

## The Railroad Station Cancels of Hanover Junction

By David A. Gentry (# 456)

Despite its tiny size, the village of Hanover Junction in York County has played a part both in history and postal history. The origins of the town can be traced to the Baltimore & Susquehanna Rail Road, one of the pioneer lines in the country. In 1838 the B & S built a line north from Baltimore, MD to York, PA, after overcoming severe objections from Pennsylvania interests who feared that it would divert commerce from the central and western parts of the state into Baltimore. The B & S built on to Wrightsville, and later built a line from York to Harrisburg.

In 1851 the Hanover Branch Railroad began construction of a line westward to Hanover from the Baltimore & Susquehanna main line. It opened in 1852, and the point where it connected with the B & S was named Hanover Junction. It was eleven miles south of York, and a post office was opened there in 1854. The Hanover Branch R.R. was originally operated by the Baltimore & Susquehanna, but it began running its own trains in 1855, when the B & S was reorganized to become the Northern Central Ry. Another company, the Gettysburg R.R., built a line from Hanover to Gettysburg.

During the Civil War, Hanover Junction had a few brief moments of strategic importance. It was occupied by elements of Confederate Gen. "Jeb" Stuart's cavalry raiders on June 27, 1863. They had marched along the Hanover Branch R.R. from Hanover, burning bridges along the way, and destroyed most of the railroad property in Hanover Junction before riding north to York. Fortunately, the railroad station at the junction survived. Within a few days the epic struggle at Gettysburg began, and the railroads were quickly rebuilt. On November 19, 1863, Abraham Lincoln traveled through the town on his way to dedicate the new cemetery at Gettysburg, with a speech now immortalized as the Gettysburg Address.

Hanover Junction made its mark in postal history as well, for there are station agent cancels from the town with three different railroad names. These markings exist because the railroad's station agent was also the postmaster, and used his railroad-supplied ticket validator to cancel the mail. Station cancels have been reported from sixteen stations along the Northern Central Ry., strong evidence that the railroad worked hard to obtain postmaster appointments for their agents.

The earliest marking from Hanover Junction reads "N. C. RAILWAY Hanover Junction" in a 23.5mm double ring circle (MPOS #195-S-2). It has been reported from 1861 to 1871, with the earlier examples struck in black, and the later ones in blue. Although this is the most common of the junction cancels, I have never seen a clear, well-struck example. Fig. 1 shows it struck in black on April 16, 1868, tying Scott 65 on a cover to Mechanicsburg. Fig. 2 shows the same device struck lightly in blue on Dec. 29, 1871. There is a second very light strike on the indicia of the postal stationary.

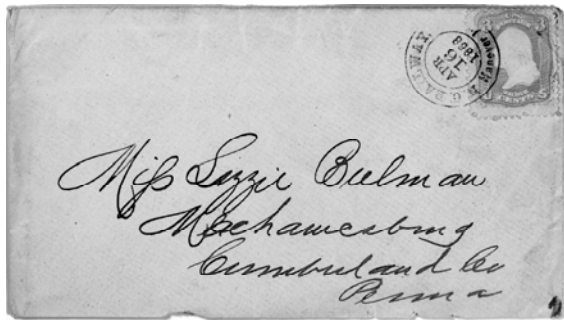


Figure 1

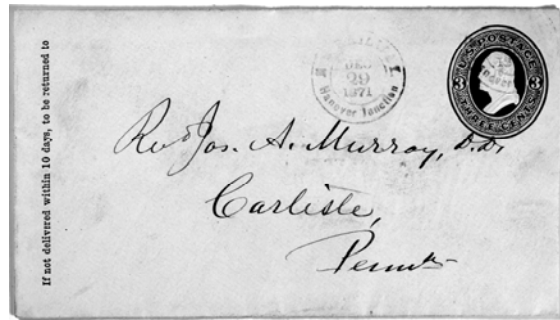


Figure 2

Sometime after 1871 the responsibility for employing an agent at the junction must have passed to the Hanover Branch R.R., for the next cancel is from that line. It reads “H. B. R. R. HANOVER JUNCTION” in a 24.5mm circle (MPOS #236-S-2). Fig. 3 is the only example reported to date, used on July 30, 1874. It was struck in blue on a cover to Darlington, Md. A second strike ties a 3c banknote to the cover, with the “OVE” visible on the bottom of the bust.

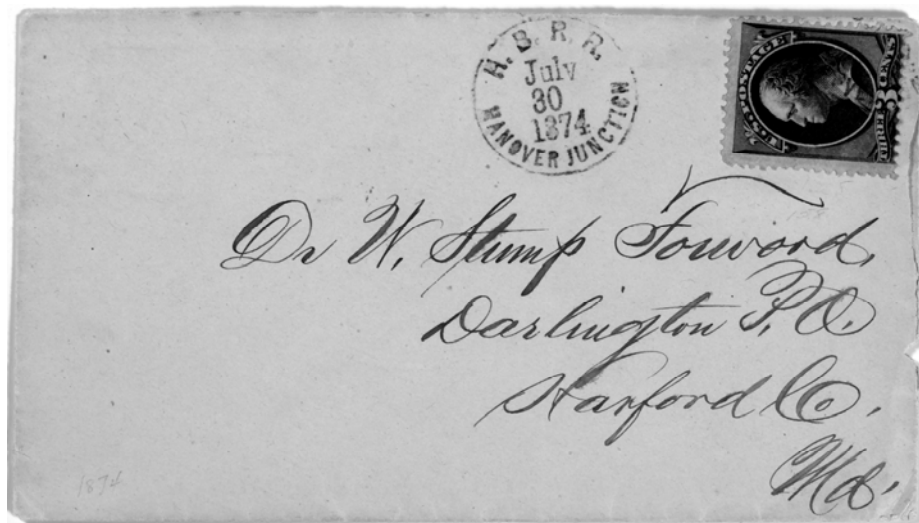


Figure 3

In September, 1874, the Hanover Branch R.R. merged with the Gettysburg R.R. to form the Hanover Junction, Hanover & Gettysburg R.R., and a third cancel exists from this road. It is similar in style to the preceding marking, and reads "H. J. H. & G. R.R. HANOVER JUNCTION" in a 24.5mm circle (MPOS #236-S-1). All reported examples are blue, and every one I have seen has an 1882 date in the device, which was corrected in ink to 1883. Most are on postal cards addressed to a company in Baltimore. Fig. 4 is the catalog copy, used on Jan. 6, 1883; Fig. 5 was used a month later. Another example from Jan. 11, 1883 has two partial strikes on a cover to Columbiana, Ohio (Fig. 6). The banknote stamp was voided with four pen strokes.

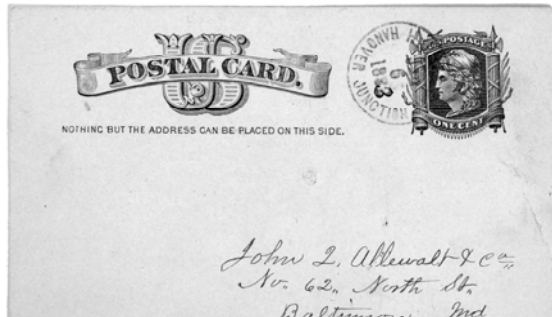


Figure 4

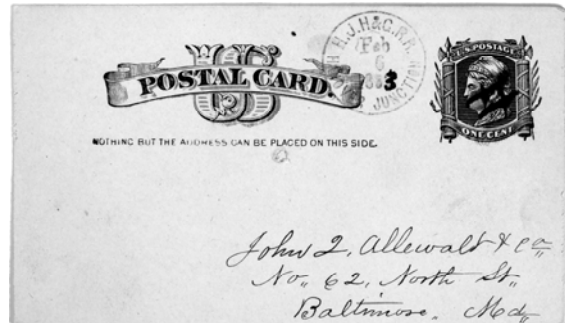


Figure 5



Figure 6

In 1886 the H.J.H. & G. R.R. became part of the Western Maryland Ry., raising the possibility of a fourth type of station cancel, but none has been seen. However, the W.M. Ry. had its own direct route from Hanover to Baltimore, and the old line to Hanover Junction lost most of its traffic. The original Hanover Branch R.R. line from Hanover Junction to Hanover was finally abandoned in the 1920s. The village declined slowly,

and finally lost its post office in 1941; it has disappeared from modern Pennsylvania maps. However, the station at Hanover Junction survives. I understand that preservation and restoration has begun since the Fig. 7 photo was taken in 1994.

**References:**

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**Figure 7**

