PORT · ELIZABETH (Dot)

Port Elizabeth (PE, today Gqeberha), was the Cape Colony's second largest city and arguably a more important port than Cape Town. It was founded by Sir Rufane Donkin, Governor of the Cape, at the time of the 1820 British Settlers arrival in Algoa Bay. After diamonds were discovered in Kimberley in 1866, PE developed rapidly as a harbour and city serving the import needs of the mining industry in the interior.

With the expansion of Cape railway system PE also began to serve the needs of the Cape's agricultural hinterland. As befitted its colonial importance, PE had a large post office whose efficiency and organisation can be seen in its use of double letter Time codes on its HCD datestamps. Smaller Cape post offices did not use them because they did not offer the level of service nor have the volume of business to demand it.

We are fortunate to have Yannis Larides Port Elizabeth ER (Earliest Recorded) HCD as a starting point. See below. This wonderful cover to Germany dated '30 AP 88' shows us that the first HCD used in PE has PORT and ELIZABETH separated by a raised dot. Frescura's offers a simplified definition of the HCD. His all-encompassing 'HC with Dot separator' fails to describe a PE HCD without a dot. Just like the GRAHAMS TOWN (No Dot) that he hides behind a similar description, this No Dot HCD exists,.

I have previously said that Putzel would have listed both a 'Dot' and a 'No Dot' variety if he was aware of them. Putzel's listing of the PE HCD, his No. 8, neither supports nor disproves my statement about what he would have done. Putzel shows two examples and lists four varieties, none of which mention a Dot. His No. 8 shows a Dot as a vertical hyphen but his other poor example, his No. 8b, is indistinct. It is possible that Putzel dismissed the unusual vertical hyphen in his No. 8 as not belonging ie. it was ink that was not a part of the postmark. The differences between Putzel's examples are based on HCD formats, not dots.

Neither Jurgens nor Goldblatt show any examples of the PE HCD.

Cover. 1888. PORT ELIZABETH '30 AP 88' to GERMANY.
It is suggested that the curious Blank at base of this postmark is an 'early' Time Code.

EARLIEST RECORDED: 30 AP 88 (06/06/2023)
TOP: Asterisk - Vertical
BETWEEN BARS: Day, Month, Year
BOTTOM: Blank
USED: On dispatch.
SOURCE: Yannis Lazarides.

The crispness of the postmark suggests the datestamp was new and applied close to the date of issue.

PORT · ELIZABETH (Dot) / 1

Frescura recognises only the PE HCD with 'dot separator'. He gives the following ER / LR.

HC..30 AP 1888   xx xx 1898

As no examples of the first PE HCD (Dot) are seen after mid-1890, the LR is for the PE HCD (No Dot).

****

xx MY 88
TOP: Asterisk - Vertical
BETWEEN BARS: Day, Month, Year
BOTTOM: Not visible
USED: On dispatch
SOURCE: A. Visser

****

14 JU 88
TOP: Asterisk - Vertical
BETWEEN BARS: Day, Month, Year
BOTTOM: Time Code Letter F
USED: Illustration - On dispatch
SOURCE: S. Kelly

****

8 SP 88 ???
TOP: Asterisk - Vertical
BETWEEN BARS: Day, Month, Year
BOTTOM: Not visible
USED: On dispatch
SOURCE: A. Visser

****

6 AU 88
TOP: Asterisk - Vertical more-or-less
BETWEEN BARS: Day, Month, Year
BOTTOM: Time Code Letter E or F
USED: On dispatch.
SOURCE: R. Hill

****

12 MR 89
TOP: Asterisk - Vertical
BETWEEN BARS: Day, Month, Year
BOTTOM: Time Code Letter E
USED: Presumably receiving postmark
SOURCE: A. Visser

****

9 JU 89
TOP: Asterisk - Vertical
BETWEEN BARS: Day, Month, Year
BOTTOM: Time Code Letter A
USED: On dispatch
SOURCE: A. Visser

****

xx JY 89
TOP: Asterisk - Vertical
BETWEEN BARS: Day, Month, Year
BOTTOM: Partial only
USED: On dispatch
SOURCE: A. Visser

****

10 SP 89
TOP: Asterisk - Vertical
BETWEEN BARS: Day, Month, Year
BOTTOM: Time Code letter F
USED: On dispatch
SOURCE: A. Visser

****

19 MR 90
TOP: Asterisk - Vertical
BETWEEN BARS: Day, Month, Year
BOTTOM: Time Code letter B
USED: On dispatch
SOURCE: A. Visser

****

No. 8
20/100

29 mm Hooded circular datestamp. Star in top section. Letter at base. Date without time code letter.

R. Putzel

28 AP 90
TOP: Asterisk - Vertical
BETWEEN BARS: Day, Month, Year
BOTTOM: Time Code letter F
USED: As illustration, probably used on dispatch
SOURCE: R. Putzel. (Postmarks of SA.)

Without referencing the dot and with the exception of the PE ER, Putzel is describing the basic HCD shown here. It will be interesting to see where and how his three varieties fit in, two of which have no date information.

**30

30 JY 90
TOP: Asterisk - Vertical
BETWEEN BARS: Day, Month, Year
BOTTOM: Time Code letter E or F
USED: On dispatch
SOURCE: A. Visser

****

A Word From Putzel

No. 8a
20/100

As No. 8, but letter at base inverted.

Not seen as HCD (Dot). Probably (No Dot).

No. 8b
20/100

As No. 8, but letter in top section. Blank base.

Seen as HCD (No Dot)

No. 8c
20/100

As No. 8b, but month before day.

Not seen as HCD (Dot). Probably (No Dot).
See next in No Dot.

Note. Yannis' PE ER is Blank at base with an Asterisk in the top segment. Putzel has listed a variety, his No. 8b, that is Blank at base but with a Time Code letter in the top segment. This indicates that there are two Blank at base PE HCDs, one with an Asterisk, the ER (Dot), and another with a Time code letter, in the top segment. Putzel's No. 8b is presumably the PE (No Dot), coming up next.

There now appears to be a hiatus is the use of the HCD in PE. We have no examples of the PE (Dot) after '30 JY 90'. **This is its LR.**

Based on our available and limited examples, use of an HCD in PE restarts with the introduction of the 'No Dot' in late 1895.

PORT   ELIZABETH (No Dot)

The PE (No Dot) is typically seen with the same consistent format, one characterised by a Time Code letter top, a Date of DD/MM/YY and a Blank below. Frescura's LR describes this second PE HDC, not the first.

"When was it introduced?" All but one of our examples suggest it was issued in late 1895. If true this means a gap of five years between the last recorded use of the PE (Dot) and the introduction of the PE (No Dot).

The PE (No Dot) example below is quite out of place. Its indistinct date appears to be 1890 or something else. It is the only PE (No Dot) HCD example we have with the date in MM/DD/YY format. We see NO PE (No Dots) with Time Code letter top until 1895! I show it here as an example of the PE (No Dot) type and ask you to consider whether it belongs here or not. On the basis that we have no other examples of the PE (No Dot) in the date range 1890 - 1894, I doubt it belongs here. Its date is most likely 1896.

S**P 29 90 or more likely 96**
TOP: Time Code letter CA
BETWEEN BARS: Month, Day, Year
BOTTOM: Not visible
USED: On dispatch
SOURCE: A. Visser
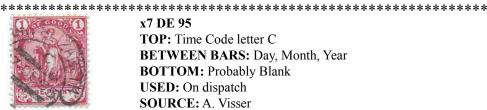
This attempt to determine the date was quite unsuccessful.

****

12 DE 95
TOP: Time Code Letter C
BETWEEN BARS:
Day, Month, Year
BOTTOM: Blank
USED: On dispatch
SOURCE: R. Hill

Starting left with '12 DE 95', we can see a period that runs to '31 JA 96' where all that changes within the datestamp is the Date between bars in the format DD/MM/YY, as well as the Time Code Letter (placed at the Top).

****

x7 DE 95
TOP: Time Code letter C
BETWEEN BARS: Day, Month, Year
BOTTOM: Probably Blank
USED: On dispatch
SOURCE: A. Visser

The Asterisk appears not to have been used at this time, nor was it needed for Time Control pur-poses. The fact that a Time Control Letter is used in every instance suggests that an Asterisk or a Blank at bottom does always indicate 'early'.

****

30 DE 95
TOP: Double Time Code letters HF
BETWEEN BARS: Day, Month, Year
BOTTOM: Blank
USED: Illustration / on dispatch
SOURCE: S. Kelly

****

10 JA 96
TOP: Double Time Code letters GP
BETWEEN BARS: Day, Month, Year
BOTTOM: Blank
USED: On dispatch
SOURCE: A. Visser

One conclusion that can be made is that at this time the Asterisk was lost. Another is that it has been dispensed with because it serves no useful purpose other than to decoratively obliterate a small area of the HCD.

****

16 JA 96
TOP: Time Code Letter D
BETWEEN BARS: Day, Month, Year
BOTTOM: Blank
USED: On dispatch
SOURCE: R. Hill

?3 JA 96
TOP: Time Code Letter C
BETWEEN BARS: Day, Month, Year
BOTTOM: Nothing
USED: On dispatch
SOURCE: R. Hill

****

30 JA 96
TOP: Double Time Code Letter LG
BETWEEN BARS: Day, Month, Year
BOTTOM: Nothing
USED: On dispatch
SOURCE: R. Hill

****

31 JA 96
TOP: Time Code Letter F (off-centre)
BETWEEN BARS: Day, Month, Year
BOTTOM: Nothing
USED: On dispatch
SOURCE: R. Hill

****

xx FE 96
TOP: Double Time Code Letter HF
BETWEEN BARS: Day, Month, Year
BOTTOM: Nothing
USED: On dispatch
SOURCE: A. Visser

****

23 AP 96
TOP: Time Code Letter C
BETWEEN BARS: Day, Month, Year
BOTTOM: Probably Blank
USED: On dispatch
SOURCE: A. Visser

****

SP 29 96, possibly but unlikely 90
TOP: Time Code letter C
BETWEEN BARS: Month, Day, Year
BOTTOM: Not visible
USED: On dispatch
SOURCE: A. Visser

This is the example we started with. It is the only PE HCD (No Dot) we have showing Date as MM/DD/YY.

Frescura does not recognise a PE HCD (No Dot). At present, this example is the PE HCD (No Dot) LR. Note, however, that Frescura's LR is '** ** 1888'. Until we see it, my guess is that it is almost certainly a PE HCD (No Dot).