

# THE UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA'S FIRST STAMP.

## No. 1. The 1910 'Opening of the Union Parliament' Commemorative.

Russell Boezak



1910. First Day of Issue '4 NO 10' Opening of Union Parliament. NONDWENI (NATAL), left, and MIDDELBURG T (TRANSVAAL), right, showing Blue-black (left) and Indigo prints (right).

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[postmaster@southafricanphilatelyclub.com](mailto:postmaster@southafricanphilatelyclub.com)



# 1910 South Africa Union #1

## *Introduction, History and Synopsis*

**The purpose** of this exhibit is to show the origin and usage of the first issue of the Union of South Africa, the 2½d commemoration stamp of 1910. The historical context of the stamp is that there was a desire to commemorate the union of the four colonies – the Cape Colony in the south-west, the Natal colony on the south-east, and the two inland, former Afrikaner or Boer republics of the Orange Free State and the Transvaal, which had become Crown Colonies after the Anglo-Boer war in 1899 to 1902. At the close of the Anglo-Boer War, the four colonies were for the first time under a common flag. Trade tariffs had been a long-standing source of revenue – and therefore also conflict – between the different political territories of South Africa, especially with Transvaal which – due to the discovery of gold in Vereeniging in 1882 – was a landlocked economic hub that resented its dependence on its neighbours, as well as the costs it was incurring through rail and harbour customs – if you could refine it and wished to sell it on the open market, you could only get it out by sea.

**The movement** towards Union which was gathering pace in the Edwardian period came to fruit in about 1909 when convention of the colonies – and the politicians of the colonies – met. It was called the National Convention, and they worked out a constitution which was embodied in the South Africa Act which went through the British Parliament in 1909 and it was due to come into effect on the 31st of May, 1910. As a result of this movement it was decided that there was sufficient interest in the country – in all four colonies – to warrant marking this with a special stamp. Louis Botha – a former Boer general – was appointed the first Prime Minister of the Union. Although earlier essays showed King Edward VII, his death on 6 May 1910 meant that a new issue had to be created with King George V. The four colonies subsequently became the four provinces of the Union.

**The structure** of the exhibit is as follows. **Frame 1** details the stamp's design considerations, its production, and its sale. **Frame 2** shows its first day usage. **Frame 3** shows enthusiastic and commemorative correspondence, foreign usage, and most common types of usage. **Frames 4 and 5** show complex usage. Highlights include pre-issue archival material, domestic and foreign advertising material, and various interesting usages both inside and outside of the Union. Usage includes both domestic and foreign destination postal history, showing interesting – including delayed and redirected – routes, various tax and official airmail markings, and complex mixed-franking rates using combinations of colonial and Interprovincial and first definitive Union adhesives.

**Special attention** is given to postal history examples of enthusiastic post-issue celebration of the stamp and also of union, as well as an extended research into inking considerations treating the aspects of production, the origins of the blued face and paper, and flaws in the printing process. The postal material is ordered from first day covers in all four provinces, simple domestic use, machine markings, various routes and methods of delivery, to complex steps of rates to uncommon destinations, on ordinary and registered mail.

**The exhibit concludes** with two sheets of very late but not quite sunset covers used right up to demonetisation in the late 1930s. Although only a quarter of the initial print run of 20 million stamps were postally used and actually for sale for only three to four years, it was active in postal circulation and validly accepted for prepayment of postage for 27 years, far longer than the 3 years as originally anticipated.



## References and Acknowledgements

1. Hagger, S. J. 1986. *The Stamps of the Union of South Africa 1910 – 1961*, pp. 1-2
2. Hilton Sydow, A. Jan 1944. "Essay, Die and Plate of the Union 2½d. commemoration stamp of 1910". *South African Philatelist*, pp. 2-3.
3. Scheepers, D. Apr 2005. "Specimen Issues of the 1910 Union Commemorative". *South African Philatelist*, pp. 53-54.
4. Lobdell, H. E. 1944. *The De La Rue Georgians of South Africa*, pp. 13-22.
5. *The London Gazette*, 18 Oct 1887, p.5612.



The design featured a full-face portrait of KGV based upon a photograph taken by Emil Fuchs, the Austrian sculptor and court painter and who did most of the designing of empire stamps at the turn of the 19th century. De La Rue's designers made an engraving from the portrait. The King wears an ermine robe which suggests an opening of parliament. The 2½d rate was a colonial compromise between 1d and 6d proposed, and pays the overseas letter rate. The empire rate at the time was 1d. An ermine robe shown left, usually worn at the opening of Parliament. Note that this is not the photograph upon which the Downey head is based.

The commemorative was designed by the distributor of stamps in Pretoria, Henry Straughan Wilkinson. Bilingual inscriptions are used, befitting a country where English and Afrikaans were both official languages. In a nod to the divided nature of South Africa's previous history, the design features four shields in the corners representing arms of the Cape of Good Hope, Natal, Transvaal and the Orange Free State.



Heraldic shield of the Cape of Good Hope.



Heraldic shield of Natal.

The 1904 Newfoundland Coronation Set 2c also uses the same Union Downey head die. This stamp was issued on 7 Feb 1911. On the right is a standard Union stamp for comparison.



Combination of the assigned coat of arms and the adjusted coat of arms of the Orange Free State. A mash-up was used as it had no colonial coat of arms.



Republican coat of arms as the Transvaal never had a "proper" coat of arms in its Edwardian period..

SG1 was printed in London by Thomas De La Rue and Co. on white wove paper using the recess method. Unusually the stamps had a **multiple rosette (lotus) watermark** (the first of its kind in South Africa stamps, which had previously featured anchors and variations of the crown over CC and CA used in other countries of the period). First used in the Empire in Zanzibar in Feb 1898.



The negatives of the above stamps have here been transposed upon a white background. No two engravers could possibly match two engravings as these two matches. All background and face lines match perfectly. The headplate for both stamps must be one and the same.



A photo of the above two stamps enlarged three times.



KGV Essay **with crown at sides**  
Date on top, Value at bottom.



KGV Essay **with value at sides**  
Crown on top, Date at bottom.



In 1964, the South African Post Office permitted a limited number of sets of photographs to be taken of the De La Rue essays and proofs in the Post Office's Archives. Some were adopted for the design of the first stamps of the Union of South Africa, up to the 1930s, and some were rejected. The above official photographs are of the original artwork held by the Government Printer in Pretoria, and are of the original KGV essays by H S Wilkinson. Note the spelling of AFRICA with a C in "Unie van Zuid Africa". It has the rectangular, bilingual authority handstamp. Only 30 pairs were produced.

### Master Die Proof



Struck in black on white card, with control guide lines on all four sides. A line-engraved die is made of soft steel to print the 'die proof'. It is a working plate, the size of the proof face and about an index finger in width. Various improvements were made to the engraving, therefore this proof is not unique. Note the correct spelling of 'AFRIKA' in the lower half of the stamp, indicating that this is the final iteration of proof. Final proof was sent by the Transvaal postal authority to London before Union, with instructions only to open when they knew Louis Botha got the premiership and they would be running the post office.

### Imperforate Colour Trials on Unwatermarked Paper



In Deep Blue



In Bright Blue



From archival material first made publicly available in Pretoria in the early 80s we learn that as late as March 1910 the Postmasters General of the South African colonies had still not yet decided on the final design for the Union commemorative, with the Cape Colony and Transvaal designs being the main contenders. They had a number of suggested designs in front of them, as well as a 1904 Mexico Cinco Centavos stamp **showing the proposed colour** upon which the commemorative colour is based.



### Tunisian Archive Specimen Overprint

Handstamped "SPECIMEN" type TUN1 in black by the Tunisian Post Office as the Receiving Authority applying the handstamp to their distribution from the UPU, thereby proving UPU-wide distribution of these overprinted issues.

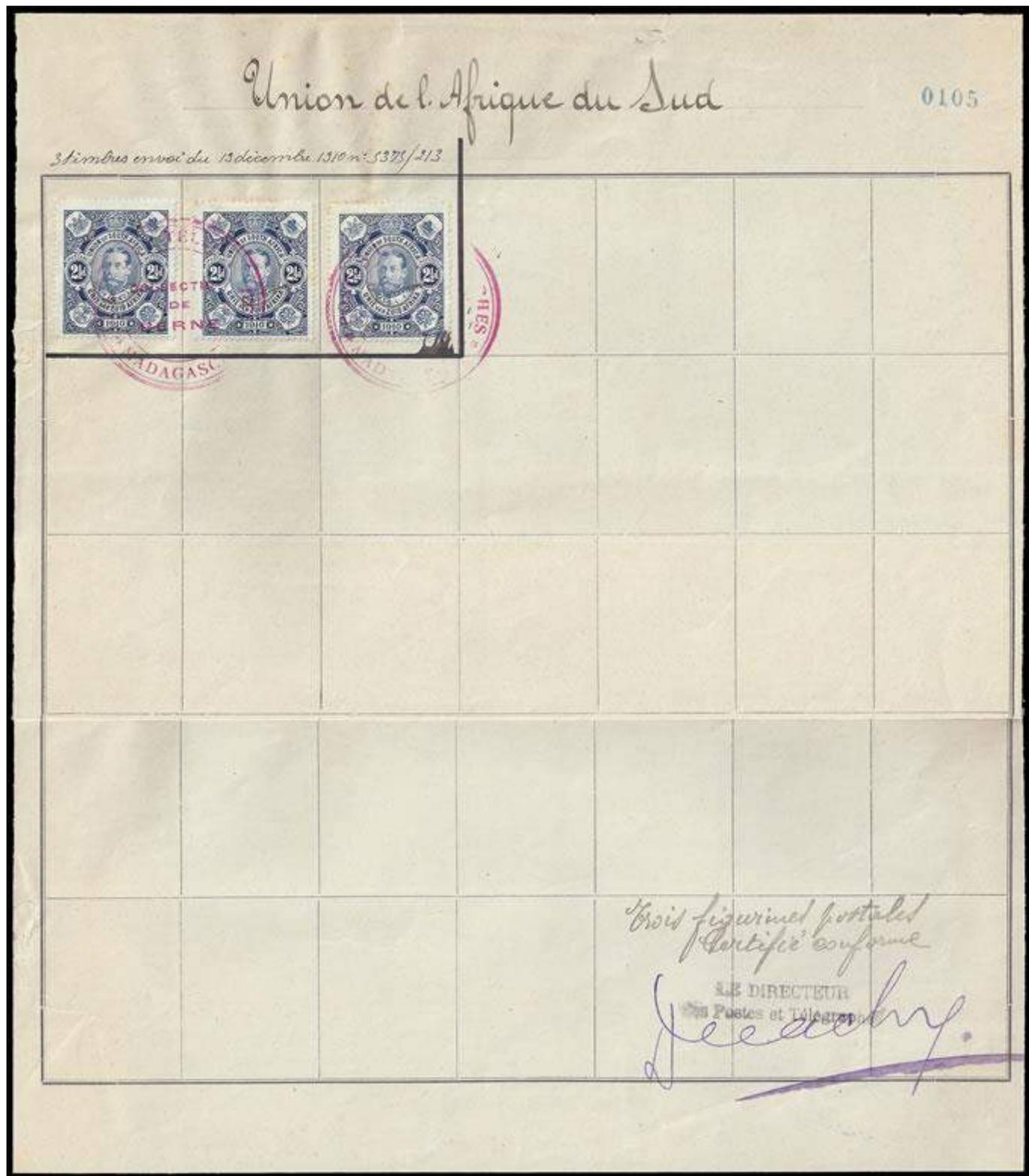


Diagonal script



Horizontal script

**Specimen overprinted** stamps supplied to the UPU had the word 'SPECIMEN' overprinted in black italic script (11½ x 1mm) **diagonally** upwards (shown above left). There is also a scarcer variation of the overprint appearing **horizontally** across the stamp (shown above right). The variation is documented but without any explanation as to the reason for its existence. There is also a purple diagonal overprint that was used on stamps in publicity cards (shown on next slides).



**Madagascar UPU Archive Receiving Authority Specimens.** Three Specimen overprinted stamps supplied to the Madagascar Post Office from the U.P.U. in Berne, Switzerland. Affixed to 275x360mm ledger paper by the Madagascar Director of Posts and tied by red circular handstamps reading "POSTES ET TELEGRAPHES \* MADAGASCAR \* COLLECTION DE BERN". **Unique.**

H.C. 1.

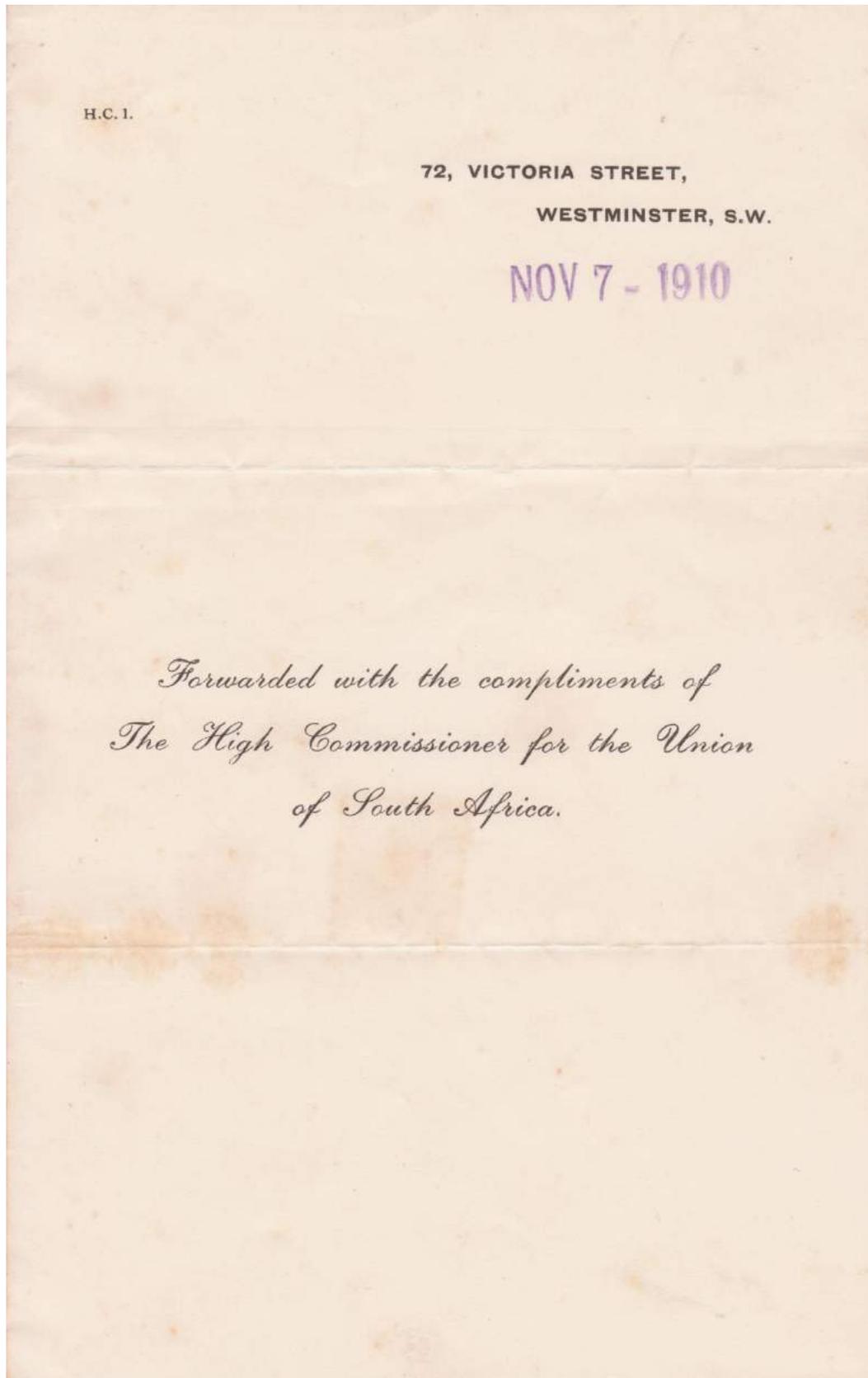
72, VICTORIA STREET,

WESTMINSTER, S.W.



*Forwarded with the compliments of  
The High Commissioner for the Union  
of South Africa.*

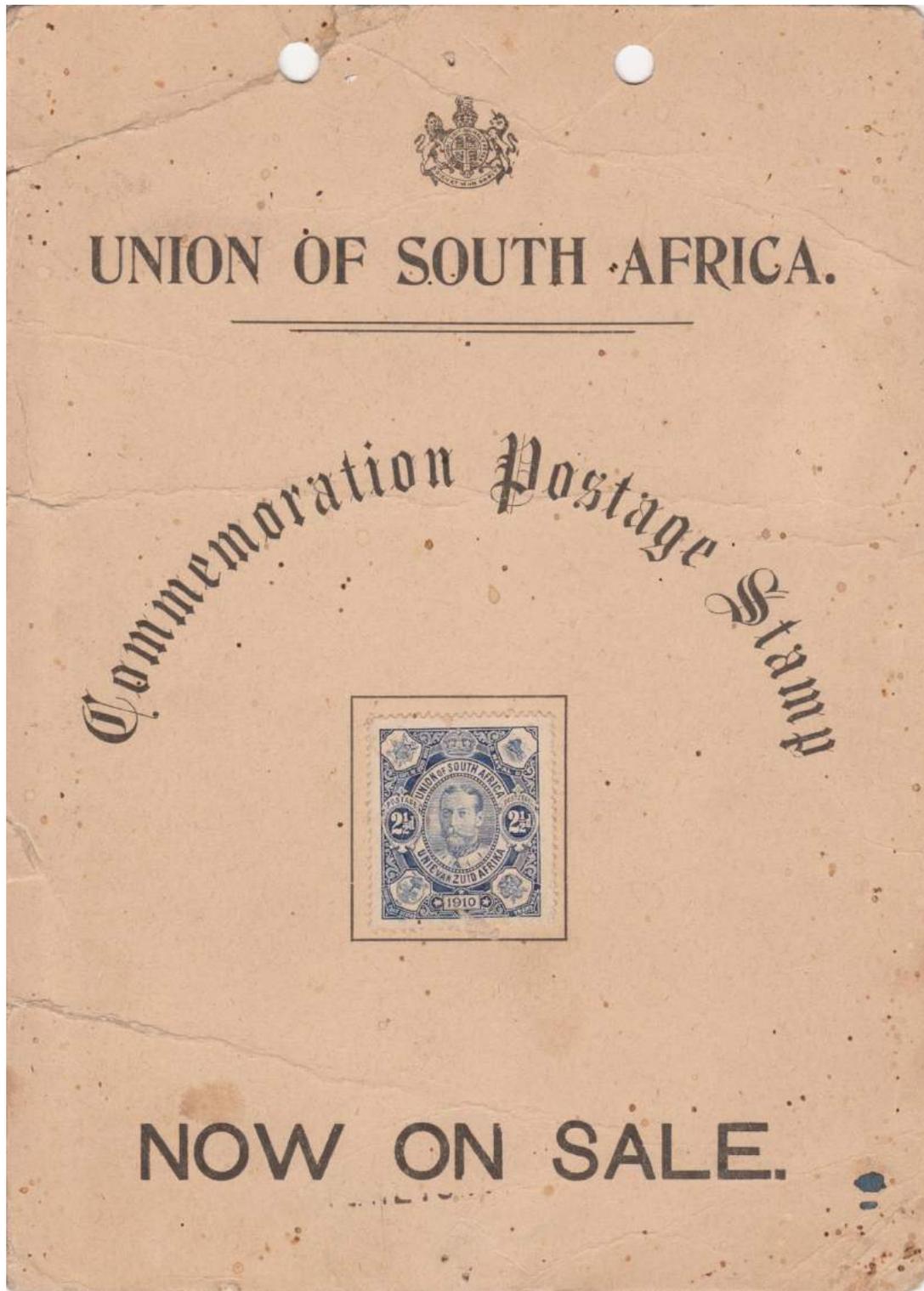
Unoverprinted commemorative pair with a complete double page of the High Commissioner's notepaper used as a "compliments slip", specially prepared for distribution to the press in London upon issue in 1910. A thousand sheets of the stamps were forwarded to the High Commissioner by De La Rue from the print run of 11 October 1910, and demand in the United Kingdom was such that further consignments were needed. Orders for the stamps came by post. Very few now remain in circulation.



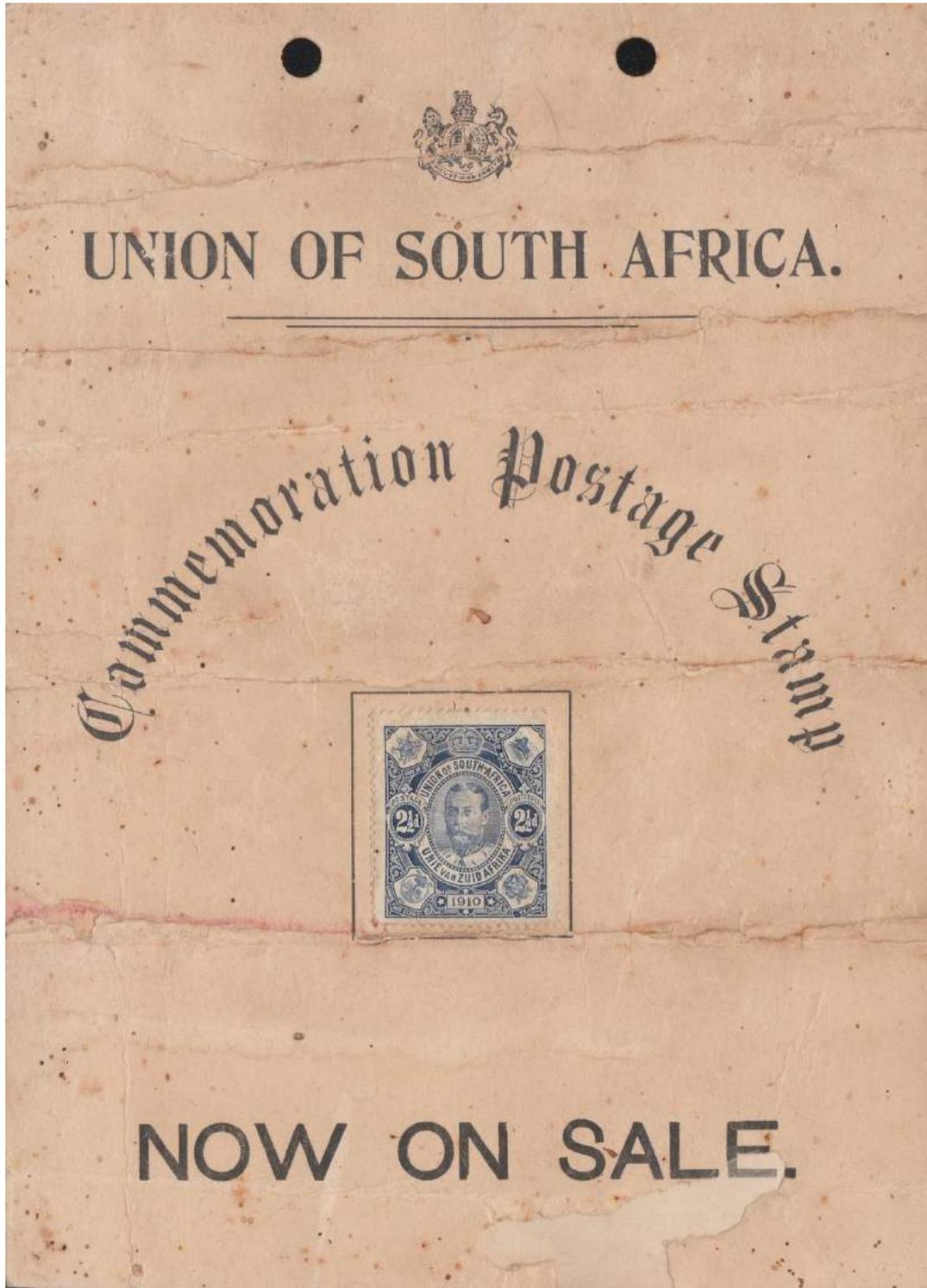
Compliments slip date stamped **three days after issue**, confirming that the stamp was advertised both in South Africa as well as the United Kingdom on or shortly after official date of issue. It also suggests that not all notices were sent ahead of date of issue. The paper also has an inverted watermark of 'Wightman & Co, Regency Street, Westminster'. As per notice in The London Gazette Oct 1887, the printers and stationers firm existed at '104 Regency-street, Westminster, in the county of Middlesex'.



**Publicity card** displayed in Money Order post offices advertising the availability of the commemorative stamp. Only 700 copies were printed in English. With a diagonal “SPECIMEN” handstamp in violet ink, (35½ x 4 mm) diagonally downward, overprinted to prevent its use before day of issue. The fugitive ink is not of a high quality – it has faded badly over the last 10 years. The cards were prepared and sent out to Post Offices from the 1st of October. Although pre-punched holes were made available, it appears that the Post Office staff was not aware of its use and still punched drawing pins at the edges of the card.



Whereas the previous publicity card appears in relative pristine condition, this was because the card was displayed behind glass in large post offices. The above card was displayed in **Dewetsdorp** – a small town in the Free State – and upon closer inspection one can see many flyspecks consistent with such a card being pinned up against an ordinary pegboard and with no protection. The photocopied reverse of the previous publicity card showing '**Dewetsdorp September 1912**', possibly the date they stopped advertising the sale of the commemorative, and also a full year until the first Union definitive series would be released.



Mounted on an official card for distribution to postmasters to call attention of the public to the sale of the stamp. Just over 3000 copies were put into circulation.



Lower right-hand quarter-sheet of 30. Although no plate numbers were used to identify printings, blue cross-hairs were placed in the centre margins, ostensibly to assist with printing and cutting. **Multiple plates were used by De La Rue, as well as at least two printing machines.**



V5 variety – **Vertical bar below** second 'A' of 'AFRIKA'



V3 variety – 'O' and 'F' of "Cape of Good Hope" **tied together** in the Cape shield.



V6 variety – **Diagonal line running down from right side of crown** through the Transvaal Shield in SE corner. Error visible on R6/1 (positional confirmation due to marginal pair), assumed to occur in later printings only again due to plate wear.

## Further Production Errors – Broken frames, Smudging, Blueing



**Inking smear in the margin**  
(expertising cert on back)



**Broken frame top left.**  
Transient smudge, no thinning



**Blued impression only**  
The selvedge is clear.



**Block of four on White paper**



**Block of four on Blued paper**

The stamp is found printed on various shades of paper from white to blue. Contemporary research suggests that the different shades are due to the fact that the blue ink was very difficult to clean off the plates. This coupled with the fact that Thomas de la Rue of London had an order to print 20 million stamps within the space of a few months suggests the cleaning of the plates – possibly in later print runs with a looming deadline – was not done as diligently as possible.

Further Production Errors – Different print shadings



**Blue-black**



**Indigo**

I have chosen first day cancelled blocks to improve the argument that both being exposed to light from date of issue means that they should have coloured the same with age. If not, then colour was set at print.



**Royal blue**

The stamp is found printed in various shades ranging from Indigo to Blue-Black. Although a single fugitive ink was specified same as specimen, the order of 20 million to be printed in recess and in a matter of months gave rise to considerable differences due to insufficient and often manual cleaning of the plates.

## First day cancels



Durban, Natal



Johannesburg, Tvl



Johannesburg, Tvl



Paardeburg, O.R.C.



Woodstock, Cape



Pearston, Eastern Cape



Wellington, Cape



East London, Cape



Dynamite Factory, Cape



Parliament, Cape



King Williams Town, Cape



Ladysmith, OFS

The Union commemorative stamps were posted enthusiastically on first day of issue. First day usage in smaller towns is more scarce.

Single first day cancellations



Dundee, Natal



Benoni, Tvl



Kimberley, Cape



Brits, Tvl



Cape Town. The 1 of '10' is inverted



Johannesburg counter 2, Tvl



Komgha, Cape.



Dundee, Natal



Johannesburg triple ring – an unrecorded Tvl datestamp

Single first day cancellations



Uppington, Cape. Manuscript cancel.



Worcester, Cape



Krugersdorp, Tvl



Pretoria, Tvl.



Queenstown



Jagersfontein, ORC.

Single first day cancellations



PO Kroonstad Station, ORC



Port Elizabeth, Cape



Verulam, Natal



Durban, Natal



Newington, Tvl



Johannesburg Parcel Office, Tvl.



Wessels Nek, Natal



Ophirton, Tvl

First day cancellations on cover, 4 Nov 1910

Many if not all are philatelic in the sense that they overpay the domestic and Empire rate by 1½d, but it was posted enthusiastically to honour the sense of occasion that was union. Usage from more than a hundred places is known – usage from smaller towns and postal agencies more scarce than cities (Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban) and secondary towns (Pretoria, Pietermaritzburg). The next few sheets provide a sample of covers from all four provinces.



Cape Town, Hout Str.



East London, Cape.



Vryburg, Cape.



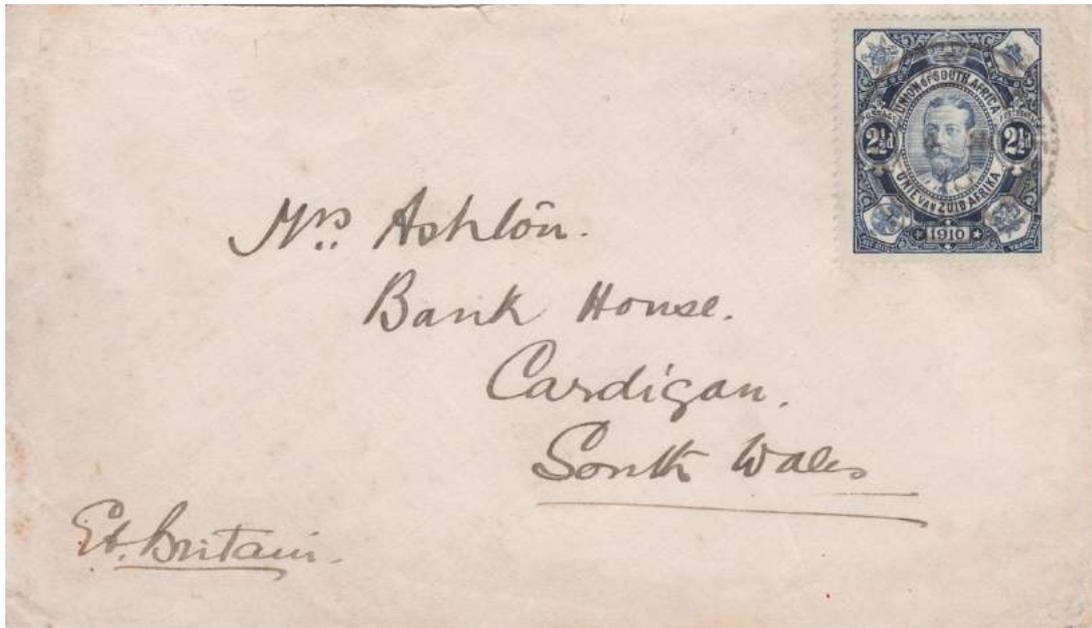
Vryburg, Cape.



Johannesburg, Transvaal.



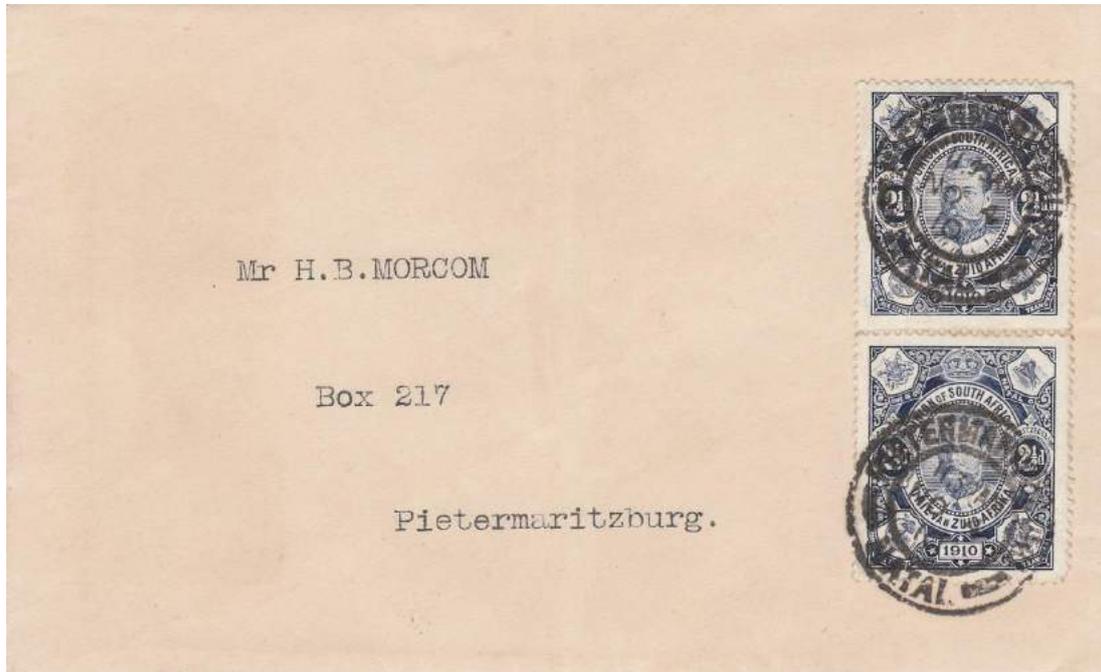
Johannesburg, Transvaal.



KANGELA ST. Eshowe, Natal.



Weenen, Natal.



Pietermaritzburg, Natal.



Hatting Spruit, Natal.



**Wolmaransstad, Transvaal.** One of many philatelic covers made by Thomas Leask, known as the “father” of Wolmaransstad. Addressed to J. Firth, Leask’s son-in-law.



**Krugersdorp, Transvaal.** Almost certainly a self-addressed souvenir.



Senekal, O.R.C



Edenburg, O.R.C

First day cancels and covers from ORC are most elusive, potentially because the larger towns were in the Cape and Transvaal.



**Kenhardt, Cape Colony.**  
Vast domestic overpayment.

## Important cancellations



This **Uniondale “home-made canceller”** was not official issue, but a home-made product assembled by a Postal official at the office concerned, from rubber symbols from a rubber printing set. These home-made cancellers were not unknown in the postal service in the early years of the century. Several post office officials manufactured their own ‘pet cancellers’ to be used upon parcels - the officially supplied metal canceller being considered incapable of leaving a clear imprint on the soft parcel or liable to damage the contents of a parcel.



**Durban circular parcel obliterator.** Typically, parcel stamps were in purple ink but occasionally are found in black ink. No date was ever applied to a parcel stamp.



**Post Office Agency cancels of Natal.** POA 63 was used in 4 other places before the last record as being in Loskop 1906 to 1907. Loskop upgraded to PO in 1907, then up to PTA 1910 and STO in 1911.



Although Secocoenie is not a first day cancel, this is a relatively rare date stamp. It is located in the Transvaal and the Post Office was open from 1898 to 1931 when it changed its name to Sekukuni. The Head Office was Lydenburg/Middleburg.



**Transvaal TPO European Mail** was a travelling Post Office between Johannesburg and De Aar which existed from 1903 to 1913. There was a special weekly service to deliver the sorted European Mail to the Western TPO at De Aar which would deliver it to Cape Town in time for the sailing of the mail ship.



Block of 12 used on parcel post. Parcel cancelled at **Roberts Heights, Transvaal, 22nd January 1912**. An unusual piece having the parcel cancel as well as the date stamp and we can only assume that a Post Office Clerk noted that all stamps were not covered by the Parcel canceller and therefore applied a separate date stamp. Parcel post that **pays a duty of 2s 6d for a weight of 13 oz. (nearly 400g)** assuming the article was registered. Three official franking strikes, the rest of the block being cancelled by dumb cancellers, whose function was to cancel stamps that missed franking in the sorting office.

Parcel cancellers



A standard Parcel Post PO Bloemfontein canceller in purple ink.



Market Street, Johannesburg is a hand obliterator cancel which was of special design for parcels and were used at certain offices throughout the Union.



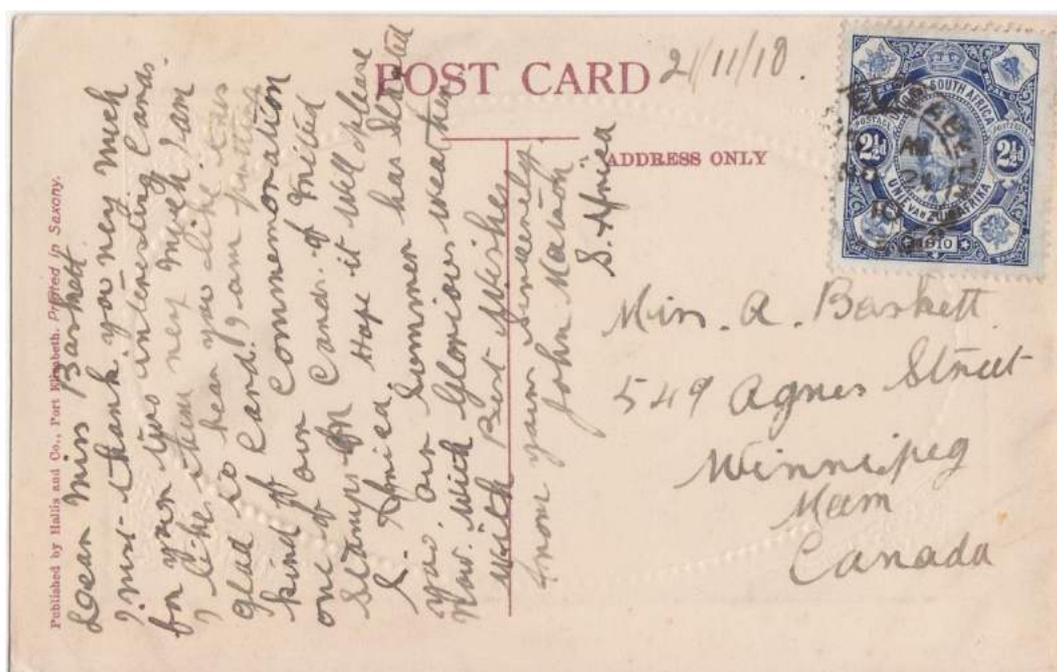
The Port Elizabeth Parcel Stamp is a fine skeleton canceller.



A common Germiston barred canceller.



Parcel post. The total rate of 1s 11d indicates that the weight of the article posted was 9½ oz. assuming the article was registered.



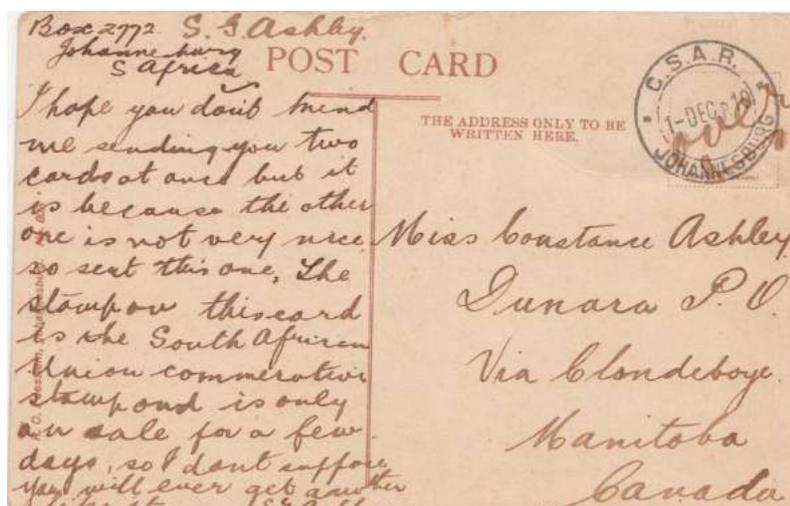
Early union picture postcards signifying public anticipation of not only a unified South Africa but also of the commemoration stamp. Content showing the eagerness in the comment “one of our commemoration stamps of United South Africa”.



Another early November 1910 Union self-addressed souvenir picture postcard (posted in and to Pretoria).



**Early reaction to Union, on postcard to Manitoba, Canada.** Franked C.S.A.R. (Central South African Railways), this cancel was used on mail posted at the main railway station in Johannesburg. The C.S.A.R. was a pre-Union railways system (previously Dutch-funded NZASM up until the Second Boer War) and operated in Transvaal. It dropped the 'Central' in 1916 to become – along with the Cape and Natal govt. railways – S.A.R. by Act of Parliament.

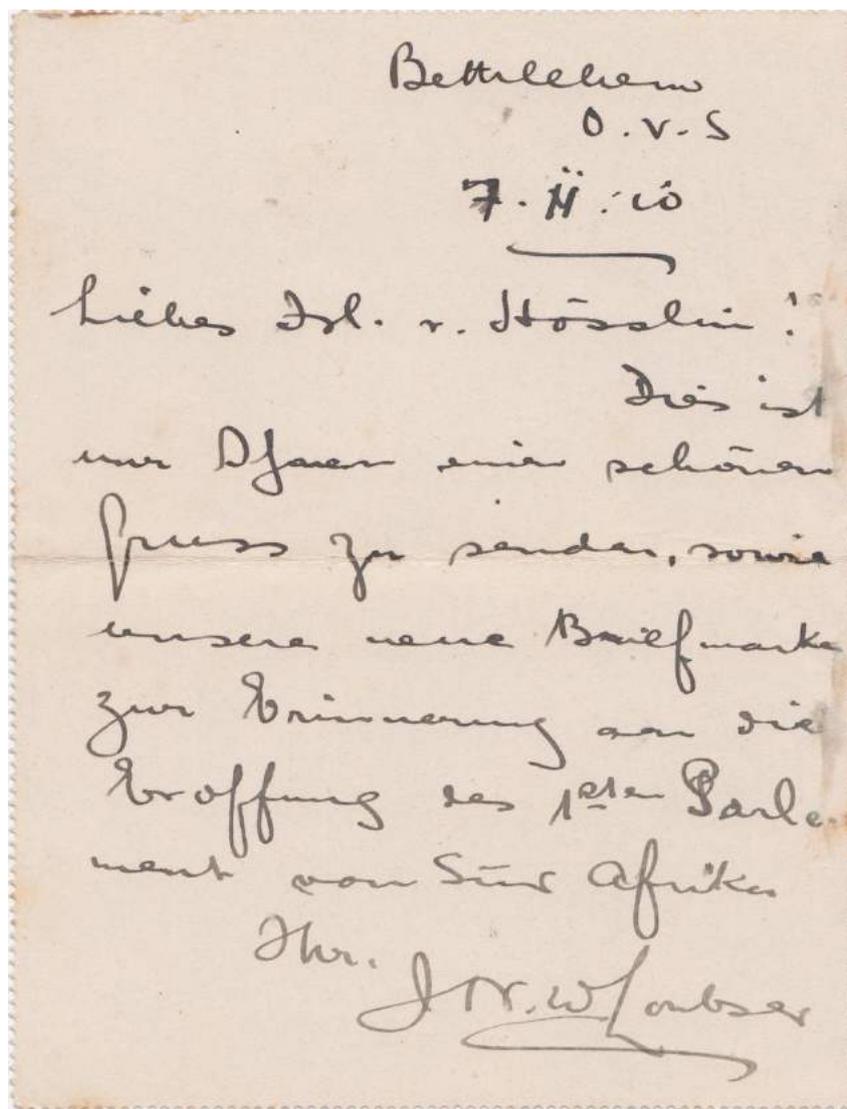


Reduced by 25%.

On the reverse, the sender refers to the commemorative as **“only being available for a few days.”** This may have added to the excited and comprehensive use countrywide within the first few days of issue, if only as a souvenir. It is not known whether this sentiment expresses any official view. Certainly no issued or archival material or research so far suggested a planned and published early withdrawal date from circulation.



1910 (Nov 7) Bethlehem, OFS to Augsburg, Germany. Mailed shortly after Union, the letter below is in German and advertises the issue of the stamp.





Nov 20<sup>th</sup> 1910.

STRATHMORE,  
89, STAIB STREET,  
NEW DOORNFONTEIN.

Johannesburg.

Mr. Way -  
According to my  
promise I send you  
two Commemorative  
Stamps - then you will  
have one used & one  
unused. When I get  
time - I shall buy & send  
you some other issues -  
Thanks for two pretty  
P.P.C. received - how  
delightful, the train

really very good of the  
Falls - quite worth  
framing - This is the  
first I have heard of  
Spice Powder.

With kindest regards  
& best wishes for Xmas  
Yours Sincerely  
W. H. Paton.

Another post-stamp issue example of people writing with great enthusiasm of the commemorative stamp itself. Entire has correspondence between two parties with an obvious stamp exchange eagerness.



Used in **Maseru, BASUTOLAND**. From 1879 until 1910, stamps of the Cape of Good Hope were used in Basutoland. From 1910 to 1933, when Basutoland issued its first definitive series, stamps of the Union of South Africa were used, and can be identified by the names of post offices (towns) : **Maseru**, Morija, Teyateyaneng, Mafeteng, Mohales Hoek, Quthing, Leribe, Mokhotlong, Quachas Nek, Butha-Butha and Thaba Bosiu.



Strip of three used in Maseru **on first day of issue**. Usage in Basutoland was especially rare given that this territory was specifically excluded from Union.



Used in **Mbabane, SWAZILAND**. After the Boer War, Swaziland became a member of the South African Postal Union. From 1913 until 2 February 1933 all Union and Provincial stamps including officials and postage due labels were postally valid in Swaziland. Swaziland's postal service only issued its own postal stamps in 1933.



**Swaziland Postal Stationery Transvaal Colony Registered Envelope 1911 (23 Apr.)** 4d. blue F size envelope, uprated with Transvaal ½d. and South Africa 1910 2½d., from Mhlotseni to Piet Retief, all three sharing an upright strike of the double-ring c.d.s. and showing manuscript "Mhlotseni 266" registration marking at foot, the reverse with a further despatch and arrival (24.12) c.d.s.

## DEUTSCHE SEEPOST LINIE HAMBURG-WESTAFRIKA (Type II)

On the bottom inside of the Barred Oval Numeric Canceller franking there are a set of Roman numerals which indicate the ship the cover was franked on. German shipping lines such as Linie Hamburg WestAfrika permitted the use of postage stamps of the Cape Colony when in local waters. According to Putzel, the following were rules for the German Seapost Offices: a) On the high seas and during a visit to a German port, mail was to be dispatched with German stamps, and b) During a ship's visit to the port of a German Colony, mail was to be dispatched with stamps of that Colony.

Dated 1/1/1912



Dated 16/7/1913



Dated 14/5/1913



Code "XXXIX" used by S. S. Frieda Woermann. The roman numerals at the base will indicate the exact ship. The Woermann S.S. Co. ran from 1894 to 1914.



**1915 (Sep 4) Censored cover to Keetmanshoop, German South West Africa**, locally used with a violet boxed censor marking. Notice on reverse in purple pencil 'Envelope found sealed, but empty by Censor, S.R.N.' Occasional use of this stamp in this territory is encountered during the occupation of German South West Africa by South African forces from 1915.



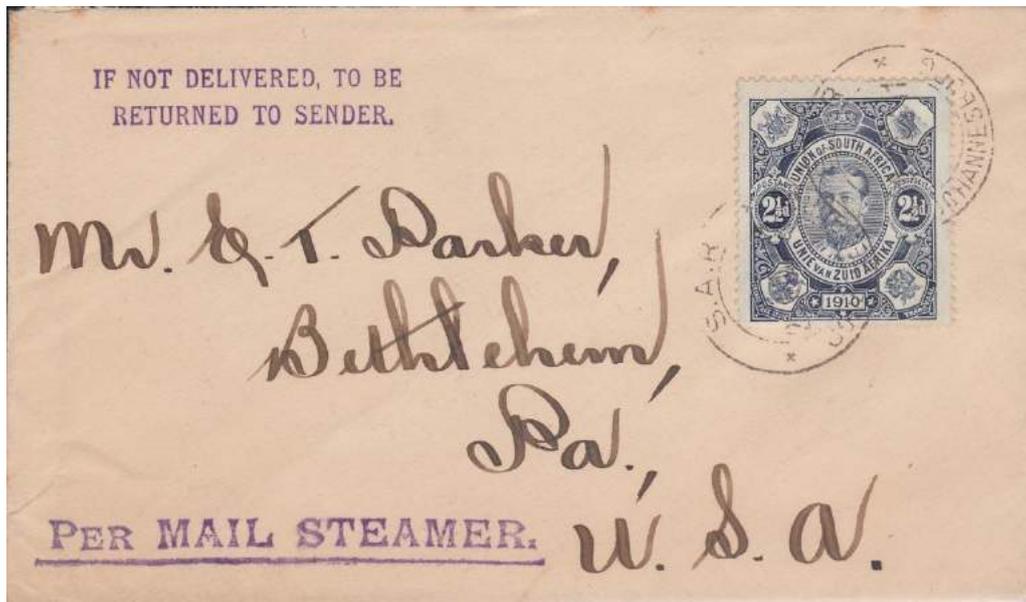
**Mier (Rietfontein) camel post single.** Mier was part of British Bechuanaland that was merged into the Cape Colony in 1895, therefore making it **Union proper** by time of this usage. What makes this usage interesting therefore is that the old B.B. canceller for Mier was still in use 15 years after the territory technically no longer existed. This was the case for two or three more years after 1910, and for towns other than just Mier. Mier in fact had no post office. It is suggested that the post office is actually in Rietfontein, but that it was called Mier historically.



**Previously unrecorded usage** of the union commemorative in Bechuanaland, paired with a 2½d Bechuanaland Protectorate adhesive. Strictly the PO should not have cancelled the Union stamp. Addressed to Albert de Bassompierre, possibly as a keepsake on completion of his diplomatic mission.



CSAR railway cancel



**Single stamped cover per mail steamer to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, USA.** Franked S.A.R. (South African Railways). Mail steamers were steamships which carried the mail across waterways, such as across an ocean or between islands, primarily during the 19th Century and early 20th Century, when the cost of sending a letter was declining to the point an ordinary person could afford the cost of sending a letter across great distances.

Machine cancels – “Transvaal” Machine Type (8 – Straight Line)



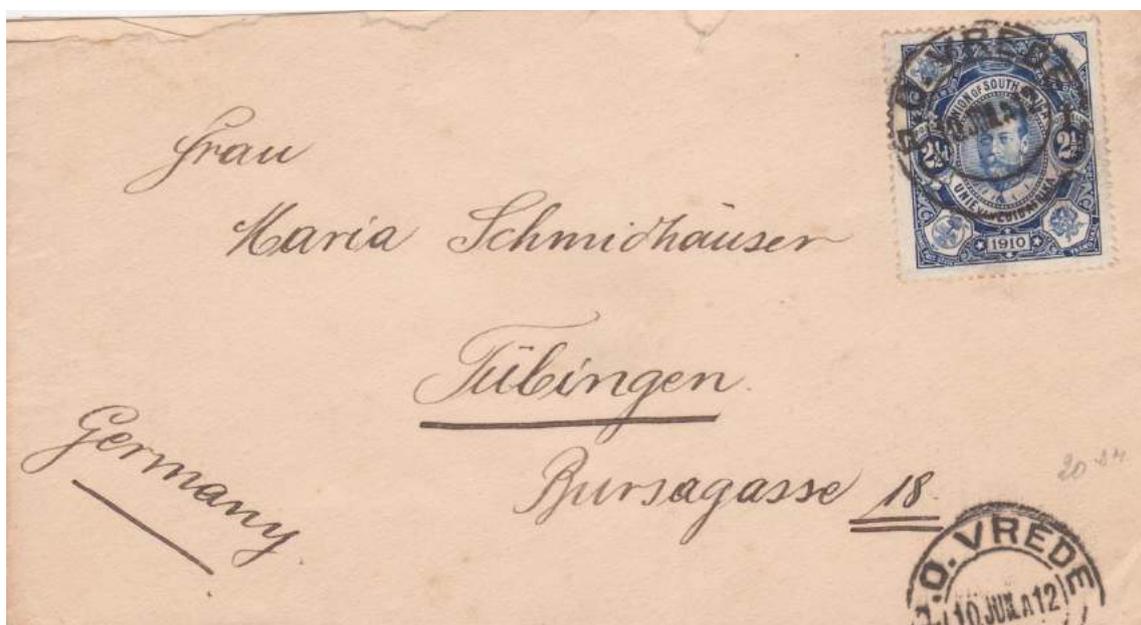
Johannesburg to Grahamstown in the Cape on 6 February 1911. Cancelled with a “Transvaal” Machine Type postmark. Backstamped with an arrival **Grahamstown** postmark dated 8 February 1911.



Johannesburg to Illinois in the United States on 23rd December 1911. Machine cancelled.



1913 (Jul 14) Senekal, OFS to Berlin, Germany.



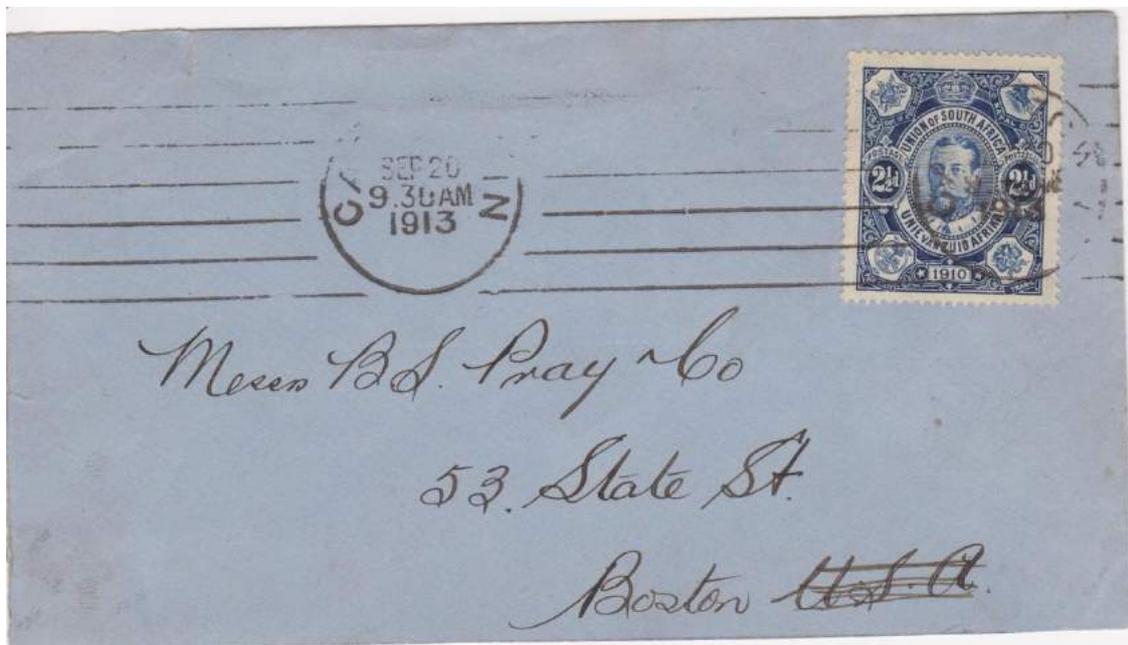
1912 (Jul 10) Vrede, OFS to Tübingen, a traditional university town in central Baden-Württemberg, Germany.

## Machine cancellations

The Hansen Krag continuous straight bar machine canceller was introduced in Cape Town in 1900. It is shown here still being used in Cape Town 13 years later.



Letter to Germany, **eight-bar canceller** used.



Letter to Boston, USA, **six-bar canceller** used. Both letters sent in Spilhaus & Co. stationery, two years apart, different handwriting.

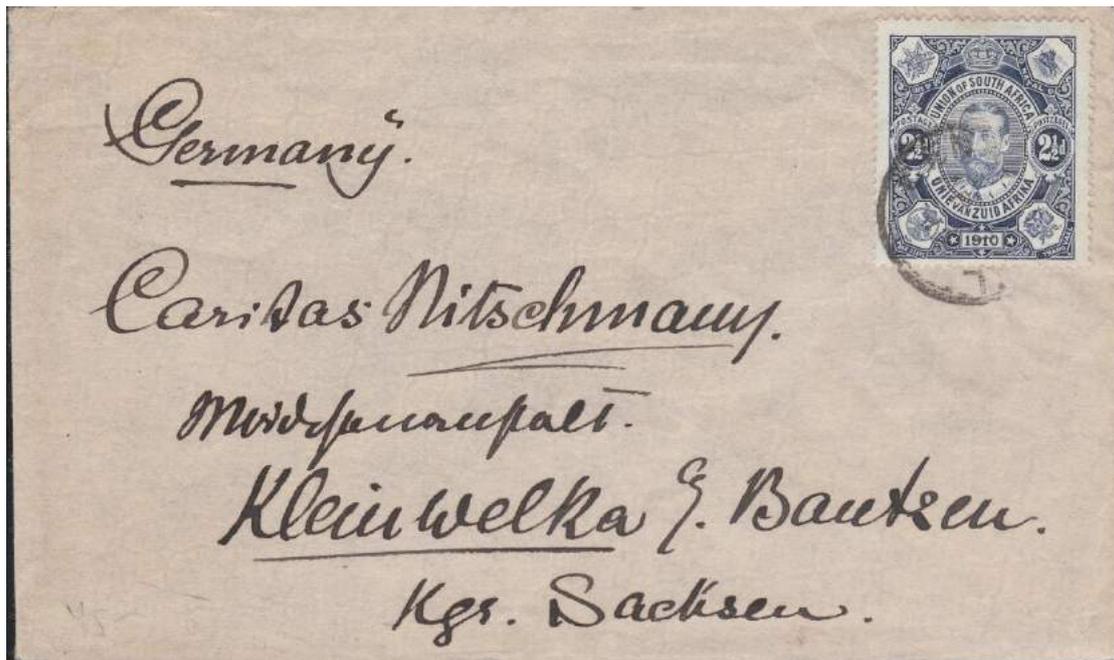
Single-stamped covers



Single-stamped letter to Geneva, Switzerland.



Letter to Connecticut, USA.



Genadendal, Cape Province to Sachsen to Germany, AP 7 12.

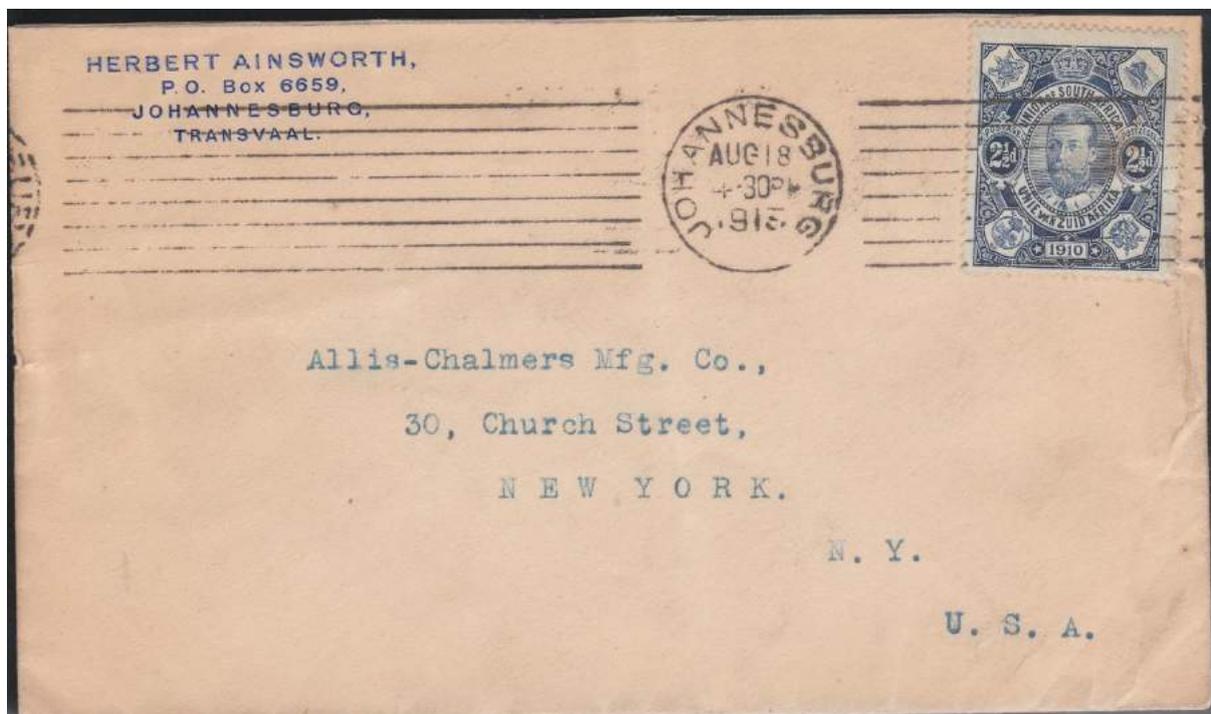


Cover to Germany, five-line machine cancelled, late use.

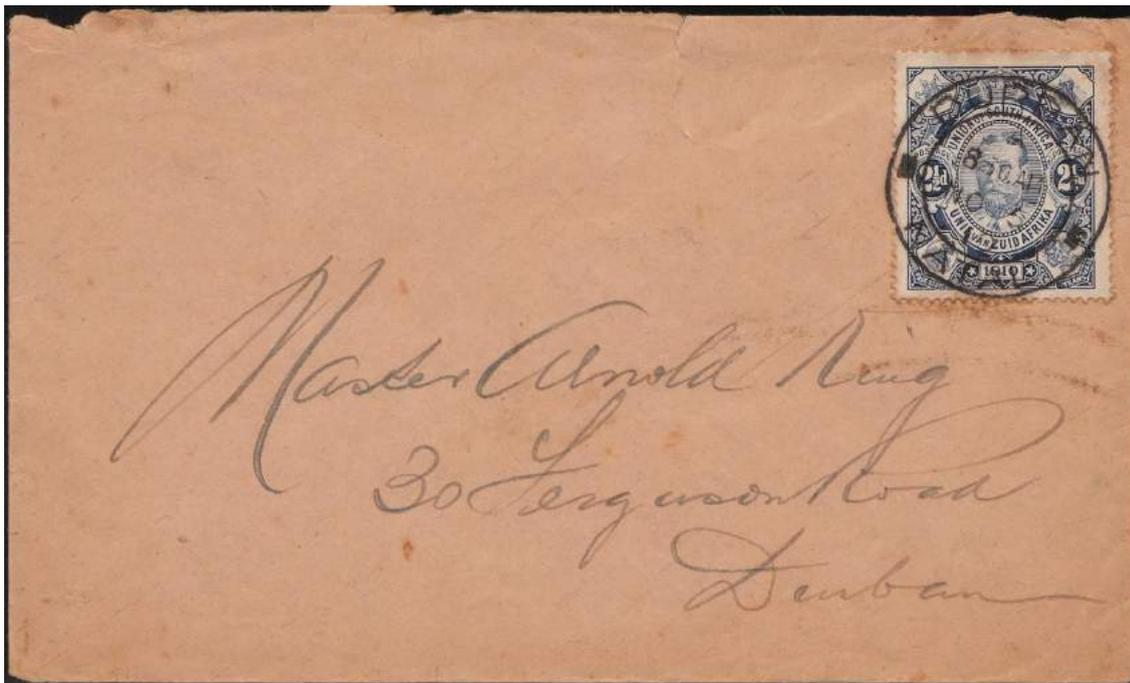
Single stamped covers



Picture postcard sent from Alfred Docks, Cape Town to Germany. Combination Union stamp and interpanneau Cape of Good Hope KEVII 1d.



Cover to Germany, five-line machine cancelled, late use.



**1910 (Nov 5)** Single on cover to Durban, Natal. Perhaps an attempted first day cover but was posted too late to still make out it with the final delivery on the 4th.



Single-stamped cover East London, Cape to USA.

Most common commercial usage

Use of a single commemorative stamp to pre-pay the foreign rate of tuppence halfpenny per half ounce.



**1913 Cover to Neuchâtel, Switzerland.** The most common commercial usage was a single stamped envelope to one of four countries other than domestic; viz. England, Germany, Switzerland or the USA.



1912 Cover to Neuchâtel, Switzerland, **same addressee as above.**



1912 (Sep 11) Wellington, Cape to Chicago, USA.



1913 (Mar 12) Wellington, Cape to Chicago, USA.



Window envelope to Germany. Excessive rate as window envelopes qualified for the ½ open letter rate.



1910 (Nov 28) Adelaide, (Eastern) Cape window envelope.



1910 Nov 6 Rustenburg, Transvaal to England. **Sent two days after first day of issue.** Usage on Picture Postcards beyond initial commemoration is uncommon.



Postcard stamped at and sent from the first international philatelic exhibition held for six days in South Africa at Durban from 30/6/1913 to 5/7/1913.



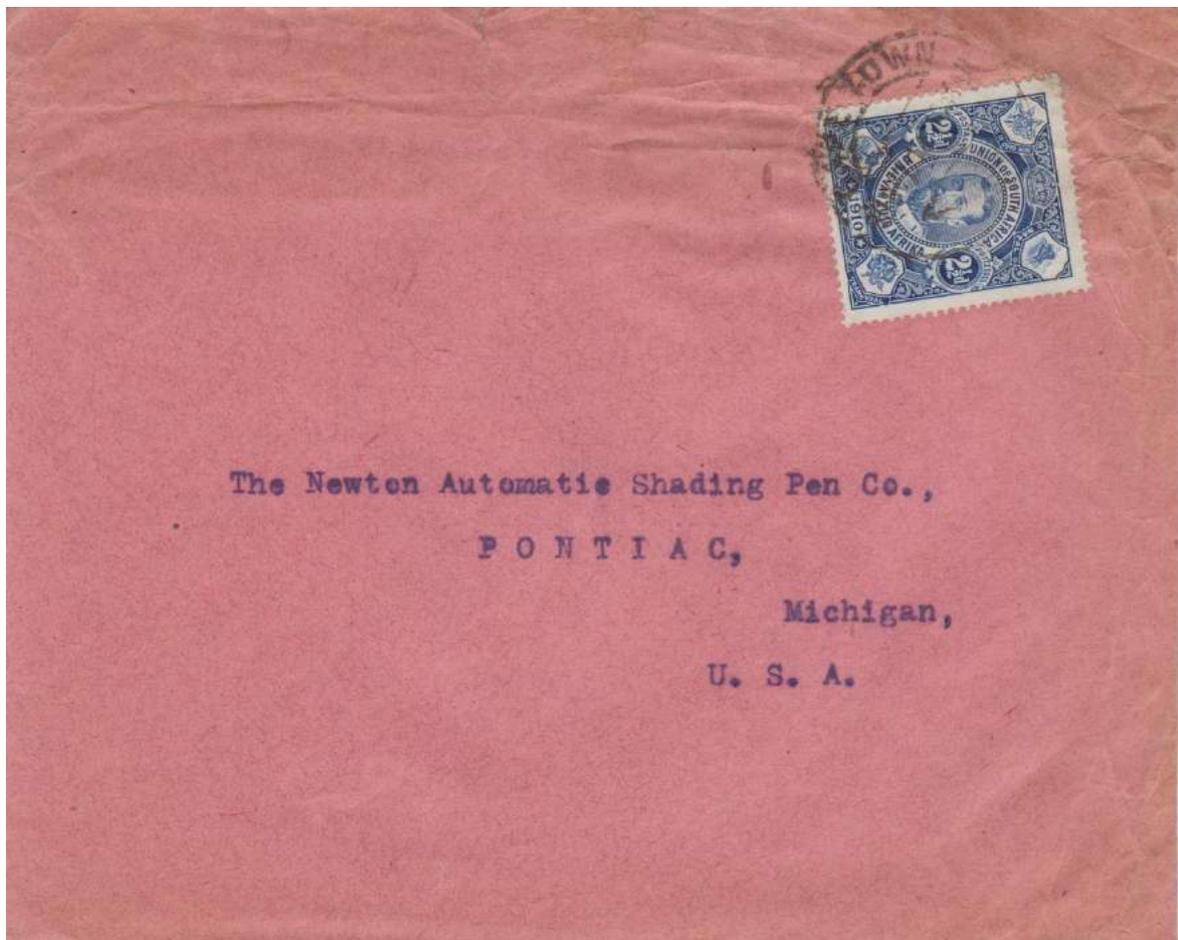
1911 (May 4) East London, Cape to Amsterdam, Holland. Amsterdam arrival stamp 27 May 1911.



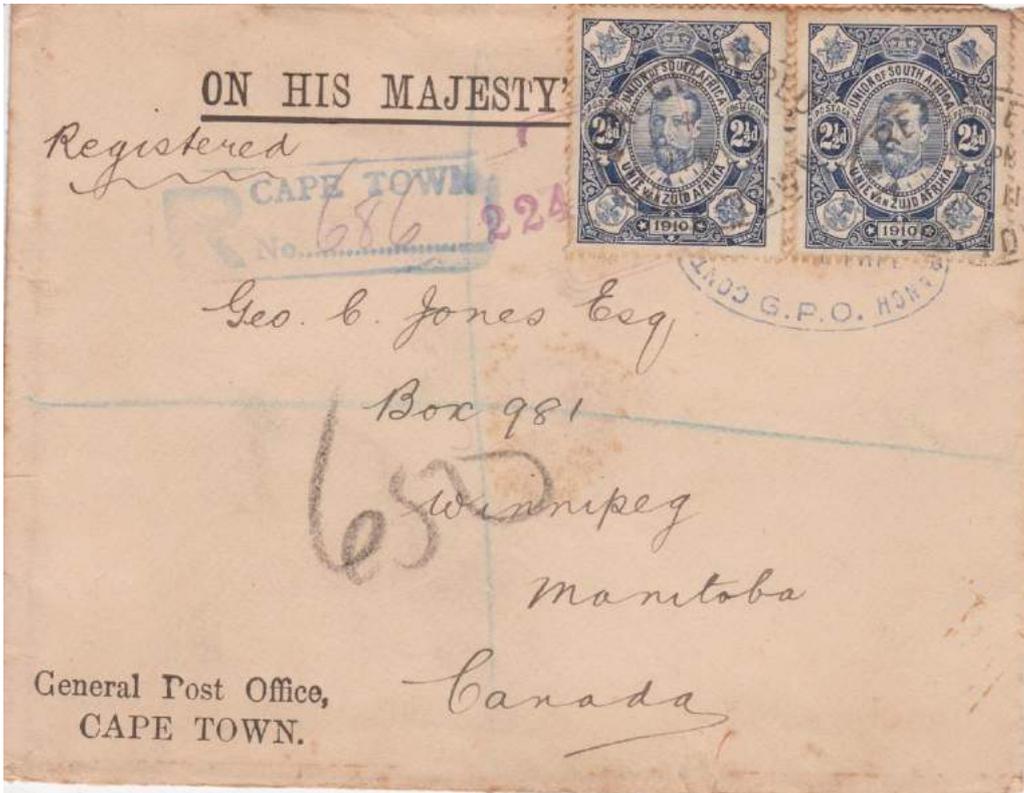
1913 (Aug 4) Johannesburg, Transvaal to Groningen, Holland.



Cover to Nurnberg (Nuremberg), Germany, **Krag six-bar canceller introduced after 1912.**



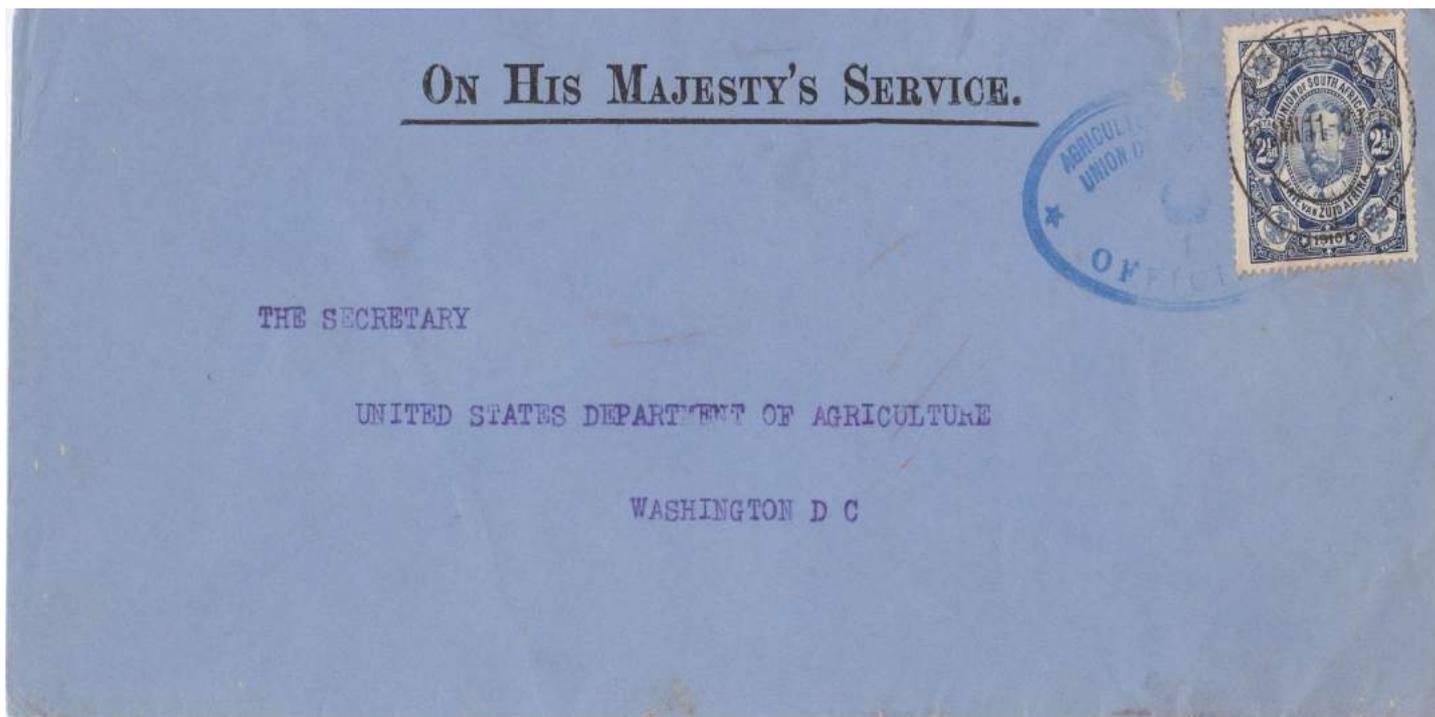
Cover to Michigan, USA, 11 October 1912.



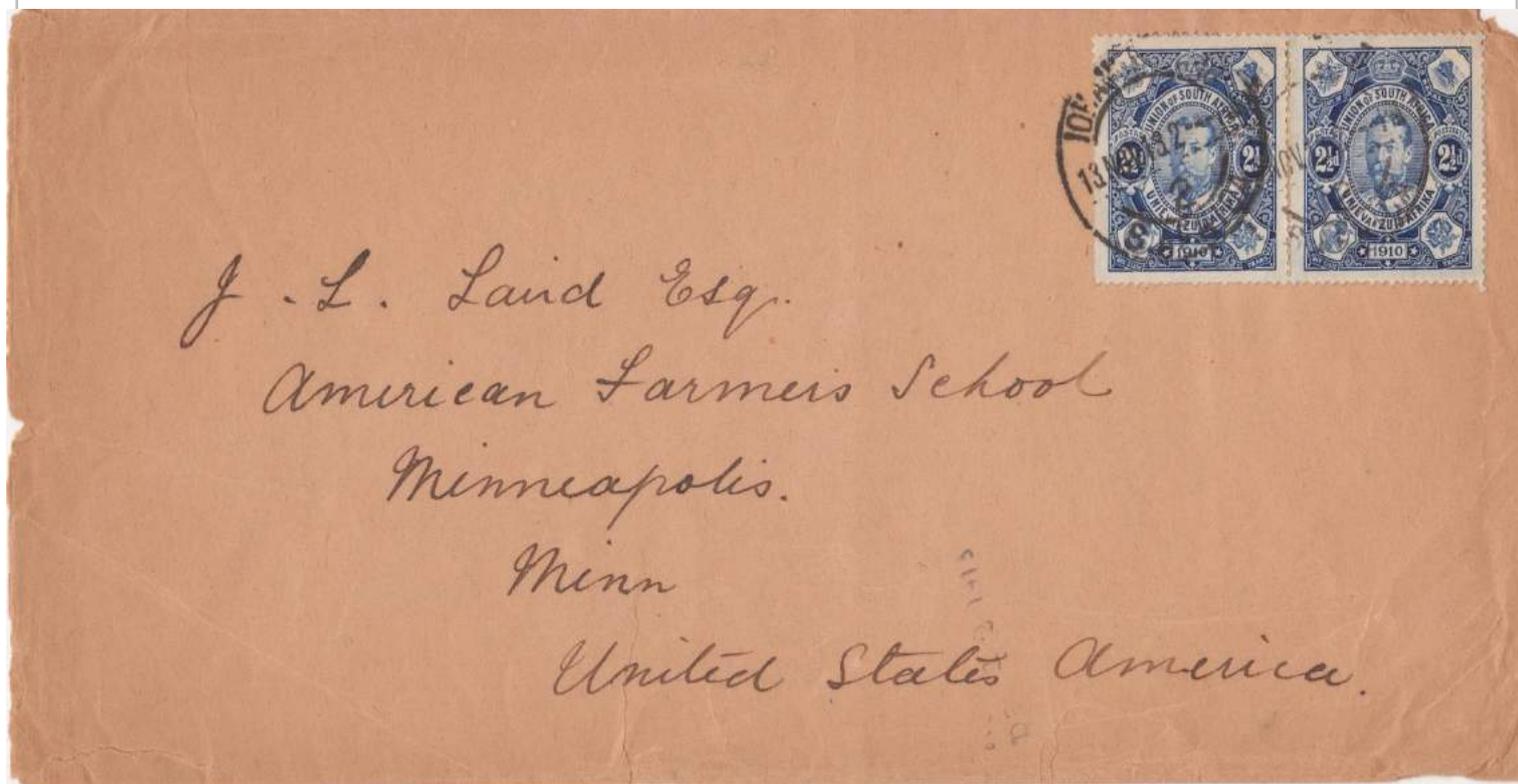
**Double foreign rate prepaid to Canada with two commemorative stamps.** The handwriting of both covers appears to be the same, suggesting a single GPO staff member responsible for outbound registered addressing. Transit stamps Montreal 9 Jun 1911, arrival Winnipeg 11 Jun 1911.



**Unregistered entire 16 Aug 1911 to Indiana, USA. Half-ounce letter rate.** OHMS letters were postage-free anywhere within the Empire. Contents on next sheet – a receipt for the purchase of four Union commemoratives. The Department of Posts and Telegraphs was created in 1910, William Thomas Hoal the first Union PMG.



**Government to government OHMS usage.** Interesting variation of this type of postage-free communication. Sent from the Agriculture Department in Transvaal to same in the USA. Official departmental marking added to the sea blue cover pre-franking. Postage still required as USA was not part of Empire. Washington D.C. backstamp 25 Feb 1911.



**High non-registered rate to the USA.** Prepaying 2.5 ounce content. No transit, arrival markings.



Unregistered double rate from Umkomaas, Natal to Berlin, Germany for a weight of 2.5 oz.



Unregistered double rate to Stockholm, Sweden. Backstamped Stockholm 10 May 1913. The most common foreign destinations are England, Switzerland, Germany and the USA due largely to the well-established commercial routes up to the turn of the First World War.



1910 (Nov 26) Cover to Klein-Hermanie, **Bohemia (now Czech Republic)**. Line-cancelled Transvaal, posted from Johannesburg. Addressed to Château Smilkau (German spelling), Smilkov/Smilkau arrival stamp on back of (Smilkov, local Czech spelling). Arrival stamp 20 Dec 1910. Uncommon dead-country destination.



**Registered mail sent from Kimberley to Athens, Greece.** Registered envelope size G of the Transvaal series, but ordered by the Union Government. It is distinguishable by the use of a blue inscription and cross lines. 2½d Union on prepaid 4d Transvaal registered letter paying a rate of 6½d. Uncommon destination. Arrival stamp Athens (in Greek). 10 days transit.



Registered envelope size F of Cape Colony, prepaid to Sweden. Mailed from St. George's post office in Cape Town. Actually has two 2½d stamps (one on each side), thus paying a rate of 9d. With transit and arrival backstamp of Malme 7 Sep 1911, nearly twice as long transit as expected.



Reverse with additional stamp, reduced by 25%.

Non-prepaid stationery registered mail



Registered personalised stationery to Birmingham, England paying correct 5d registered overseas rate – 4d for registration, 1d contents.



Registered personalised stationery to Blackburn, England. Correct 5d registered overseas rate posted Cape Town. Transit/arrival London/Blackburn stamps 12/17 Dec 1910 all respectively.

Non-prepaid stationery registered mail



Registered envelope paying **domestic registered rate**.



Registered envelope paying **foreign registered rate** from Middelburg, Cape to London. Arrival stamp 23 Aug 1913. Address on front (shown below – reduced).





**Consular mail to Stockholm, Sweden.** Late interprovincial use of the Transvaal colonial tuppence to make up a 7d rate. Backstamp Stockholm 8 Jan 1914.

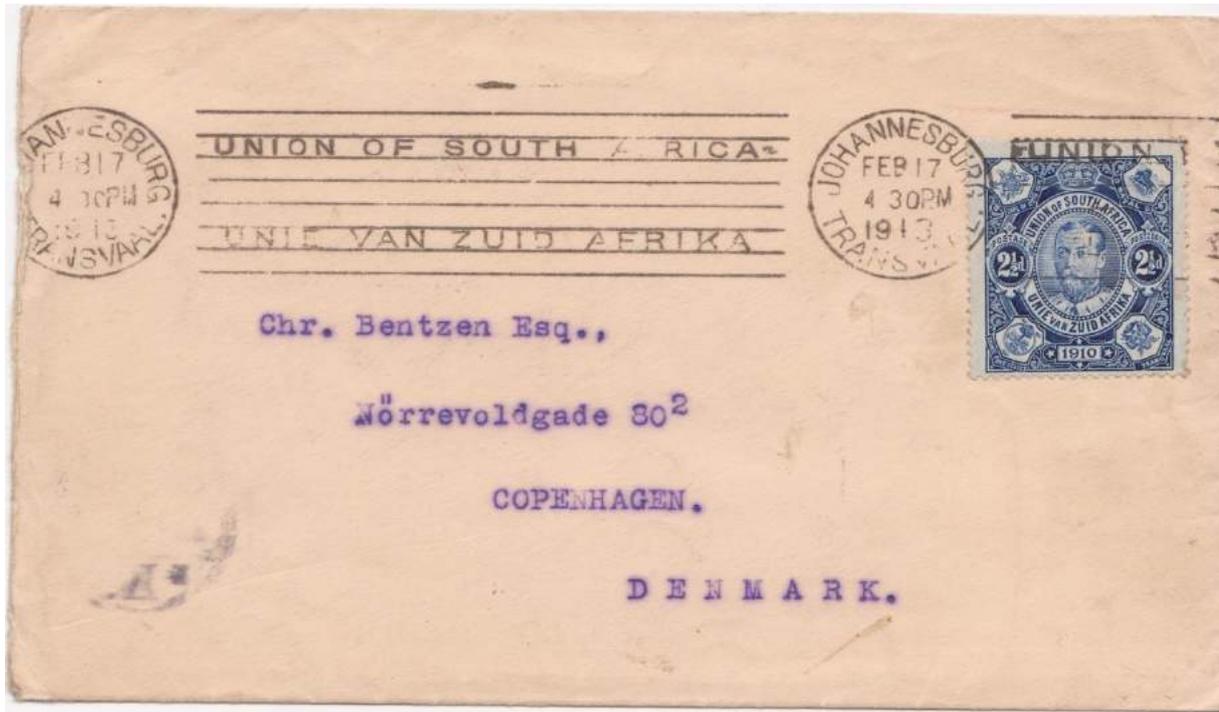


**Censor mail from Johannesburg to Berne, Switzerland.** Late colonial use. Censor backstamp "2 Sep 1915 CAPE TOWN Opened by Censor / Geopend door Censor". Swiss backstamped 25 Sep 1915. Censor stamp on front.

Large rate colonial use

**Large registered envelope to Bloemfontein from post office on diamond mine.** Paying 5½d for content and 4d for registration through multiple colonials. Although short distance from Cullinan (40km east of Pretoria), has transit stamps Pretoria 14 Feb 1912 and Bloemfontein 15 Feb 1912. Address of mine listed on reverse as 88 Oak Avenue which is correct. Established in 1902, it rose to prominence in 1905 when the Cullinan Diamond — still the largest rough diamond of gem quality ever found — was discovered here.





Danish Consul to Copenhagen, Denmark with stamp cancelled at Johannesburg. Reverse flap shows Consular markings and Copenhagen arrival stamping of 10 March. **On Royal Danish consular stationery.**



Pretoria, TVL to Württemberg, Germany. Consular stationery as per reverse. It is evident from these covers that **consular mail received no concessions** from the GPO.



**Registered mixed franking letter to Germany.** Hillbrow, Johannesburg post office. Commemorative stamp paying postage along with 4d Transvaal colony stamp, probably from new stock requisitioned by the Union. Arrived in Nullheim, Baden three weeks later. Typical European cancelling date format is date, month, year.



**Registered mail sent from the Transvaal to Liverpool, England.** Stamps from the three other colonies used interprovincially. Total rate of 5d which paying the correct registration rate. Mail arrived in Liverpool more than three weeks later as per Liverpool arrival mark on reverse.

## Treble rates

Use of a single commemorative stamp with additional colonial stamp to prepay letters heavier than the minimum weight of half an ounce.



**Late use** of both the colonial and Union commemorative to prepay the **treble letter rate** at 1d per oz. to the UK. On slogan cancelled envelope.



The Union and single CoGH halfpenny is used to prepay a **domestic treble letter rate** at 1d per oz.

## Mourning covers

Mourning covers have the striking feature of having black-rimmed borders and were sent as a formal notification of death as well as invitation to a funeral.



Single-stamped mourning cover to **Austria**, an uncommon European destination. The year of the postal slogan is 1912. The 'Eight Liner' Union Slogan Machine Cancellor was only used at Johannesburg during 1912. Horizontal lines equidistant in length and spacing and single line circle 23mm. The lettering of the slogan is 2mm high.

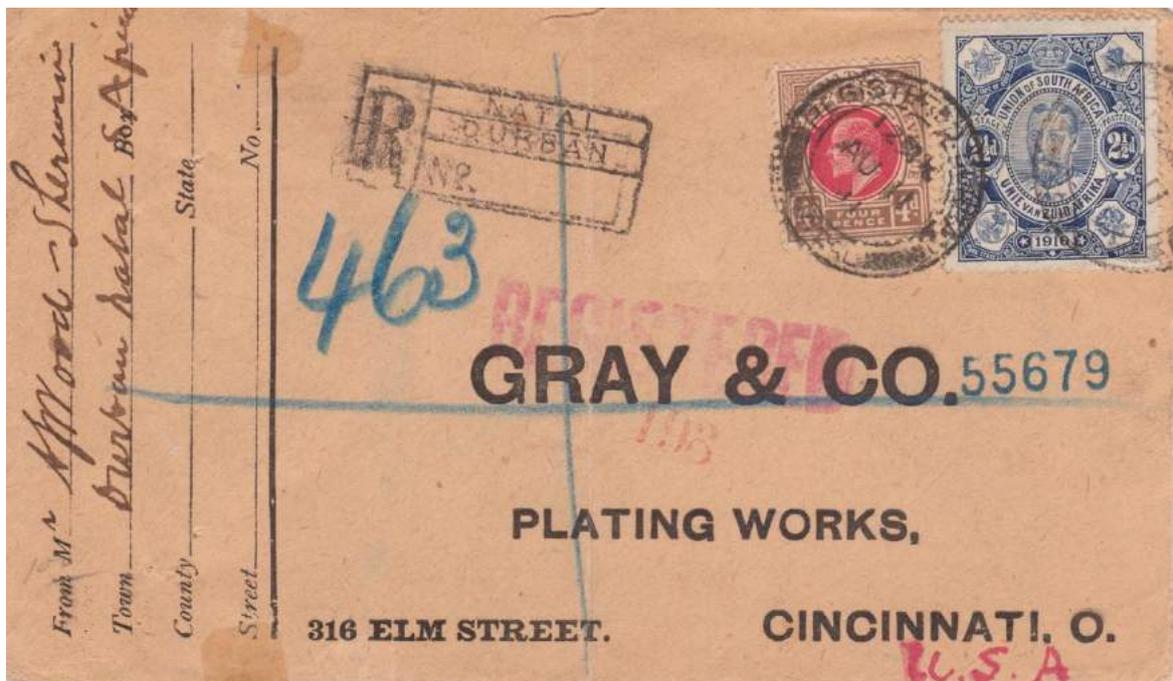


Germiston Station to London. KEVII penny added to pay 3.5d which is more than the **treble rate** of 1d per oz.

Additional steps of rates



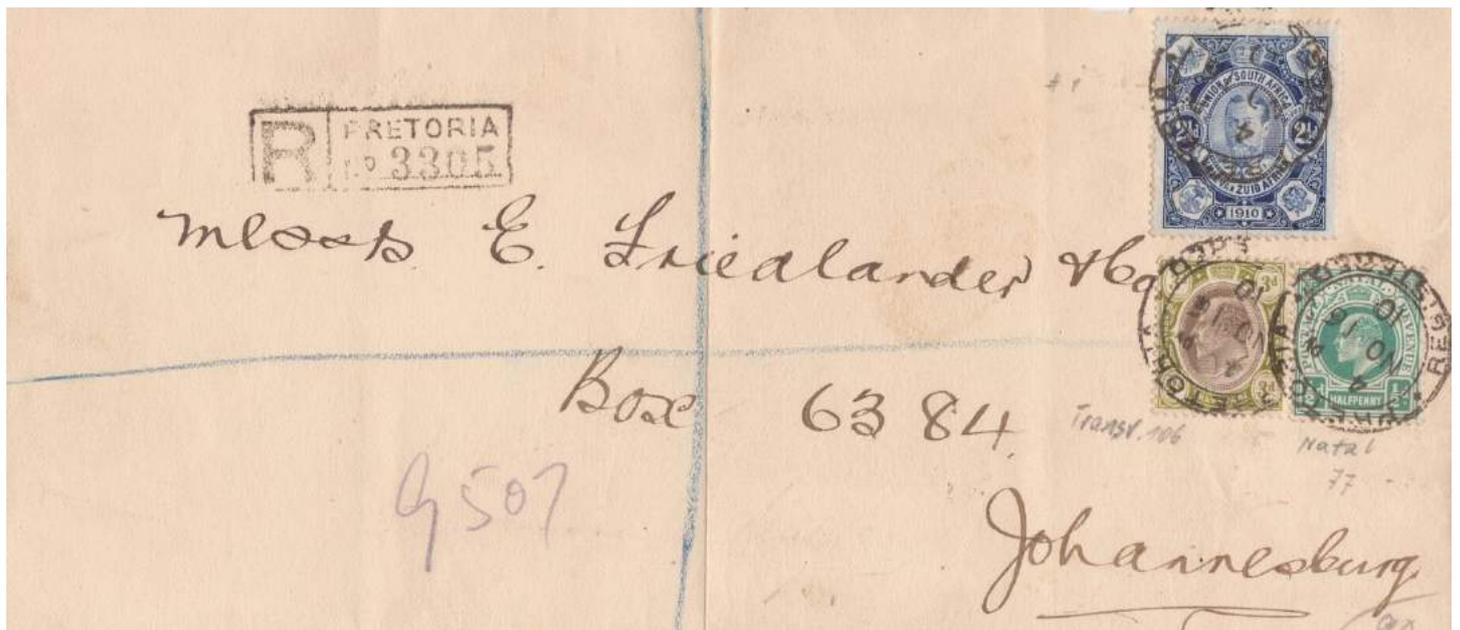
**Double letter rate** paying 5d for 2½ ounces content to Sweden. Arrival stamp on reverse Uppsala, Sweden 16 Oct 1911. Letter posted from the 'Svenska Gustav Adolfs Församling' (or Church) to Knut Bernhard Westman, Swedish Lutheran historian, educational missionary, missiologist, and ecumenical leader.



**Registered pre-printed self-addressed return envelope**, colonial combination paying 4d registration and 2½d for content. Outbound from Durban, Natal 11 Aug 1911, transit stamps New York 7 Sep 1911, arrival stamp Cincinnati, Ohio 9 Sep 1911.



**Registered letter from Volksrust to Switzerland.** Addition of two Transvaal KEVII low values to pay a rate of 6½d. Backstamped Horgen, Switzerland 10 Jun 1912.



**Early use domestic registered letter from Pretoria to Johannesburg.** Addition of KEVII Transvaal thruppence and Natal halfpenny to pay a combined rate of tuppenny content and 4d registration.



**Registered personalised envelope to New York.** Union stamp prepaying foreign letter rate to USA, with registration paid with Cape Colony 4d (mailed in Cape Town). Sent on 21 April 1911, **this was the very last day** of the South African leg of the southern hemisphere tour by John Philip Sousa and his band, and was probably sent as a keepsake by a band member. Three different New York transit stamps 19 May 1911.



Paying letter rate of 5½d to USA on **advertising envelope**. Union 2½d plus a Transvaal KEVII 1d strip of 3.

## Interprovincial mail

The context of stamps used interprovincially arose from the fact that the stamps of the former colonies were allowed – by Government Gazette notice, 19 Aug 1910 – to be valid throughout the Union until the KGV Kingshead series introduced in 1 Sep 1913.



Pre-paid 1d Transvaal cover sent to Court, Switzerland. **Transvaal prepaid penny envelope but sent from Matatiele, Cape Colony** therefore Interprovincial, and paying the correct 5d overseas rate. Sent by Paul Ramseyer of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society. Indicated as being sent 'via England' although no UK transit stamps.



Registered cover sent to California, USA from Lawrence St. post office, Port Elizabeth, Cape. **Transvaal KEVII 3d and 6d therefore colonials used interprovincially.** 4d for registration leaves 7½d paid for content. Multiple transit stamps on reverse. New York 24 Feb 1913.



**G-size registered Bloemhof cover to Holland.** Use of two commemoratives to prepay the foreign letter rate for twice half an ounce plus 4d registration fee. Pre-paid 4d Tvl registration envelope, uprated with two Union 2½d for a total rate of 9d. Given that 5d was paid for contents it must have weighed 2½ oz. Arrival stamp Amsterdam 18th August 1913. The Bloemhof stamp is not a transit stamp – merely a same-day backstamp upon cancelling. Uncommon European destination.



**Orange River Colony prepaid registered envelope to Turkey** from Nylstroom. Transit stamps London EC 26 Jul 1913 and arrival stamp Smyrna, Turkey 2 Aug 1913. Personalised backstamp 3 Jul 1913 Emil Tamsen although appears validly commercial. Uncommon Asian destination.



Internal quadruple weight letter on legal business, prepaying 10d rate for 5oz content, possibly a folded A4 or foolscap signed contract to an engineering firm.



Paying a rate multiple of 10 times, cover posted to and from Greytown in the Cape. It is not uncommon to find the Union stamp on domestic letters, sometimes vastly overpaying the correct rate.



**Underfranked cover to Jersey City, USA, machine-cancelled at Johannesburg.** Insufficient postage of a single 2½d, postage of 10 cents added (2c for every ½d owed). T50 centimes therefore 10c due. Franked 10c by the US Postal Authorities. Transit time of 26 days.



**Redirected underfranked cover mailed from Jagersfontein, OFS to USA.** Combination of the 2½d Union and a 1902 CoGH KEVII penny yields an insufficient total rate of 3½d possibly because the content was above 1oz. Cover therefore marked **Due 6 cents** with three two-cent postage dues (2c for every ½d owed). Total transit of 26 days incl. redirection. "2" in blue pencil at top-left signifies a double-rate. The 2/30 above the tax mark signifies a double rate with a deficiency of 30 centimes – every five centimes requires a cent postage, therefore 6c is due. US postage dues bulk-precanceled since 1887.



**Pre-paid registered letter to Cheltenham, England.** Combination franking Transvaal 4d registered letter, first Union stamp, multiple KEVII low value stamps, giving total rate of 11d (**more than twice standard rate**) therefore 3½ oz. content. Bristol transit Backstamp 26 Nov 1910, reached Cheltenham on the same day.



**Registered letter to Groitzsch, a small town in Leipzig.** Combination franking with Natal, ORC and Transvaal colonials paying the 4d registered tariff and thruppence for content. Backstamped Groitzsch 13 Aug 1911.



Interprovincial use to Mannheim, Germany. The additional KEVII Tvl penny **could be a late fee that was paid on a half-ounce letter**. The position of the colonial indicates affixed by post office counter staff. The 'N6 No6 II' are positional coordinates on a postal grid in Germany that will deliver to the address with great accuracy.



**Registered envelope from Pretoria to Malta via London**, prepaying 4d registration and 2d content, with a suspected late fee 1d penalty. Transit stamped London 26 Nov 1910, arrival stamped Valletta, Malta 1 Dec 1910. Very uncommon destination.



**1912 (Dec 2) Large prepaid registered envelope to Täbris, Persia.** Union commemorative on 4d Transvaal registered envelope uprated with three Natal 2½d colonial stamps. A very complex route from London to Tiflis, Djulfa on the Araxes River (which forms the international boundary between northwest Iran and Russia), and on to Tabriz by another Russian road. Transit stamps London 21 Dec 1912, Tauris (Persia) 31 Dec 1912.





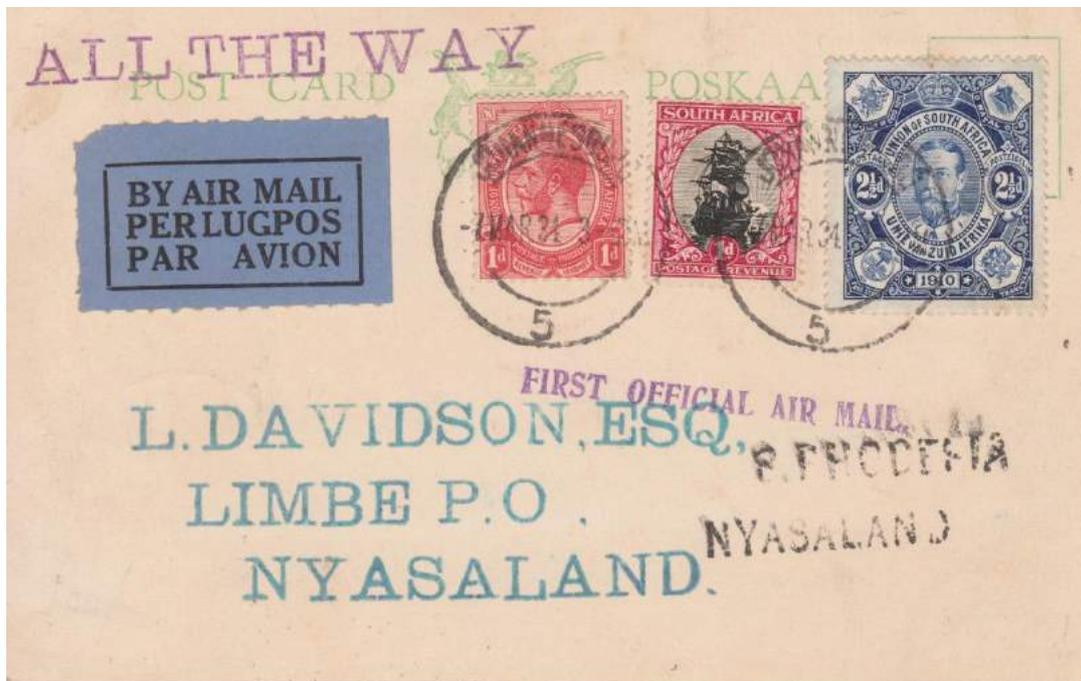
**Commemorative / definitive cover to Germany.** Mailed from Rosettenville post office with a 5½d rate although no registered markings. Very late genuine usage of the Union commemorative and shows how available the stamp was even in 1920 after the main Interprovincial period. Krag 5B machine postmark introduced after 1912.



**South Africa Imperial Press Conference Special Postmark.** The conference was held between Feb 4 and Mar 21 1935. The Union commemorative is supported by stamps from each of the four colonies, still available before colonial demonetisation at the end of December 1935. Overpaid for a registered domestic letter, it appears to have been meticulously prepared in advance but nonetheless went through the post. Not a “sunset” cover for either the commemorative or the colonial stamps.

Very late usage, demonetisation and the end of the issue.

With the first definitive issue due in 1913 and with wartime looking, the 1910 commemorative was not intended to be used beyond commemoration, and the colonials certainly not beyond 1910 at Union. The covers below are however not quite 'sunset', given that all colonial stamps were only demonetised 31 December 1937. Therefore although not often used and long since replaced, they remained postally valid.



1934 (Mar 7) First Official Airmail post card to Limbe, Nyasaland (now Malawi). Bearing a penny ship, a penny Kingshead and a single 2½d Union. Backstamped with a Blantyre transit cancel of 9 Mar with an arrival stamp of Limbe 1½ hrs later (Limbe is 7 miles east of Blantyre). One of the many manufactured covers by Robertson Stamp Company.



1932 (Sep 7) Johannesburg to Nakuru, British East Africa (now Kenya), bearing Cape colony and first Union definitive stamps, as well as a pair of 2½d Unions. Transit backstamped Nairobi 11 Sep 1932, and Nakuru 12 Sep 1932 arrival.



# The End

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**A grateful South African Philately Club thanks**

**Russell Boezak**

**for sharing his 'Opening of the Union Parliament' Commemorative philatelic material with us.**

**13/12/2020**

**If you have questions and want to contact Russell or the Club, please contact:**

**"Postmaster" <[postmaster@southafricanphilatelyclub.com](mailto:postmaster@southafricanphilatelyclub.com)>**

**[www.southafricanphilatelyclub.com](http://www.southafricanphilatelyclub.com)**