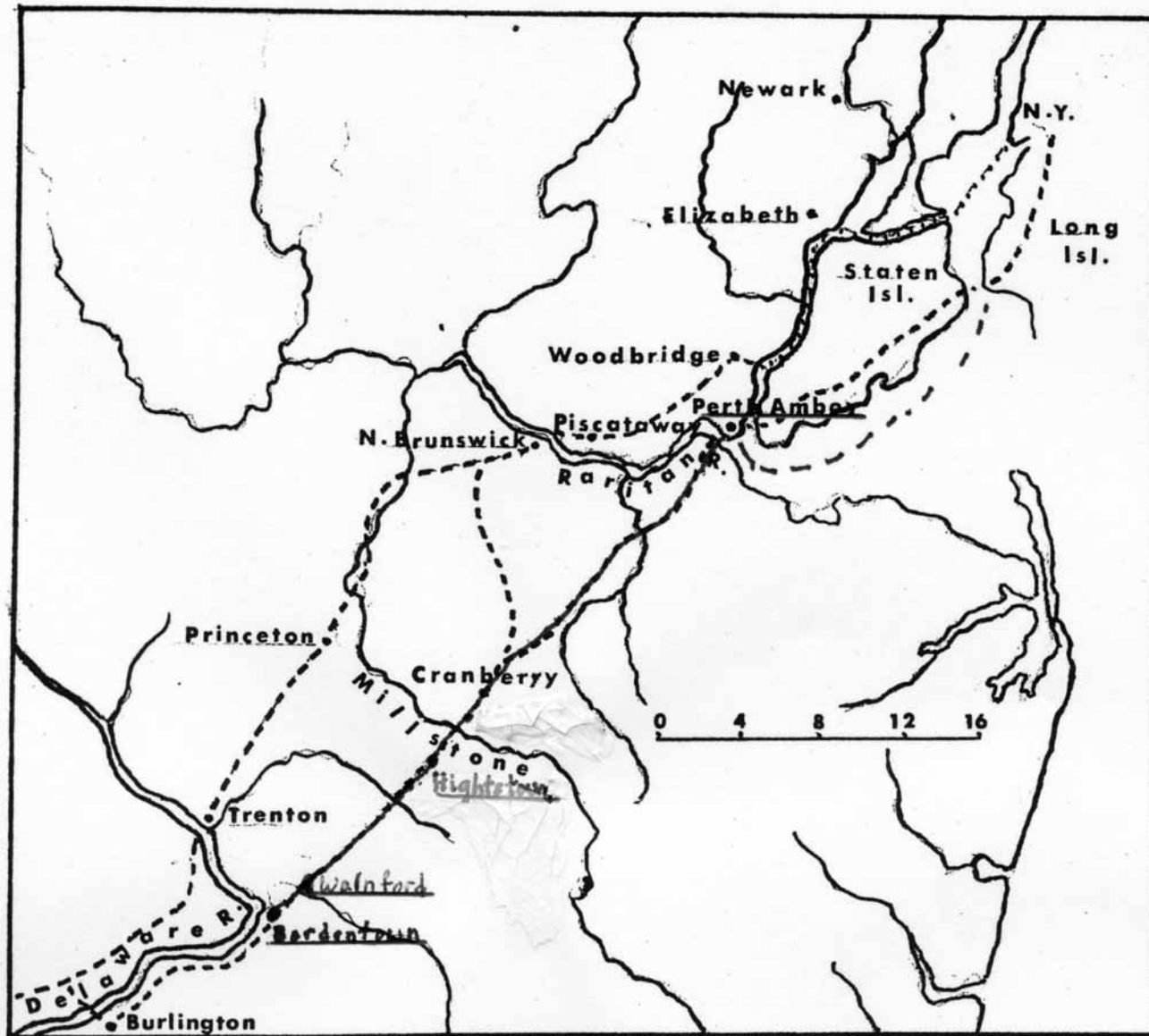


The Bordentown
&
New York Stage

By Robert G. Rose

The Bordentown & New York Stage was established in 1740 by Joseph Borden, Jr. a founder of Bordentown, New Jersey. Cargo and passengers were transported by “stage boat” from Philadelphia and transported up the Delaware River to Bordentown and then by “stage waggon” to Perth Amboy before being ferried to lower Manhattan. The full trip took three days.

The stage line is believed to have operated until the early 1790’s except during the Revolutionary War when transportation lines were disrupted throughout the New Jersey.



New Jersey's Colonial Post Roads.



TRAVEL BY STAGECOACH NEAR TRENTON, N. J. Watercolor by Pavel Petrovich Svinin (1787-1839). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1942. *Reproduced courtesy of the Museum.*

Joseph BORDEN

source: NJ Colonial Documents, Newspaper Extracts, p22. From "The American Weekly Mercury," April 17-24, 1740.

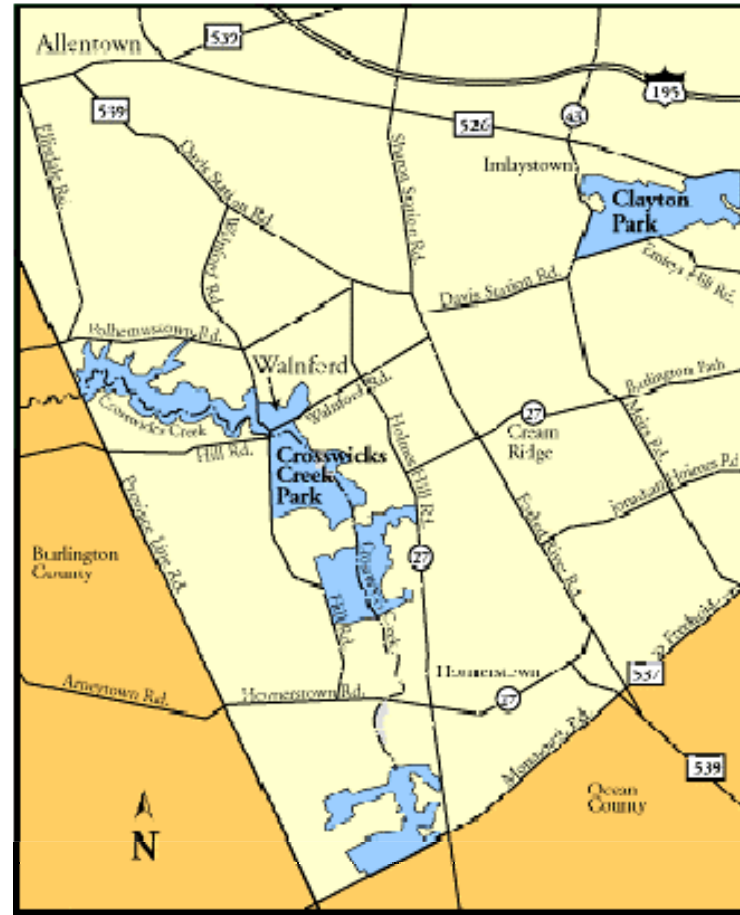
"This is to give Notice. That on the first Day of May next, will be ready and well fixed, a **Stage** Wagon to carry Passengers or Goods, between Perth-Amboy and Bordens-Town, which will attend at Amboy Ferry on every Tuesday, and at Bordens-Town every Thursday, on which Days all Persons intending to transport themselves or Goods, may be carried from either of said Places to the other for Four Shillings a Passenger, and all Goods at reasonable Rates. Security is given by the Wagoner for the safe Conveying all Goods delivered into his Charge. All Persons having Goods to transport as aforesaid, may send them to Joseph Borden at Bordens-Town, or Pontins Stelle at Amboy, who will take proper Care they shall be sent according to Order. New Jersey, April 17th 1740."

source: notes to NJ Colonial Documents, 1740, Newspaper Extracts, p22, quote E.M. Woodward, in "Hist. Burlington and Mercer Counties" 454, 458, 459.

"Joseph Borden, the founder of **Bordentown**, was the seventh child of Benj and Abigail (dau of Jas Grover) Borden, who were m 22 Sep 1670. Jos was b 12 May 1687. He first visited Farnsworth's Landing in a coasting vessel, probably his own, from Shrewsbury, NJ, and on 3 Mar 1724 bought of Sam'l Farnsworth 105 acres of land, and subsequently, by purchase, became the owner of nearly the whole of the site of the present **Bordentown**. He seems to have been enterprising, progressive and liberal. In 1740 he gave the site for the Friends' meetinghouse, and in 1751 conveyed to the Baptists for a trifling consideration the site for their church and burying ground. He was interested in the iron forge, laid out streets and building lots, erected a splendid mansion for himself, and did much to bring about a realization of his belief that **Bordentown** would be a great emporium for trade between NY and Philadelphia. It was with this idea in view that he reserved the waterfront on the Delaware, established a line of "**stage-waggons**" between NY and **Bordentown**, and "**stage-boats**" from **Bordentown** to Philadelphia, in order to head off his growing rival, Trenton. It will be seen in subsequent pages that he and his son Joseph kept up these means of transportation for many years. He d 22 Sep 1765. Some time prior to 1716 he m Mary Ann ---. They had one son, Joseph, and six daughters."

The earliest reported usage of a cover with a specific reference to the Bordentown Stage is a cover dated August 23, 1775 from Philadelphia to Richard Waln in Walnford, New Jersey. The writer endorsed the cover “Pr Bordentown Stage.”

Walnford is located just off the old colonial road to Perth Amboy. Richard Waln was a wealthy Quaker merchant from Philadelphia. In 1772 he purchased a large tract of property in the New Jersey countryside and built a mansion house for his family of six children as well as a grainery and mill for his business. His property became known as “Walnford.” Waln’s religious beliefs and his business interests resulted in his refusal to support the American position with the coming of the Revolutionary War. In 1777, he was arrested and in effect, deported through enemy lines, to Staten Island which was under British occupation while his family remained in Walnford. A year later, he returned, was again arrested, but was able to make application to the revolutionary authorities and was permitted to remain. Waln’s decendants continued to live on the property for nearly 200 years. The property was purchased by Monmouth County in 1985 and after restoration, is preserved today as a county park.



1775
Mr John Mitchell Crosswicks 6 Jan^y

Sir

I have to Inform you that your
Sleigh is now Ready to go down
but as our boat cannot go am
at a loss to know how to send it
therefore if you know of any
opportunity please to acquaint me
therewith, you may depend I will
Miss no safe opportunity of sending it
as soon as possible I am Sir
your very Thru Serv^t

Jⁿ Knight

To
Mr John Mitchell

Merchant

By Favour
13 Hours
Stage

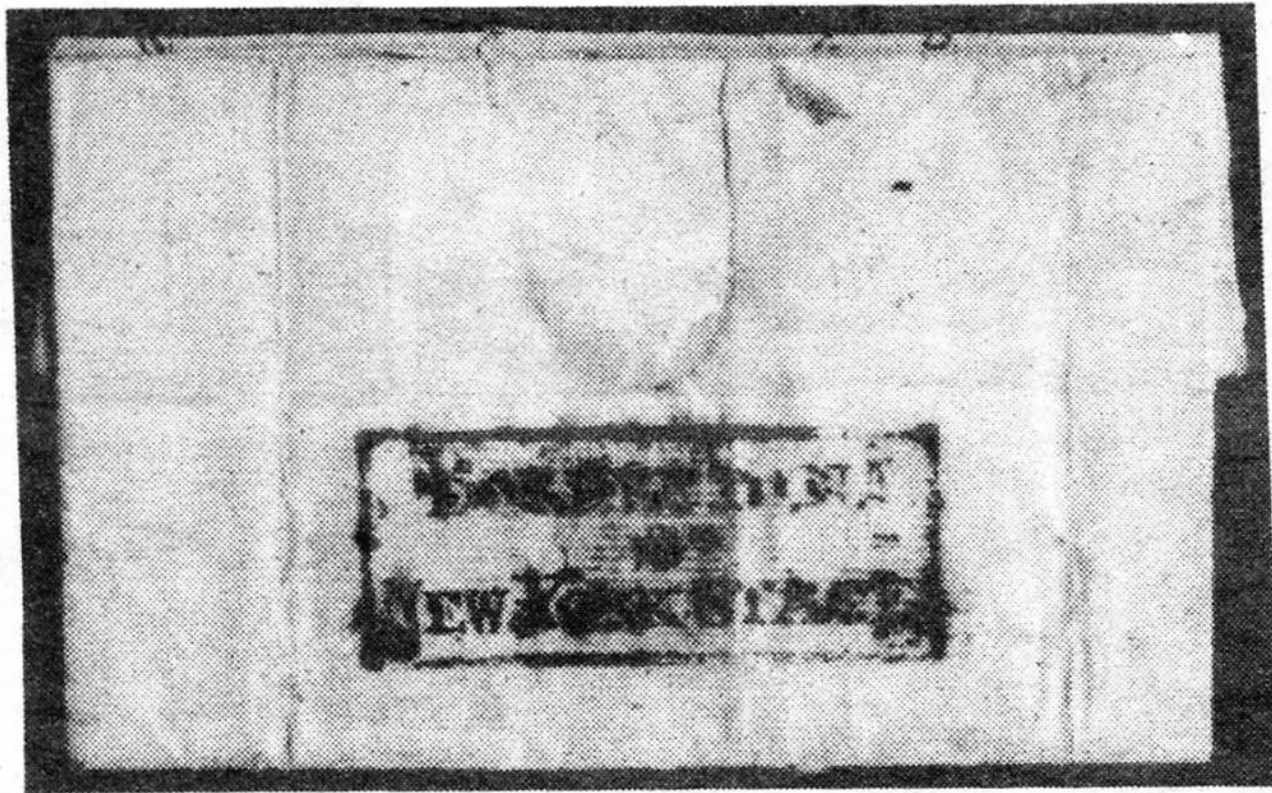
Philadelphia

Cousin John's Well please to send down
all ye flour & that they they has got
as much as they can as something may
happen to stop the vessel going out
and then it will not feel half ye
drip it is now, ^{let} the ship that be
packed in flour for J
Believe the port will be open to sea
9th of next month ^{but am not certain} we are all prett well
at present I hope thy family is well
give my love to Cousin Peter please to
tell Saml write I want to see him &
the other ye thy Dr. man Richd Wall
Philad^a 22nd 1775

From
Richd Wall at

for Walnford
Gardentown
Stage

The most well known marking used on the Bordentown Stage is the famed “New York & Bordenton Stage” handstamp of which only six covers have been recorded. The handstamp is reported with usages between August and November, 1786. This time period happens to coincide with the first year of government contract stage mail service which has led to speculation whether this handstamp marking is something more than a private carrier marking.



BORDENTOWN & NEW YORK STAGE, the earliest of the independent mail handstamps, struck on the back of a folded letter posted "1 mile out of Trenton" and dated Aug. 23, 1786, at Philadelphia. Cover courtesy of Calvet Hahn.

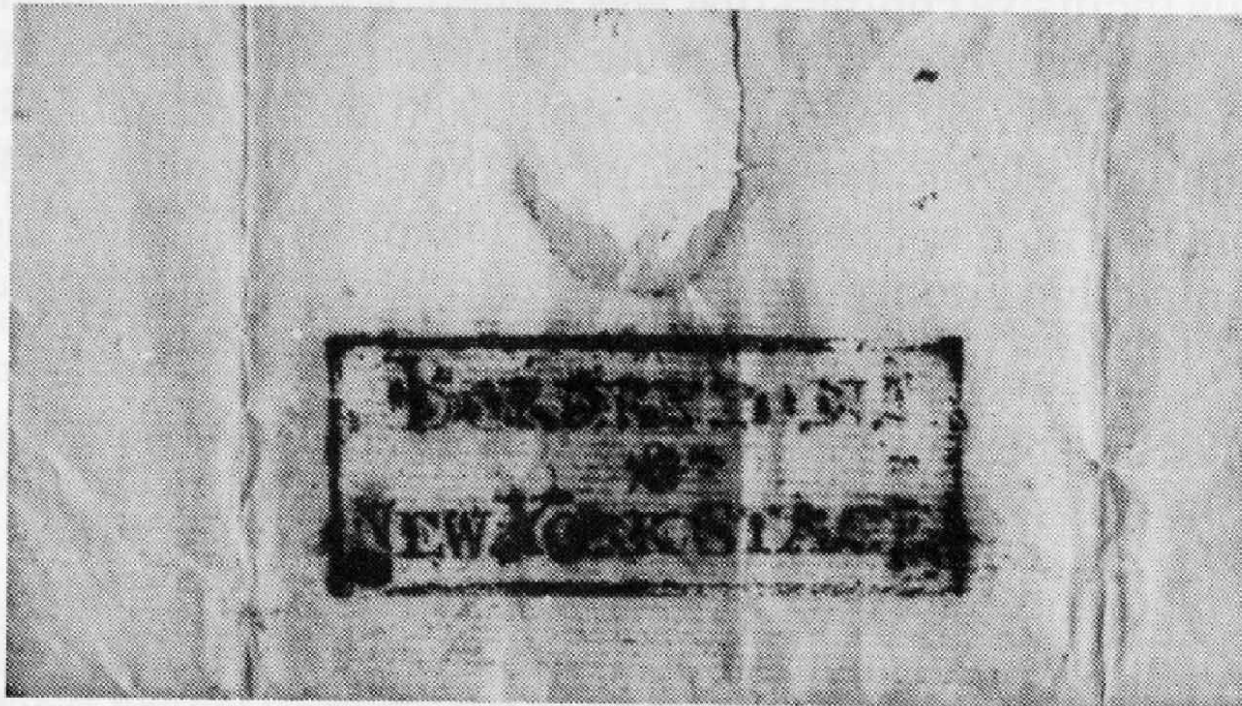


Fig. 55. Bordentown Stage Handstamp: Although the Bordentown stage had carried letters for decades previous, the earliest of the five recorded handstamps is this letter of August 23, 1786 written at George Ryale's, one mile out of Trenton, N.J., and addressed to Richard Waln at Walnford by Jacob Downing. Reports plans to sell 300 bbls. of Indian corn for cash. **It does not have any postal rating although it should.**

In 1740, Joseph Borden, Sr. of Bordentown advertised the beginning of the Bordentown Stage, which continued into the 1780s and provides us with the earliest handstamped **independent mail** marking, that of the **Bordentown Stage Service**. **Figure 8** shows the earliest of the five recorded Bordentown stage handstamped covers. I also record three in manuscript. Originating from George Ryale, one mile out of Trenton this August 23, 1786 letter is signed by Jacob Downing and addressed to Richard Waln, Walnford (Wallingford, CT). A January 5, 1775 advertisement notes the stage was for through passengers and goods only, and that henceforth the proprietors will not take cash entrusted as there is no place to secure the money.

10th Septer 1786

Capt. Mearns Smith
Post Office
Spartanburg

at Spartanburg
the 10th

BORDENTON
NEW YORK STAGE



23^d Sept 1786

Capt. William Smith
at the Mill
Spotsdown
F. Borden on page 2

BORDENTON
NEW YORK STAGE



LORD'S
NEW YORK STAGE

Mr
Mrs

LORD'S
NEW YORK STAGE

Richard Waln

Q. H.

Waldenford
Waldenford
Waldenford

Waldenford
stage boat

BOSTON
NEW-YORK STAGE

Washington

Edward Mearns

10/20/1760

546

Andrew Bell

Perth Anuboy

DORRINGTON
NEW YORK STAGE

8
13th July 1705
Capt. William
In J. M.
of London
with a bag

10
14th Aug 1705
Capt. W.
at
of
Hague

11
Mr. C.
at Mr. M.
Hague

2^d May 1787
Mr. William Smith
at the Mills
of Bordentown
Stage & Hydestown

Fig. 56. *Bordentown Stage Manuscript*: This letter of May 2, 1787 is from Philadelphia to Hydestown in the northwestern part of Pennsylvania in the oil region. It is not a route covered by postal contracts at this time, and thus not postally rated.

Bordentown December 28th 1780

Dear Sir

As I am under the necessity of paying
into the Treasury this Week Twenty Pounds as a license for my
Stages I must take the liberty to request your assistance on
the occasion and have to assure you I am

Sir,
your very Obedt Servant
Robt. McKean

Wm. Richard Malin

HANDSTAMP MARKINGS

The **six** reported examples of the “Bordenton & New York Stage” handstamp in chronological order by date with known auction sale history, include:

- (1) August 23, 1786 usage on folded paper originating at “George Ryale’s” with ms. notation posted “1 mile out of Trenton” to Walnford; illustrated in Calvet M. Hahn, “*The Post Office During Confederation (1782-9), Part V,*” *The Collectors Club Philatelist*, September-October 1991, *Figure 55*, p.340; Calvet M. Hahn, “*Express Business: Origins and Definitions,*” *The Penny Post*, July 2003, *Figure 8*, pp. 56 & 60; John A. Fox Auctions, Hollowbush Collection, August 15, 1966, lot no. 1.
- (2) September 10, 1786 usage on folded letter from Philadelphia with ms. notation “pr. Bordent’n Stage Boat” to Hydestown (now Hightstown, NJ); Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Inc., Edith M. Faulstich Collection, Sale 440, November 19-21, 1973, lot no. 332; Butterfield-Johnson-Gillio Auction, Sale 6534, October 7, 1996, lot no. 1825; illustrated in William C. Coles, Jr., *The Postal Markings of New Jersey Stampless Covers*, The Collectors Club of Chicago, 1983, *Figure 8*, p. 13 and in Alex L. ter Braake, coord., *The Posted Letter in Colonial and Revolutionary America, 1628-1790*, The American Philatelic Society Library, 1975, Figure B-16, p. B-40.
- (3) September 23, 1786 usage on folded letter from Philadelphia to Hydestown with ms. notation “pr Bordentown Stage;” H.R. Harmer, Inc., Edwin Mayer Collection, February 17, 1967, lot 3010; Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Inc., Sale 426, February 14-16, 1973, lot no. 332
- (4) October 10, 1786 Quaker date usage on folded letter being the only example with *two strikes* of handstamp from Philadelphia to Walnford with ms. notation “pr Bordentown Stage boat;” Matthew Bennett, Siskin Collection, Sale 290, October 7, 2005, lot no. 249.
- (5) October 28, 1786 usage on folded letter from Philadelphia to Walnford with ms. notation “pr Stage;” illustrated in Margaret S. Pierce, *Early Stage and Mail Routes Through West Jersey*, Fourteenth American Philatelic Congress, 1948, p. 21; Weiss Auctions, October 30, 2004, lot no. 2198
- (6) November 21, 1786 usage on folded letter to Perth Amboy; H.R. Harmer, Inc., July 15, 1968, lot no. 35; Stan Gib Inc., November 11, 1972, lot no. 28; Al Zimmerman, December 7, 1976, lot no. 23; Richard J. Frajola, Inc., September 9, 1989, lot no. 381.

MANUSCRIPT MARKINGS

- (1) January 6, 1775 usage on folded letter from Crosswicks to Philadelphia with ms. notation “pr Favour B Town Stage.” A possible earliest recorded use on the Bordentown Stage, however “B” could refer to a competitor, the Burlington Stage.
- (2) August 23, 1775 usage on folded letter from Philadelphia to Walnford with ms. notation “pr Bordentown Stage,” Matthew Bennett, Siskin Collection, Sale 290, October 7, 2005, lot no. 152. The earliest recorded use on the Bordentown Stage with positive attribution.
- (3) May 16, 1784 usage on folded letter from New York to Philadelphia with ms. notation “Pr. Bordentown Stage,” Matthew Bennett, Siskin Collection, Sale 290, October 7, 2005, lot no. 237. This is the only recorded example of a usage over the entire route from north to south.
- (4) July 13, 1785 usage on folded letter from Philadelphia to Hydestown with ms. notation “p Bordentown boat with a Highland,” Al Zimmerman, March 18, 1980, lot no. 8
- (5) May 2, 1787 usage on folded letter from Philadelphia to Hydestown with ms. notation “pr Bordentown Stage, illustrated in Calvet M. Hahn, “*The Post Office During Confederation (1782-9), Part V,*” September-October 1991, The Collectors Club Philatelist, Figure 56, p. 344
- (6) August 14, 1790 usage on folded letter from Philadelphia to Hydestown with ms. notation “p Bordentown Stage,” Al Zimmerman, March 18, 1980, lot no. 10.
- (7) ___, 1792 usage on folded letter from Philadelphia to Hydestown with ms. notation “p Stage Boat,” Al Zimmerman, March 18, 1980, lot no. 11. The latest recorded date of an apparent Bordentown Stage usage.

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