

RAILWAY PHILATELY OF SOUTH AFRICA – 1867 to 1910

'The railway revolutionized land transport and it became possible to organize the human and natural resources of far larger geographical bases'

It is generally accepted that the development of Railway systems over the world facilitated the **transport** of mail and led to the introduction of a uniform **postage** system. In South Africa, the development of postal systems was greatly **influenced** by the arrival and development of the different railway systems.

Railways in South Africa rather begin as undertakings by **several** small companies to service local needs. The first working railway line in started in **1860** between Durban and the Harbour. At first it was operated by animal power until the Natal Railway Company purchased a **steam** locomotive.

The Cape Town Railway and Dock Company, which had obtained its locomotive a year earlier, had not completed any railway line. These early railways were mainly used to carry **freight** and eventually **Cape Town** supported three small railway companies operating lines from Cape Town to Wellington, Wynberg and Sea Point, issuing parcel **stamps** as early as **1877**.

Over the years it so developed that the Railway Department started to **issue** its own packet labels, stamps, stationary, stamps and cancellers. The basic difference between **railway stamps** and normal postage stamps is that, although both prepay the conveyance of mail, in the former they are normally **affixed** to a waybill and not directly to the item of mail to be delivered.

AIM

This exhibit aims to show how the Railways deal with **conveyance** of material/postal matters by way of railway stamps, covers and waybills.

SCOPE

The development and **expansion** of the different railway companies of South Africa and constant innovation that led to the introduction of a **service** to assist and compliment the Postal Service are observed. These **efforts**, such as Postal Agencies/Offices at Railway stations, Travelling Post Offices and Special Mail Trains resulted in the **efficiency** of rail-post services. The storyline is **outlined** with historic pictures and postcards portraying early activities and philatelic material of Railways in South Africa. It concludes with the amalgamation of these Railway Systems to form the SA Railways in 1910.

MANIFESTATION

Frame 1

- pp 1: Introduction
Natal
pp 2 - 5: Natal Government Railways (NGR)
pp 6: NGR - Official Stationery
pp 7: NGR - Traveling Post Offices
Cape of Good Hope
pp 8: Cape Town Railway and Dock Company

Frame 2

- pp 9: Cape Town Railway
pp 10 - 13: Cape Government Railway (CGR)
pp 14 - 15: CGR - Expansion
pp 16: CGR

Frame 3

- pp 17: New Cape Central Railway Ltd
pp 18 - 22: CGR - Travelling Post Offices (TPO's)
pp 23 - 24: CGR - Railway Station Postmarks

Frame 4

- Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek**
pp 25 - 26: Nederlandsche-Zuid-Afrikaansche Spoorwegmaatschappij (NZASM)
pp 27 - 29: NZASM - Official Stationery
pp 30 - 31: NZASM - Railway lines
pp 32: NZASM - Braamfontein Disaster

Frame 5

- pp 33 - 34: NZASM - Traveling Post Offices (TPO's)
pp 35: NZASM - Pretoria Pietersburg Spoorweg Maatschappij
Orange Free State (OFS)
pp 36: Oranjevrijstaatsche Spoorwegen (OVSS)
pp 37: OVSS - Stationery
pp 38: OVSS - Travelling Post Offices
pp 39: OVSS - Associated Station Marks
Anglo Boer War (ABW)
pp 40: ABW - Railway Related Mail

Frame 6

- pp 41: ABW - Railway Related Mail
pp 42: ABW - Hospital Trains
Imperial Military Railways (IMR)
pp 43 - 44: IMR - Usage of NZASM/OVSS stationary
pp 45 - 47: IMR - Official Stationery
pp 48: IMR - Travelling Post Offices (TPO's)

Frame 7

- pp 49 - 50: IMR - Railway Pioneer Regiment
pp 51: IMR Related transport
Central South African Railways (CSAR)
(1902 - 1910)
pp 52 - 54: CSAR
pp 55: CSAR - Perfins
pp 56: CSAR

Frame 8

- pp 57 - 58: CSAR
pp 59 - 60: CSAR Traveling Post Offices *Transvaal*
pp 61: CSAR Traveling Post Offices *ORC*
pp 62: CSAR Traveling Post Offices Tax marks
pp 63: CSAR/ORC Railway Cancellations
pp 64: **South African Railways 1910** →

MATERIAL

The exhibit is planned chronologically but, in some instances, material is grouped together to keep to the story line without detracting.

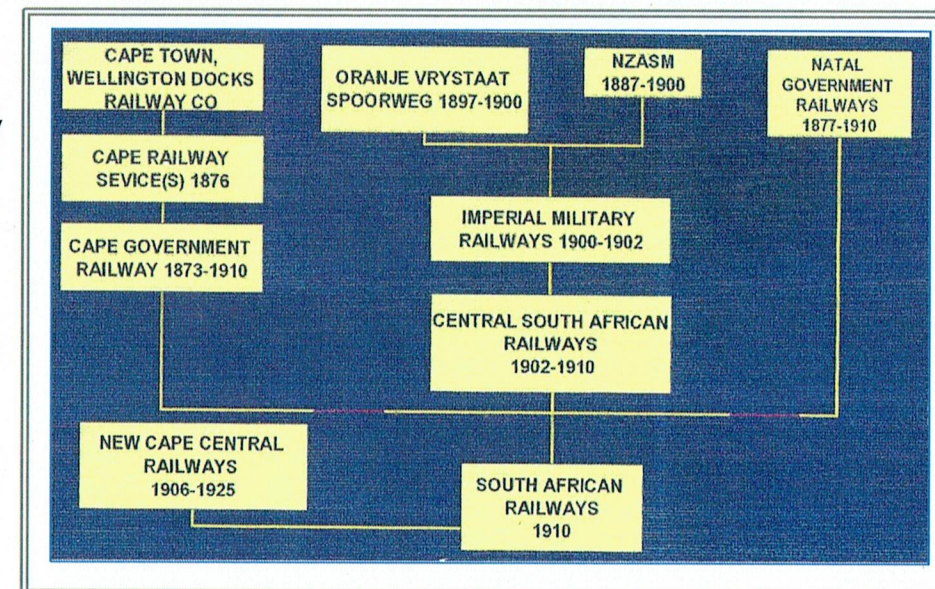
Philatelic as well as non-philatelic material has been chosen to best fit the story, to enhance the exhibit and to appeal to the eye.

In general terms, it can be mentioned that at least **70%** of the material shown, is of notable historical importance and as such unique and hard to find.

Specialist items are outlined with Green borders.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Transvaal Railway Stamps and Travelling Post Offices: AR Drysdal RDP, RDPSA, FRPSL, 1997: Various pages
Railway Stamps of South Africa: HS Hagen and SP Naylor, 1985: Various pages
Railway Postal History of South Africa: HS Hagen and SP Naylor, 1998: Various pages
Personal research - Various Internet websites accessed: <https://commons.wikimedia.org> : <https://www.sahistory.org.za> :

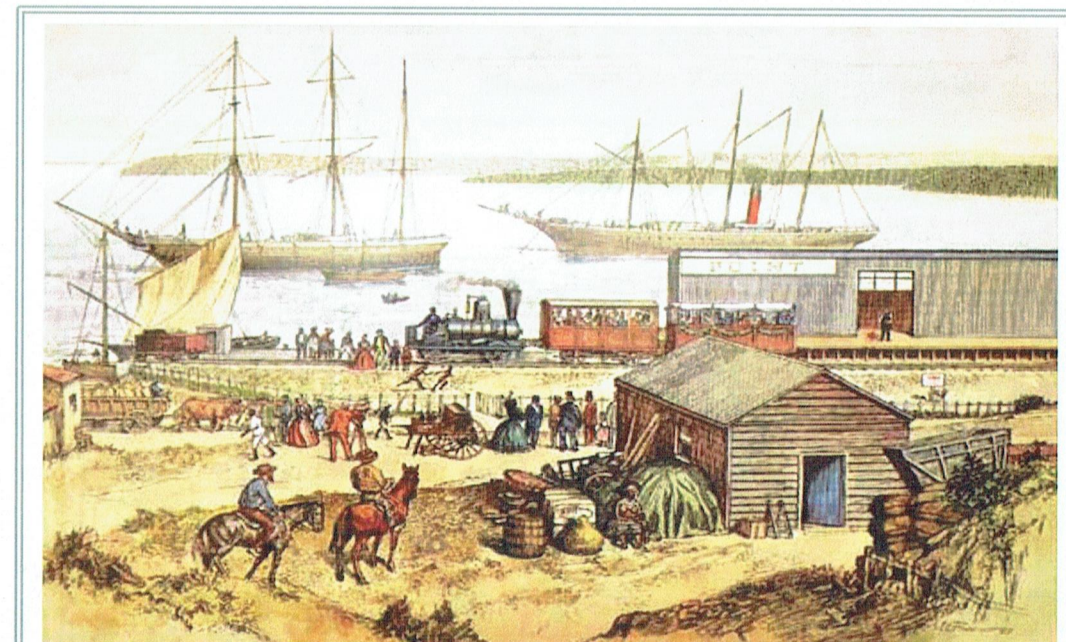


Selected Highlights

- De La Rue essays - pp 10
Kimberley & Bechuanaland Railway - pp 15
Midland TPO handstamp in red - pp 20
Johannesburg Station boxed handstamp - pp 27
Pretoria Pietersburg Spoorweg Maatschappij cover - pp 35
Looted Mail cover - pp 40
IMR Karree boxed station cachet - pp 42
CSAR Stencil cut stamps - pp 53
CSAR parcel label - pp 57
TPO 6d Tax mark - pp 62
- NGR perforated stamp on cover - pp 6
Hottentots Holland cover - pp 12
Set of 10 specimens stamps - pp 16
Delagoa Bay Railway cover - pp 25
Unboxed Olifantsfontein station handstamp - pp 29
OVSS free pass ticket - pp 37
NZASM Boer Forces cover - pp 41
Imperial Government Railways cover - pp 43
CSAR perforated stamp on cover - pp 55
CSAR stamp specimens - pp 58
SAR perforated stamps - pp 64

The first railway company in South Africa - **Natal Railway Company** - was formed in January **1859**. It starts operations on 26 June 1860 with construction of the **first** railway line in SA - a 3-kilometre track connecting Durban with the Point station at Durban harbour.

By 25 January 1867, the line had been **extended** a further 5.6 km to Umgeni to transport stone to the harbour.



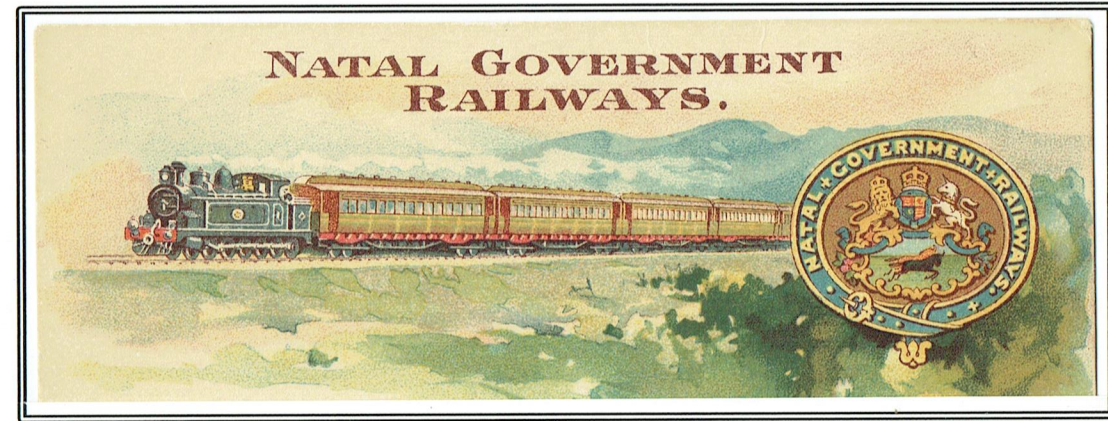
Reproduction of 1889 painting by A.H. Barrett showing the Point Station on the official opening of the first railway line in South Africa - from the Point to Durban

Source: Railway Society of Southern Africa.

NATAL GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS – 1877 TO 1910

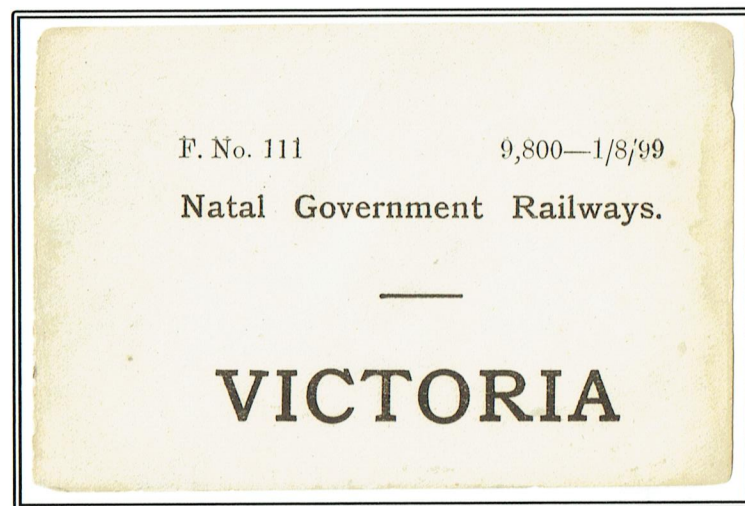
In 1876 the **Natal Government Railways (NGR)** came into being and bought all the assets of the Natal Railway Company that continued to operate under that name until it became part of the NGR on 1 January 1877

Although Natal boast the first Railway in South Africa, they only **issued** railway stamps in **1880** depicting the monogram 'NGR'



Large scroll letters NGR with perf gauge 12,5

NGR luggage labels were printed to mark luggage and goods destined for a station on a certain line, although it was in some instances to other Railway Service over Provincial borders



Unused NGR luggage label (F. No. 111) used to mark luggage destined for Victoria Station on the Pietermaritzburg – Greytown line



CUTTING THE FIRST TURF OF THE NATAL GOVERNMENT RAILWAY AT DURBAN.

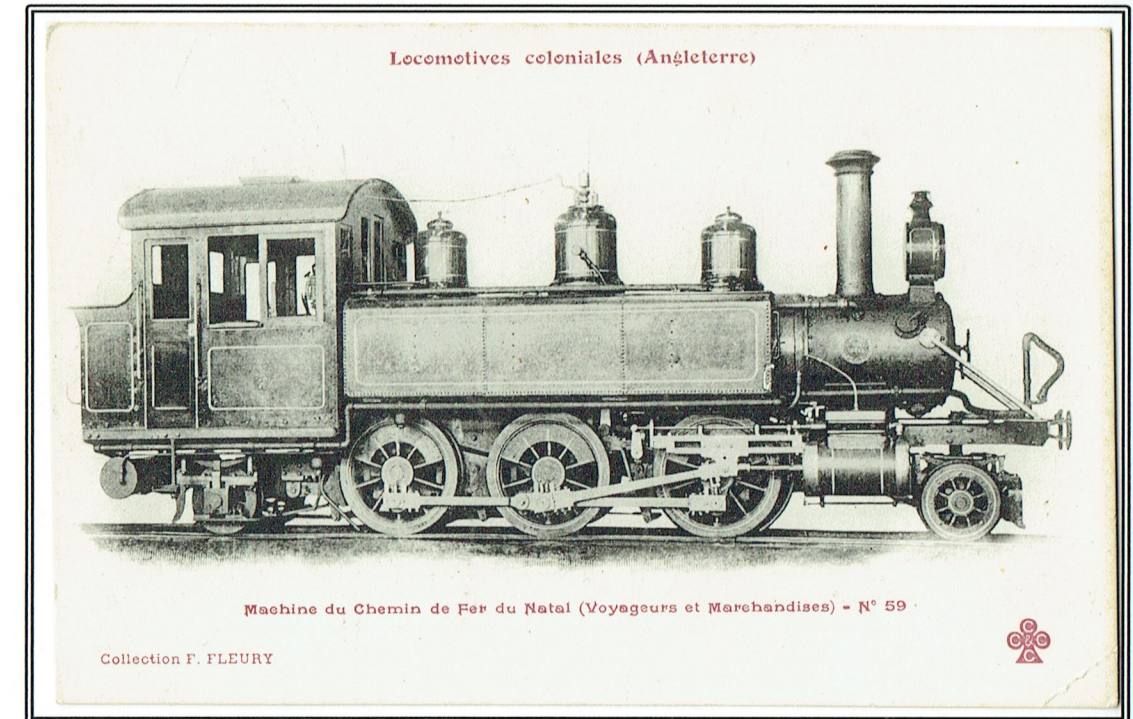
Original wood engraved print image from a **rare, retained** copy of "The Illustrated London News" of 11 March 1876 with caption "Cutting the first turf of the Natal Government Railway at Durban"

NATAL GOVERNMENT RAILWAY – 1877 TO 1910

These first stamps were in use until **1900** when another set of parcel stamps, with the same design, were issued but with a different perforation gauge



Large scroll letters NGR with perf 11



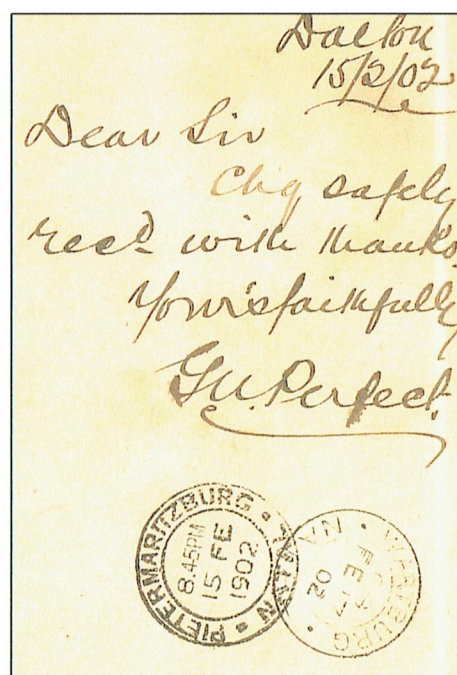
In 1908 new stamps were again issued again with the same design and perforation but in different colors



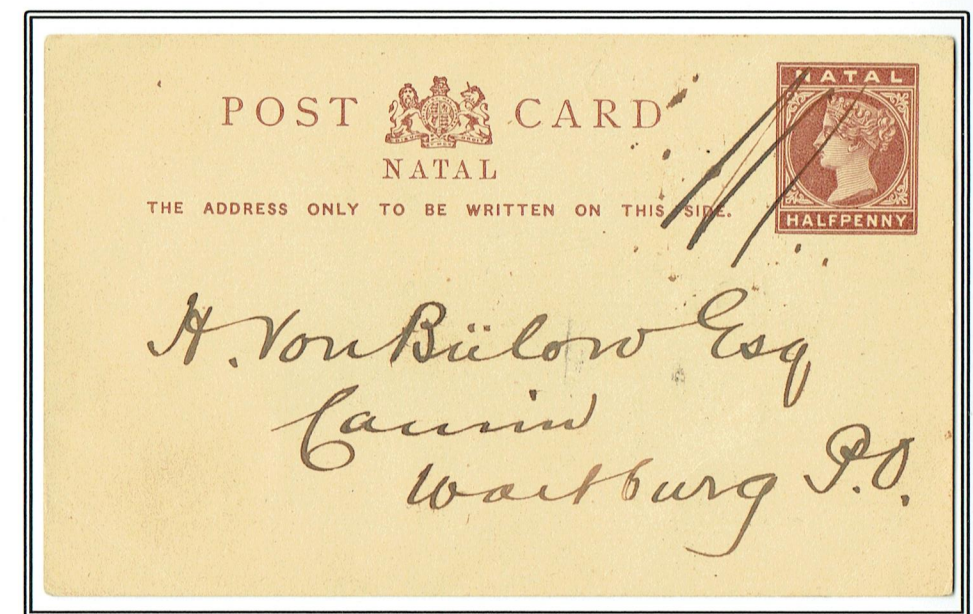
Large scroll letters NGR



Durban Railway Station in Centre



Back of card



1902 Railway manuscript cancellation QV 1/2d postcard addressed to Wartburg from Dalton via Pietermaritzburg on 15 February (at the back)

The imprint stamp is cancelled, as was required, by 'three bars with pen and black ink', the duty of the sending station master if without official stamping apparatus

NATAL GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS – 1877 TO 1910

For publicity and to **promote** the NGR, breakfast menus issued to passengers could be folded and used as a publicity stationary **card** displaying a map of the routes the NGR operated

In 1907 the NGR started to **perforate** the Natal King Edward VII stamps with the letters **NGR** for Railway related usage. Stamps of the Orange River Colony were also **perforated** NGR for the Van Reenen-Kroonstad line



This correctly franked card is addressed to Scotland and cancelled in Durban on 20 July 1906



NATAL GOVERNMENT RAILWAY – 1877 TO 1910

In 1909 the NGR issued another set of Parcel Stamps with saw tooth perforation gauge 14, the last before Unification in 1910



Cancelled in accordance with regulations, the stamps were cancelled with horizontal lines if a hand canceller was not available



Dark Grey



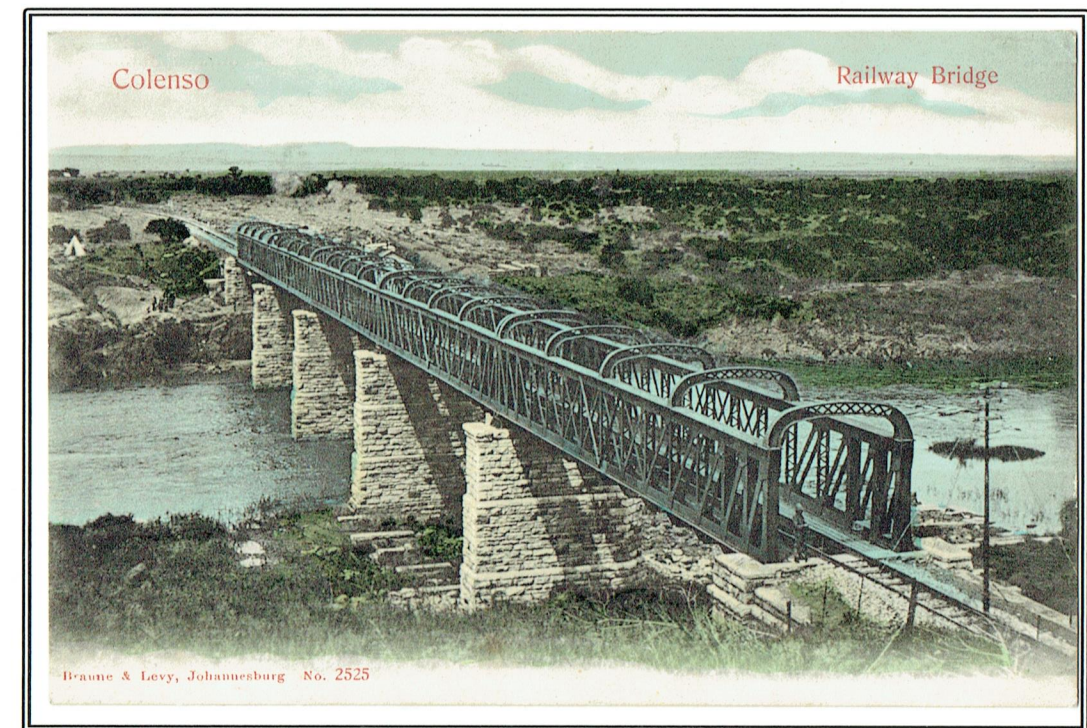
Green



Light Aquamarine



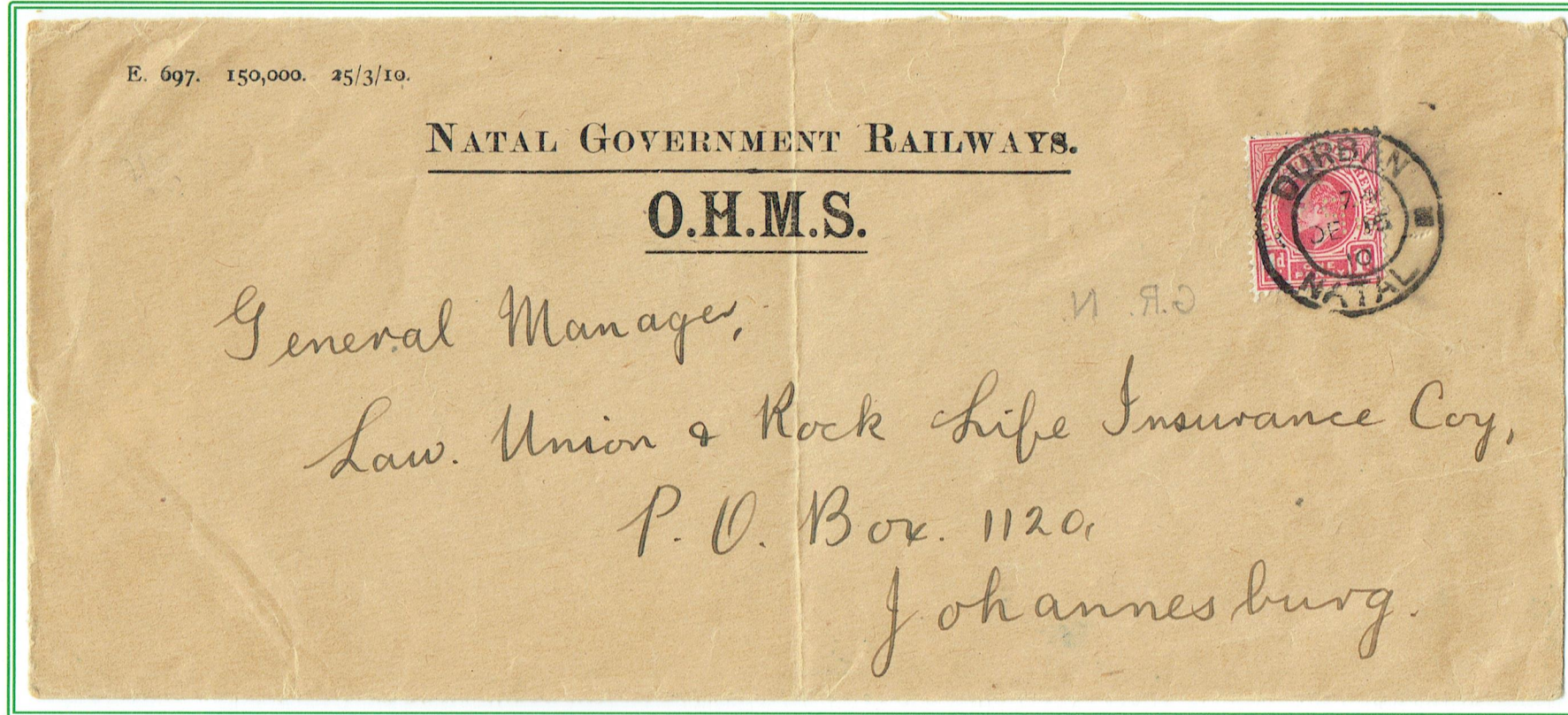
Dark Aquamarine



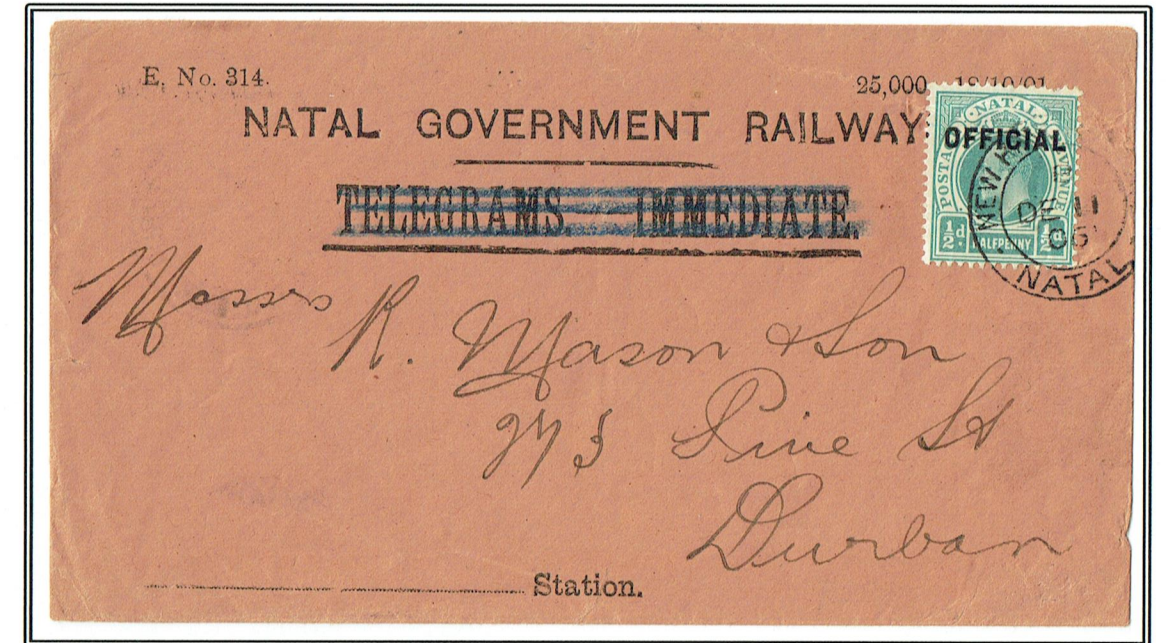
NATAL GOVERNMENT RAILWAY – 1877 TO 1910

OFFICIAL STATIONERY

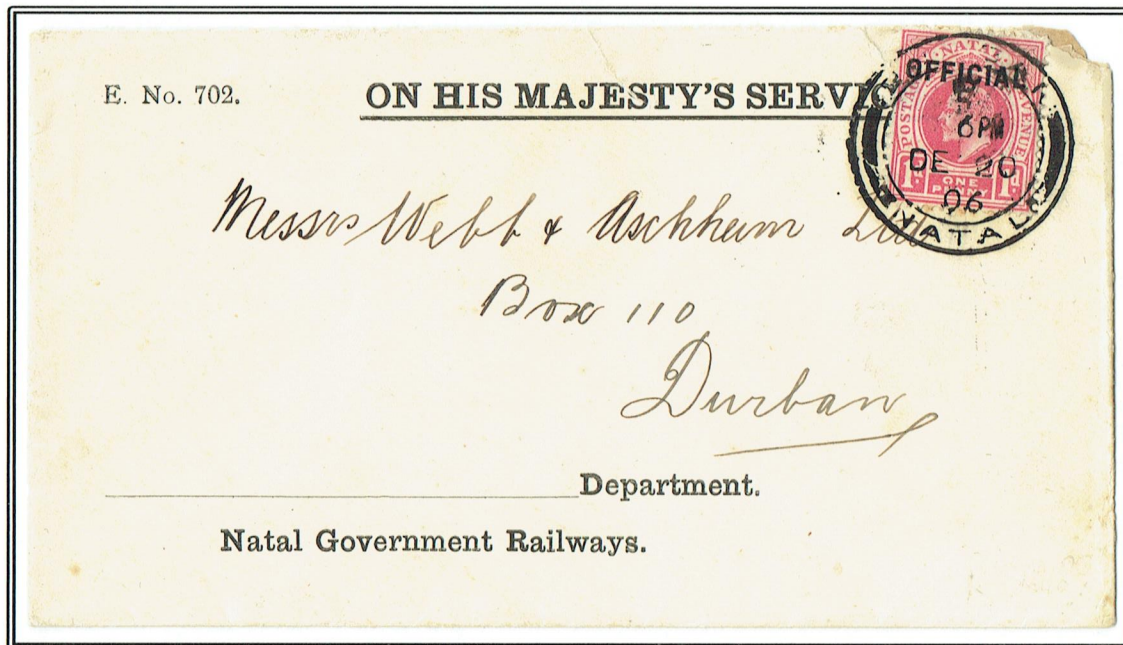
Stationery that identifies the NGR was specially designed and printed and coded and the intended usage for the official stationery was for use in the postal service



NGR cover with code E698 (left corner) addressed to Johannesburg. It is franked with a 1d Natal Edward VII with shifted reverse **NGR perforation**. The stamp is cancelled with a Durban, Natal circular datestamp dated 16 December 1910 and backstamped Johannesburg 18 December 1910. Rare - **Perforated stamps of this type on cover are seldomly seen**

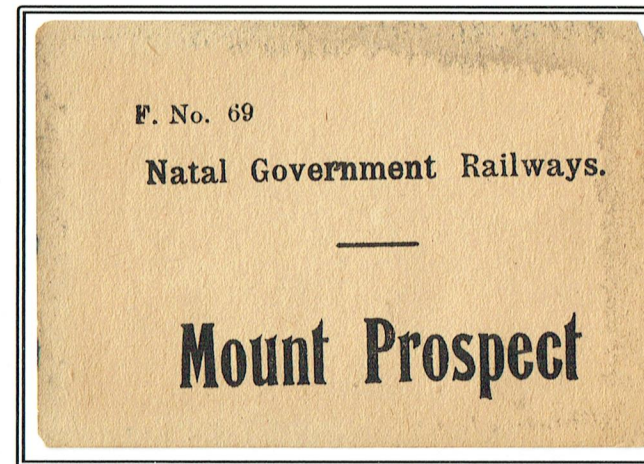


Official NGR Telegrams envelope with code E No 314 (left corner) used for postal purposes and addressed to Durban. The stamp is cancelled with a New Hanover, Natal circular datestamp dated 11 Dec 1906. It received a Pietermaritzburg, Natal transit mark on 11 December 1906 and a Durban arrival mark on the same day

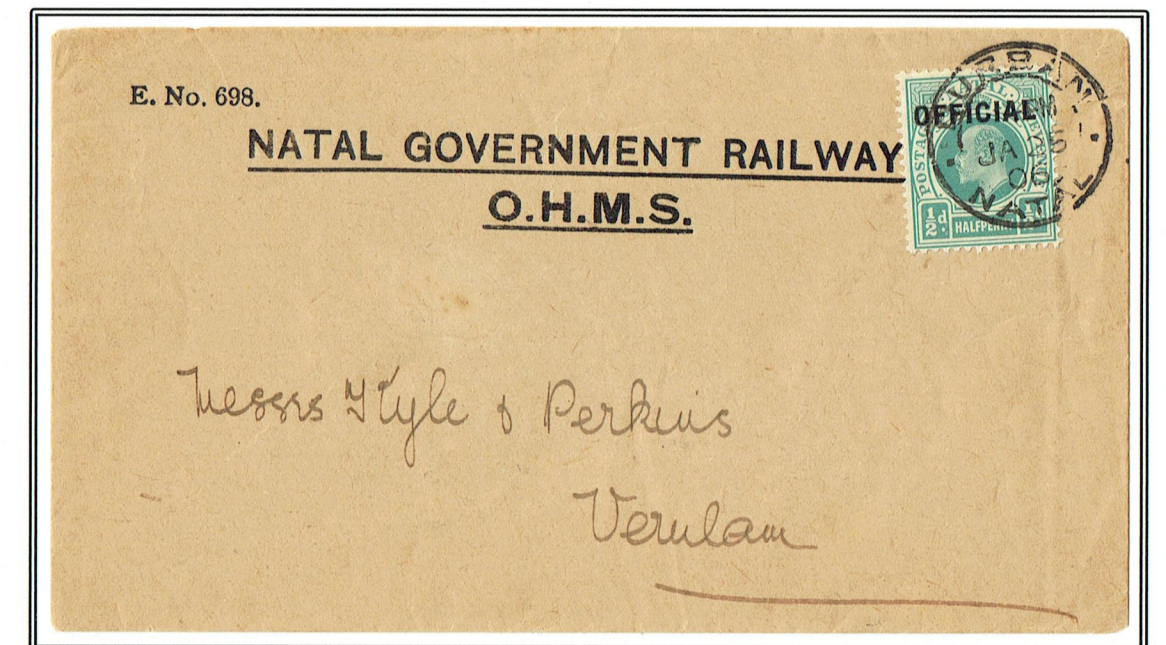


Code E No 702 with Natal Government Railways printed bottom left. Addressed to Durban, the Official 1d Natal Edward VII stamp is cancelled with an indistinct Natal circular datestamp dated 20 December 1906

Other than the others, the name of the Department can be inserted



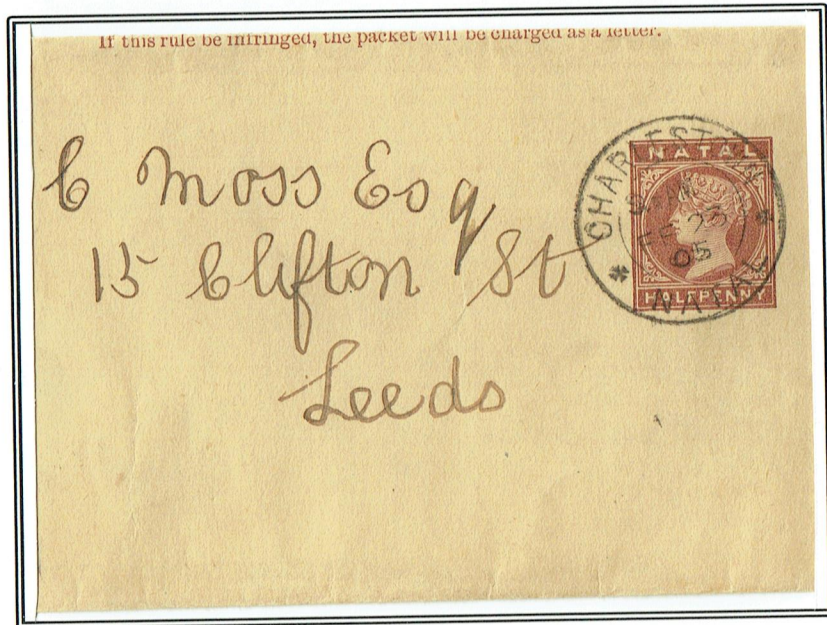
Unused NGR luggage label (F. No. 69) used to mark luggage destined for Mount Prospect Station on the Ladysmith – Volksrust line



Code E No 698 envelope addressed to Verulam and franked with a 1/2d Natal Edward VII stamp cancelled with a Durban, Natal circular datestamp dated 25 January 1906. The cover is backstamped Verulam, Natal on 26 January 1906

NGR TRAVELLING POST OFFICES

TPO NATAL: It operated as an experimental service for a short while in 1893 between Charlestown and New Castle. Between 1896 and 1899 it operated **weekly** from Elandsfontein (Germiston) to Charlestown and later extended to New Castle and responsible for sorting overseas mail destined for Natal

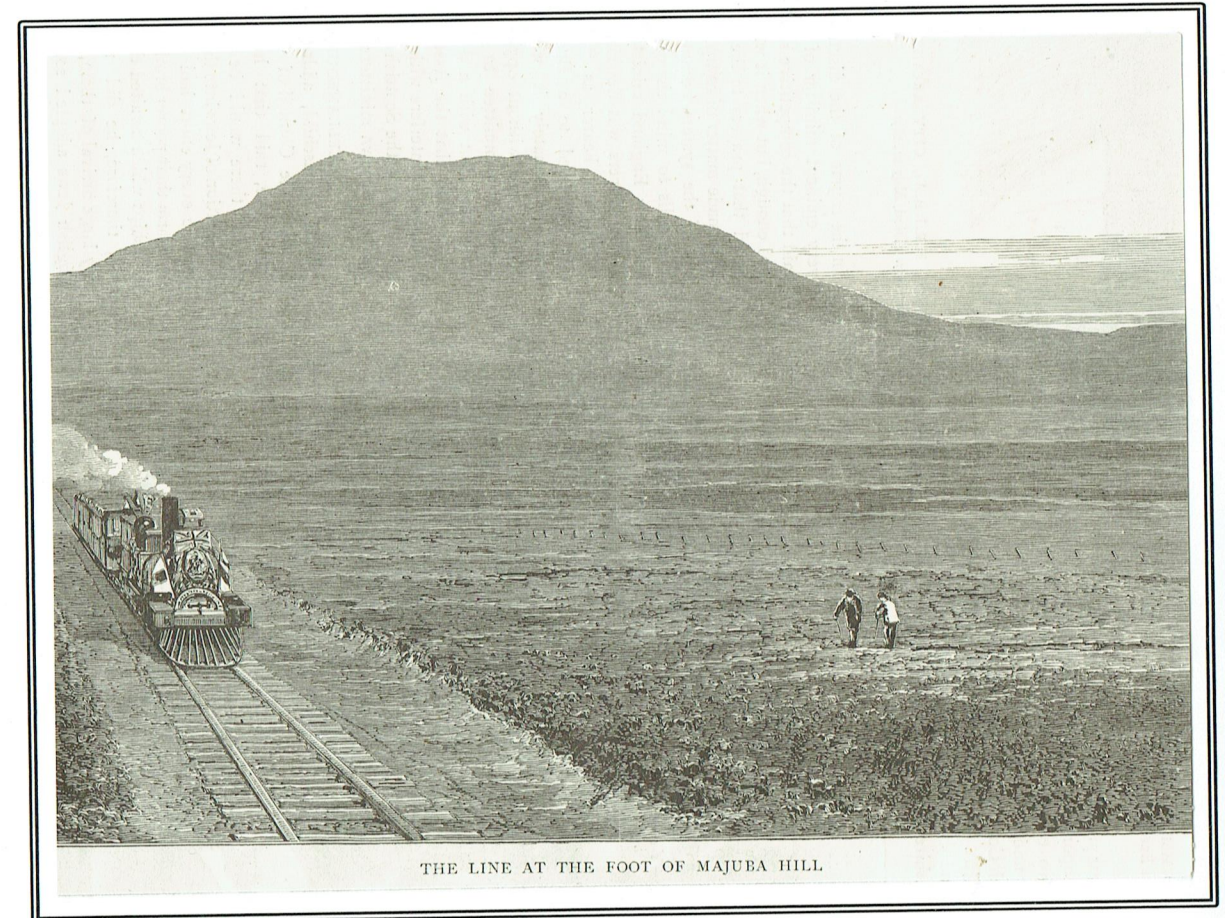


Wrapper addressed to Leeds, United Kingdom cancelled with Charlestown cds dated 25 February 1905



Wikimedia Commons

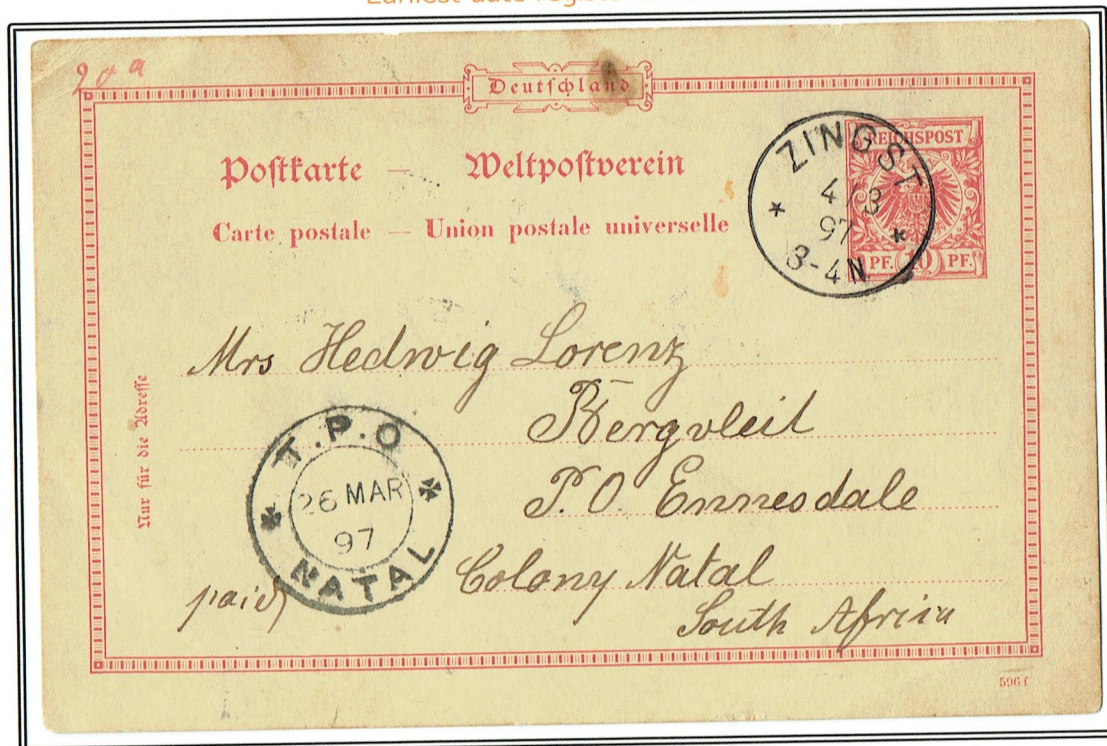
Major Railway lines of Natal Government Railways in 1910



Original print image from a retained copy of "The Graphic" of 6 June 1891 pg. 633

Post Card from Zingst, Germany Bergvliet dated 4 March 1897 with 'TPO NATAL' handstamp dated 26 March 1897

Earliest date registered known

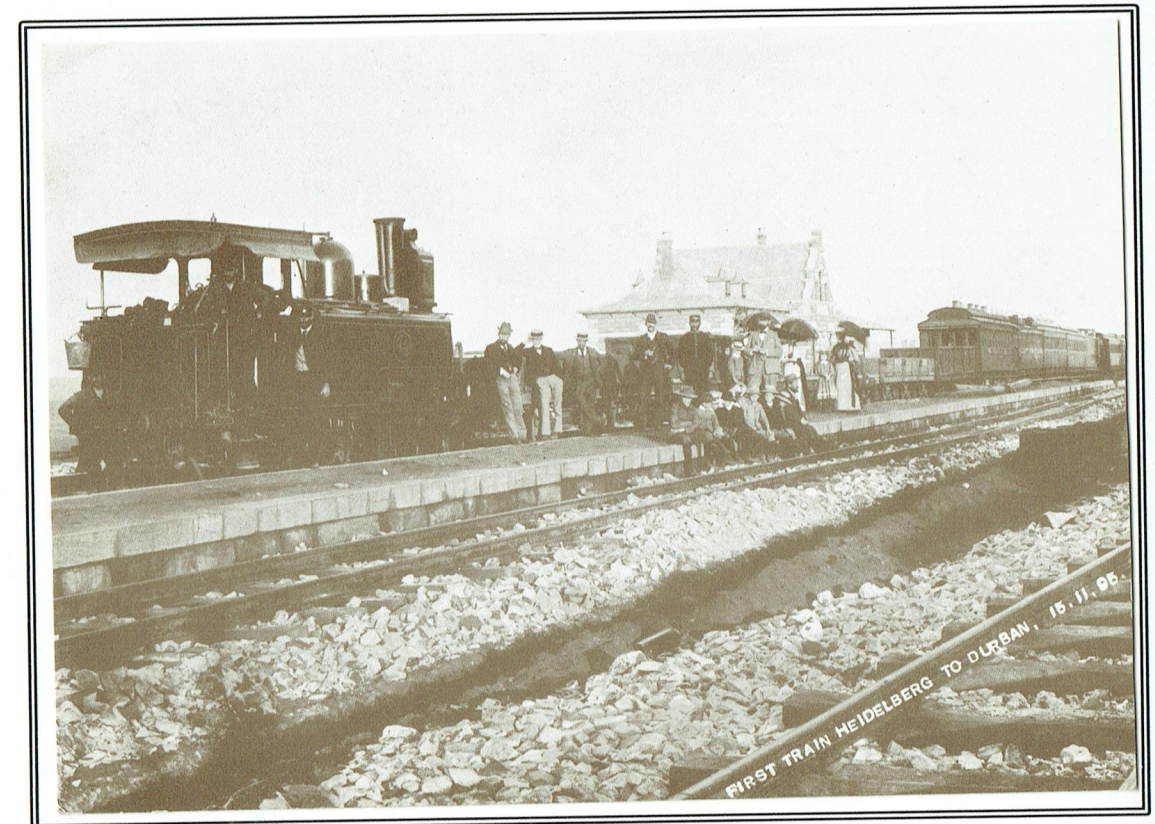


Travelled by train from Cape Town to Elandsfontein, where it was sorted on the Natal TPO to Charlestown receiving 'TPO NATAL' handstamp dated 26 March 1897

From Charlestown by rail to Ennersdale station via Ladysmith, backstamped Ladysmith, Natal and Ennersdale on 27 March 1897



Unused NGR luggage label (F. No. 70) used to mark luggage destined for Klip River Station on the Johannesburg – Vereeniging line



CAPE TOWN RAILWAY AND DOCK COMPANY – 1862 TO 1873

The privately-owned **Cape Town Railway and Dock Company (CTRDC)** was formed in 1853 with the main object to introduce a progressive system of railways in the Cape of Good Hope, loosely referred to as the 'Cape'

On 31 March **1859** the first track for steam powered locomotives was started by the company – a 72-kilometer (45 miles) line linking Cape Town via **Eerste River** and Paarl with Wellington, a small but important centre in the wine districts of the Western Cape

Work was hampered by delays and the first section to Eerste River was opened on 13 February 1862

CTRDC continue services up to 1873 and apart from a line by the Wynberg Railway Company connecting the suburb of Wynberg with Cape Town in August 1862, **no growth** had taken place

As the Railways developed, the Post Office and public made more use of this facility for travelling and to send **parcels** and Industrial equipment

Parcel services were introduced, and parcels send via the Railways were to be **franked** and cancelled

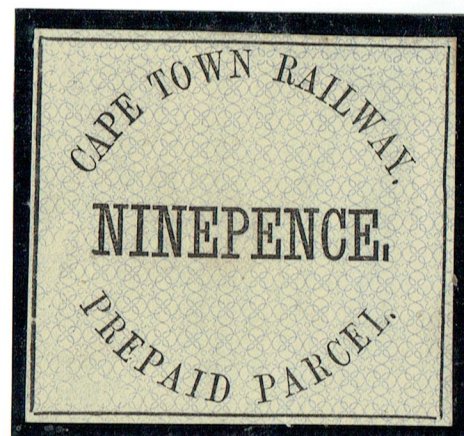
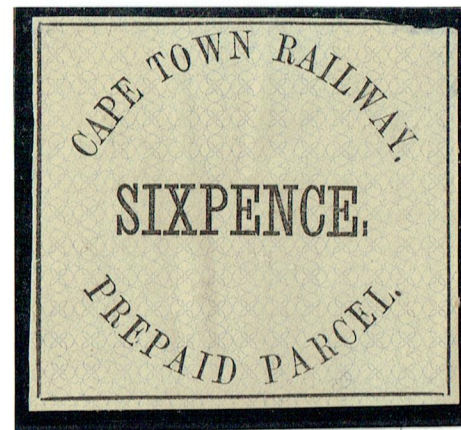
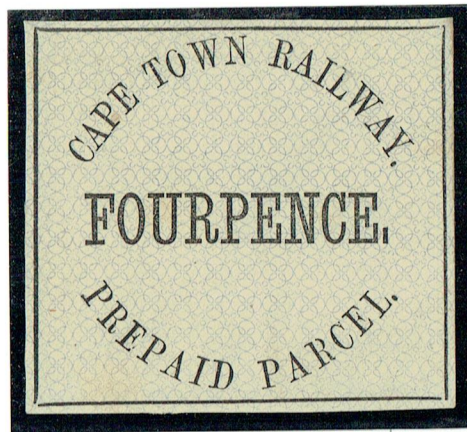
It follows that stamps were specially designed and printed for this purpose

CAPE TOWN RAILWAY AND DOCK COMPANY

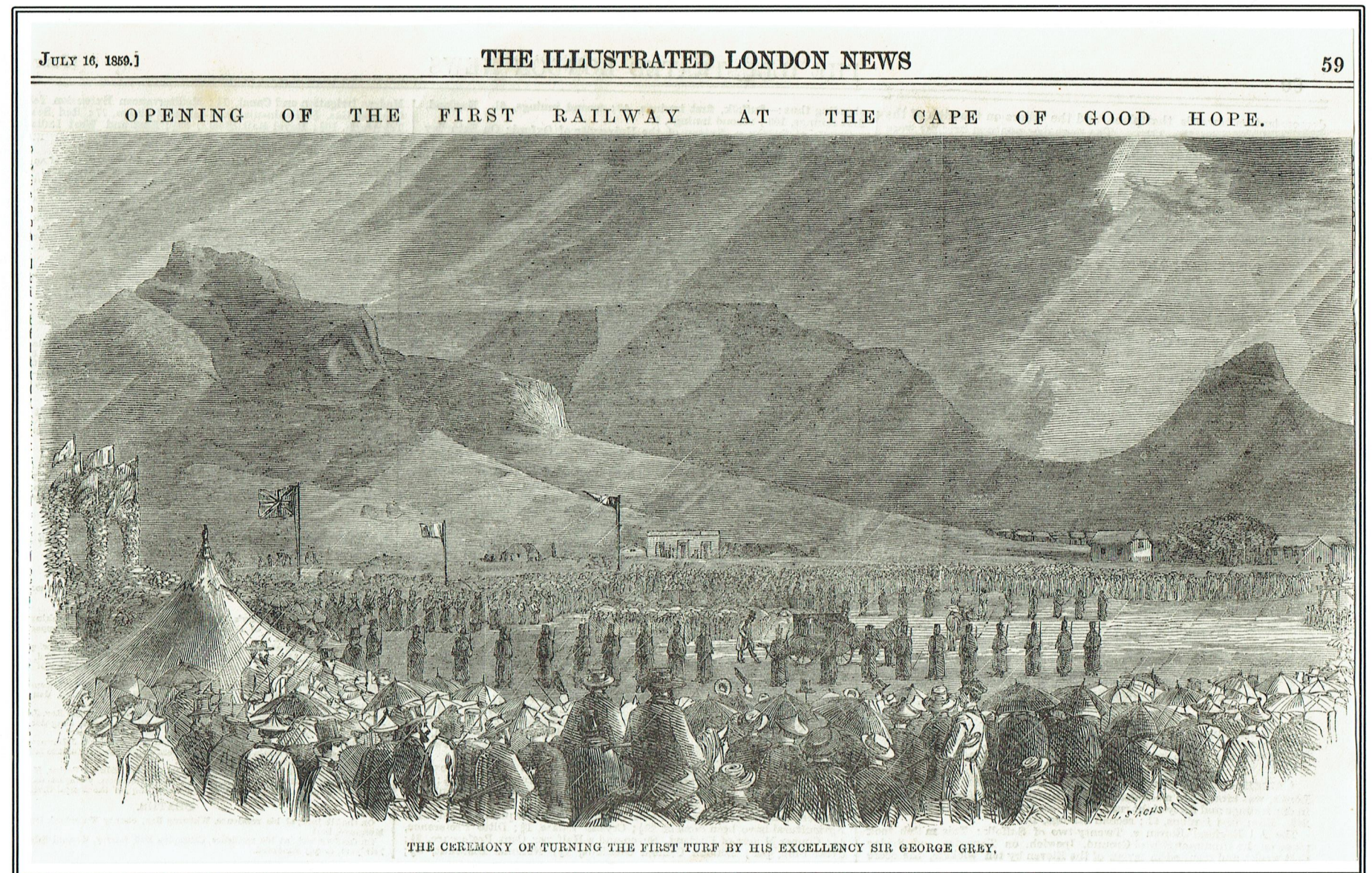
Although the Cape cannot claim the first operating railway in Southern Africa, they were the first to issue railway parcel stamps for this service in **1867**



Letter from Cape Town to the Station Master, Eerste River with a Cape Town cds dated 15 December 1877 and an arrival Eerste River cds dated 1 December 1877, which is wrong because the date was not changed



No large initial letters in the background with no ornaments printed on the surface
All values are imperforated



Original wood engraved print images from a **rare, retained** copy of "The Illustrated London News" of 16 July 1859