

UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA

The Union's First Stamp

SG 1 and 2. 2½d. Shades of Blue

First Day Cancels

There is no record that 4 November was a public holiday and, although Post Offices were supposedly to open for only half-an-hour on 4 November 1910 for sale of the 2½d. Commemorative stamp, it is a misapprehension to think that the only genuine postmarks are between 9 and 9:30 AM. The Publicity Office of the Philatelic Section, G.P.O. Pretoria stated that the holiday was likely a late decision and that Post Offices would be open for an hour, as on all public holidays, but there was no set time for the hour thereby partially explaining why times from 7:10 AM until 5 PM are recorded. Moreover, letters posted in mailboxes and at the Post Office, especially Johannesburg, may not have been received by postal clerks until later in the day, even late at night, but still bear a valid First Day Cancel. Even others may have been cancelled early in the day, or the day before, thus giving the appearance of cancels to order. See *'The Springbok'* Vol 11. No 5. 1963 at 90.



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Printing was done by Thomas De la Rue & Co. Ltd., of London, using the recess process, in blue on white wove paper, watermarked multiple rosettes, perforated 14 by a single comb appliance. The sheets are comprised of 120 stamps in ten rows of twelve each with a center-indicating line in the color of the stamps in the middle of each outer margin, which was otherwise blank. The bottom margin is perforated through.

Prussian Blue on White Paper

Control Ca. Guide Line Block

in the top margin over the center position. Between Rows 1/6 & 7



Blocks of the 2½d. stamp of this size are not common.

Blue on White Paper



Prussian Blue on White Paper



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Blue on White Paper



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Blue on Bluish Paper



An example of the challenges of printing with blue ink. The ink has toned the paper on the left but left the right margin relatively untouched.



Control Ca. Guide Line Block



Guide Line Block



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The Union's First Stamp Prussian Blue on White Paper



Guide Line Block



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Prussian Blue on Bluish Paper

The Stanley Gibbons Catalog notes that '(t)he deep blue shade is generally accompanied by bluing of the paper.' To distinguish blue paper from faded white paper it is necessary to view the margins with a magnifier to see if blue is bleeding from the headplate. View one stamp on another to determine if it is blue or Prussian blue. Blue will be emphasized next to the blackish Prussian blue shade.



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Varieties in wording below the Cape of Good Hope Shield



V1. 'BF' for 'OF'



V2. 'UF' for 'OF'



V3. 'O' & 'F' connected



V4. Part of 'G' of 'GOOD' missing



V5-Vertical mark below and to the right of the 2nd 'A' of AFRIKA. Row 1/8



V6-line from right side of the Cape of Good Hope crown at top left corner through to the Transvaal shield at the bottom right corner. Row 6/1



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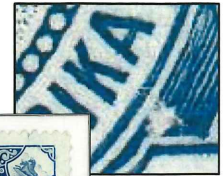
Other Varieties



'OOD' for Good in CGH

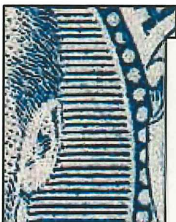


'QF' for Of in CGH



Large white blob below 'K' of Afrika and broken top frame line

Doctor blade and various other oblique blue lines around the head.



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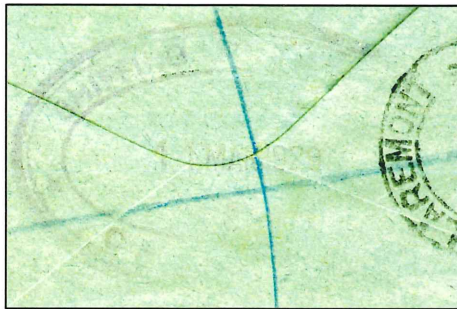
Shipping Postmaster & Assistant Shipping Postmaster Marks

'Many of the cancels are so rare the covers can be counted on one hand.'

The Shipping Postmaster and his Assistant used these marks at Cape Town and Durban on board ships in the harbor. Their duties were to visit ships in the harbor to sell postage stamps and money orders and to accept for onward transmission registered letters, cables and telegrams up until briefly before sailing. Domestic mail would be postmarked ashore at either Cape Town Docks or Durban Docks. Foreign mail would have already received a paquebot cancel. The origin of the Shipping Postmaster is unknown but the earliest known cancel is 18 August 1909. The cancels were of the type shown here but with many subtypes. They are scarce because many covers with Shipping Postmaster marks were discarded because the marks resembled fiscal cancels due to their color; i.e, red, blue, violet or magenta. It is also the case that the impressions were often unclear because the stamp itself was made of rubber and not steel.

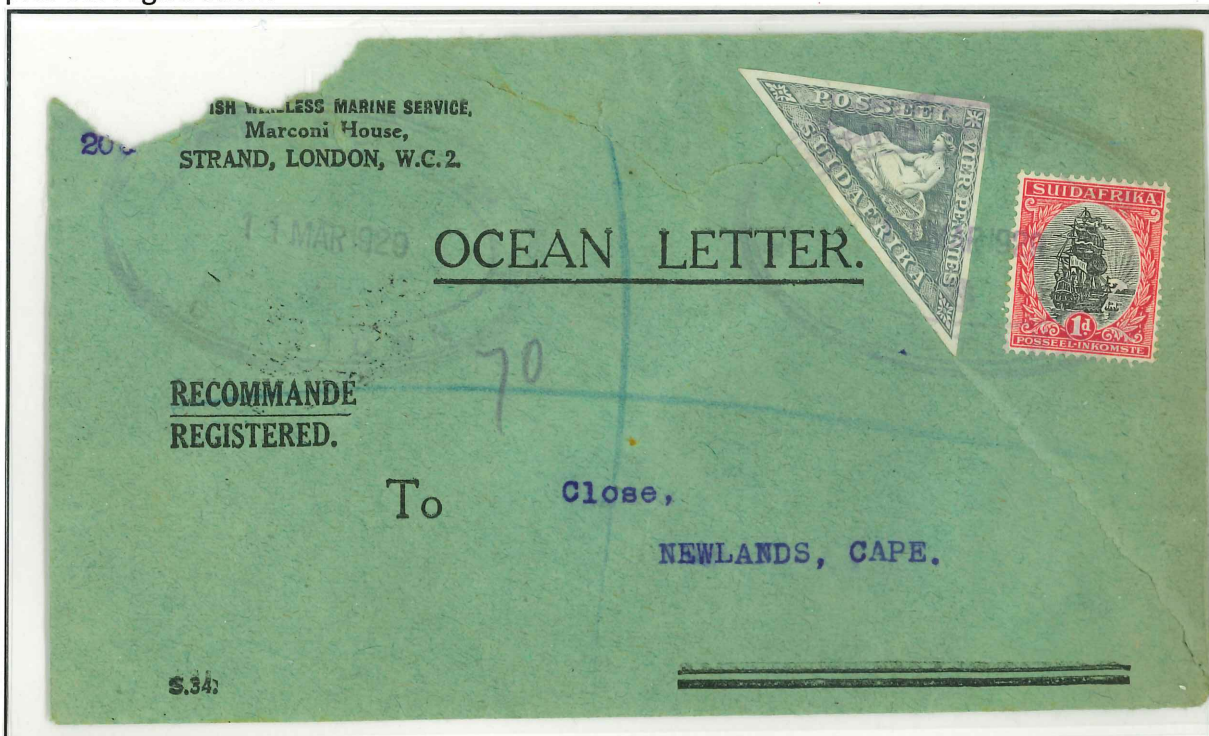
Type 2A (1910) Assistant

Shipping Postmaster strike-seldom seen



Details and descriptions from *'The Shipping Postmaster Cancellations of South Africa'*, Mike Downey. Pub. 2014 by the TPO & Seapost Society.

Shipping Postmaster Type 8 known to be used in 1927-30 at Cape Town. Marconi Ocean Letter accepted at sea for Cape Town. Franked 5d. to prepay the 1929 Commonwealth 2d. postal fee plus 3d. registration.



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Registered cover accepted at Pretoria to Hamburg, Germany. Overfranked 11½d. by four 1910 'Opening of Parliament' 2½d. stamps and single Natal pre-Union 1½d. definitive interprovincial usage. The foreign letter rate in 1911 was 2½d. per ½ oz. and 4d. registration. Tied by Pretoria, Registered 16 January 1911 cds, Hamburg 5 February 1911 receipt d/s, and senders lilac return address h/s.



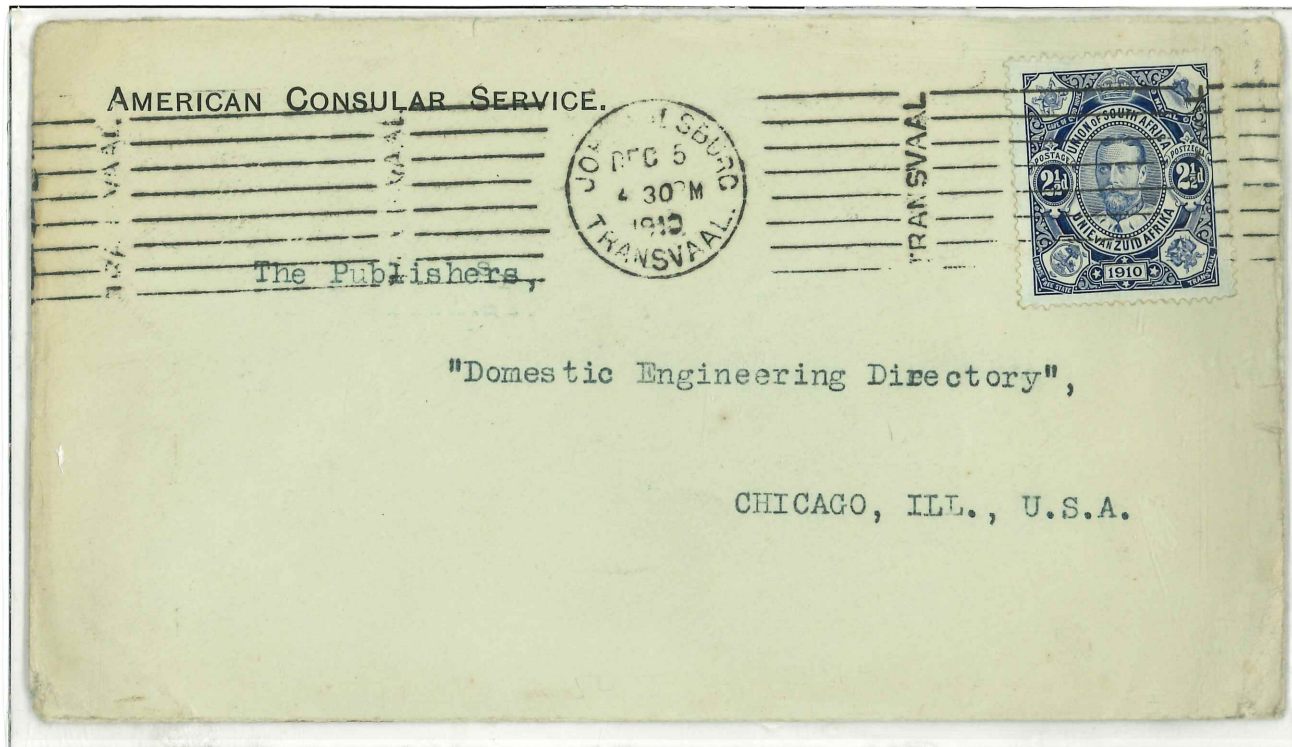
V4. Parts of 'G' missing in one of the Cape of Good Hope Shields



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The Union's First Stamp

Registered United State official cover accepted at Johannesburg. Franked with a single 2½d. tied by eight-bar Johannesburg, Transvaal 5 December 1910 roller canceller, and a Consular back-stamp. The foreign (UPU) mail fee in 1910 was 2½d. per ½ oz.



Scarce Swaziland Cancel
struck at Mbabane in 1933.



Union Handbook UA36 valued at 32x normal. The stamp was used in January 1933 because usage in Swaziland was not valid after 31 January of that year.

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Commemorative sheet sold as a souvenir on the 50th Anniversary of the Union's first stamp at the Johannesburg International Stamp Show featuring a replica of the first stamp.

SG MS1738. Miniature Sheet Issued 9 October 2009. Inverted 'L' shaped phosphor bands at top and right. P 13¼. Available for Standard Postal Usage.

