Pomeroy in upstate New York. There are eight notable examples of conjunctive use where the mail volume was very small or unusual.

Perhaps the premier letter is the Hale **triple** conjunctive use from Geneva, New York to Newburyport, Massachusetts dated July 30, 1844 shown in Figure 22. Geneva is a small town in upstate New York between Syracuse and Rochester. Hale's agent in Geneva was John Fargo who was probably Pomeroy's agent as well. The letter bears two Pomeroy stamps that carried it to Albany where it was handed to Hale who applied his Albany forwarding handstamp and carried it to Boston. In Boston it was handed to Crofoot who applied his handstamp and carried it to Newburyport for delivery. Since there are no additional charges shown for delivery the two Pomeroy stamps covered the cost for the entire journey and indicates fee sharing.



Figure 22. Triple Conjunctive Use Letter Geneva, New York to Newburyport, Massachusetts Dated July 30, 1844.

CONJUNCTIVE USE

Gilman's express operated between Boston, Massachusetts and Bangor, Maine twice a week from a Boston office at 9 Court Street. Figure 23 shows a letter from Bangor, Maine to Salem, Massachusetts dated September 22, 1844. This is one of just three Hale/Gilman conjunctive use letters known, the other two originating in Boston. Hale's Maine partner was Jerome & Co. so the Gilman use is somewhat unusual.



Figure 23. Hale/Gilman Conjunctive Use Bangor to Salem Dated September 22, 1844.

Gunnison's Express operated between Boston, Calais and Eastport in Maine and Saint Johns in New Brunswick, Canada. Gunnison was also Hale's agent in Eastport. Five Hale/Gunnison conjunctive use letters are known, four originating in Saint Johns and one in Eastport. The Eastport letter is shown in Figure 24 dated May 6, 1844 from Eastport, Maine to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.



Figure 24. Hale/Gunnison Conjunctive Use Eastport to Philadelphia Dated May 6, 1844.

CONJUNCTIVE USE

A. Roberts & Company operated the Eastern Letter Express Co. from Boston, Massachusetts through New Hampshire and Maine. Three Hale/Roberts conjunctive use letters are known all originating in Concord, New Hampshire during just a 10 days period from September 9 to September 18, 1844. Figure 25 shows the September 9, 1844 letter to Boston that Hale then carried to New York City, New York.



Figure 25. Hale/Roberts Conjunctive Use Concord to New York City Dated September 9, 1844.

American Letter Mail and Hale competed for business in the northeast often with offices in the same city. ALM was a most successful independent mail company second to Hale. Four letters exist which clearly show both companies handstamps. Figure 26 shows a letter from Middletown, Connecticut to Boston dated October 16, 1844 with both Hale and ALM handstamps. It is not clear why both appear on the letter but points to Hale carrying the letter to Boston and passing it to ALM for delivery.



Figure 26. Hale/ALM Conjunctive Use Middletown to Boston Dated October 16, 1844.

CONJUNCTIVE USE

Pomeroy's Letter Express carried mail from Buffalo east to Albany and then south to New York City, New York. Hale and Pomeroy had an agreement to carry each others mail east and west of Albany. Thirteen Hale/Pomeroy conjunctive use letters have been recorded but many have not been seen so limited data exists although most appear to have Pomeroy adhesives. Figure 27 shows a letter dated August 15, 1844 that originated west of Albany addressed to Salem, Massachusetts. Two Pomeroy stamps are present as is Hale's Albany forwarding handstamp.



Figure 27. Hale/Pomeroy Conjunctive Use Albany to Salem Dated August 15, 1844.

Overton & Co. carried mail over the Boston to Baltimore route and up the Hudson River to Albany. Just two Hale/Overton conjunctive use letters are known. Figure 28 shows a letter dated August 28, 1844 from New York City to Albany, New York. Overton had just announced this route in August and may not have been ready to handle the mail and turned the letter over to Hale to deliver.

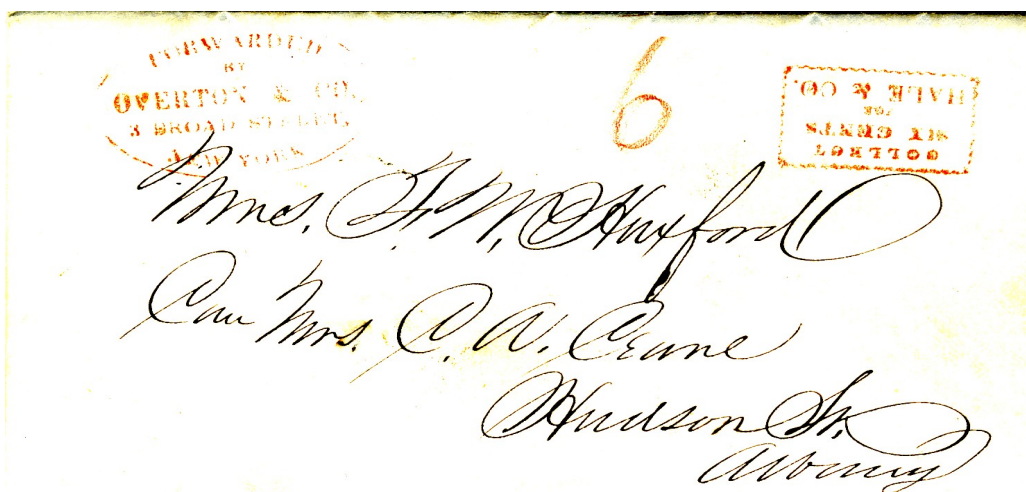


Figure 28. Hale/Overton Conjunctive Use New York to Albany Dated August 28, 1844.