

THE “BASKET TRICK” IN A MARITIME CONTEXT

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31 March 2026

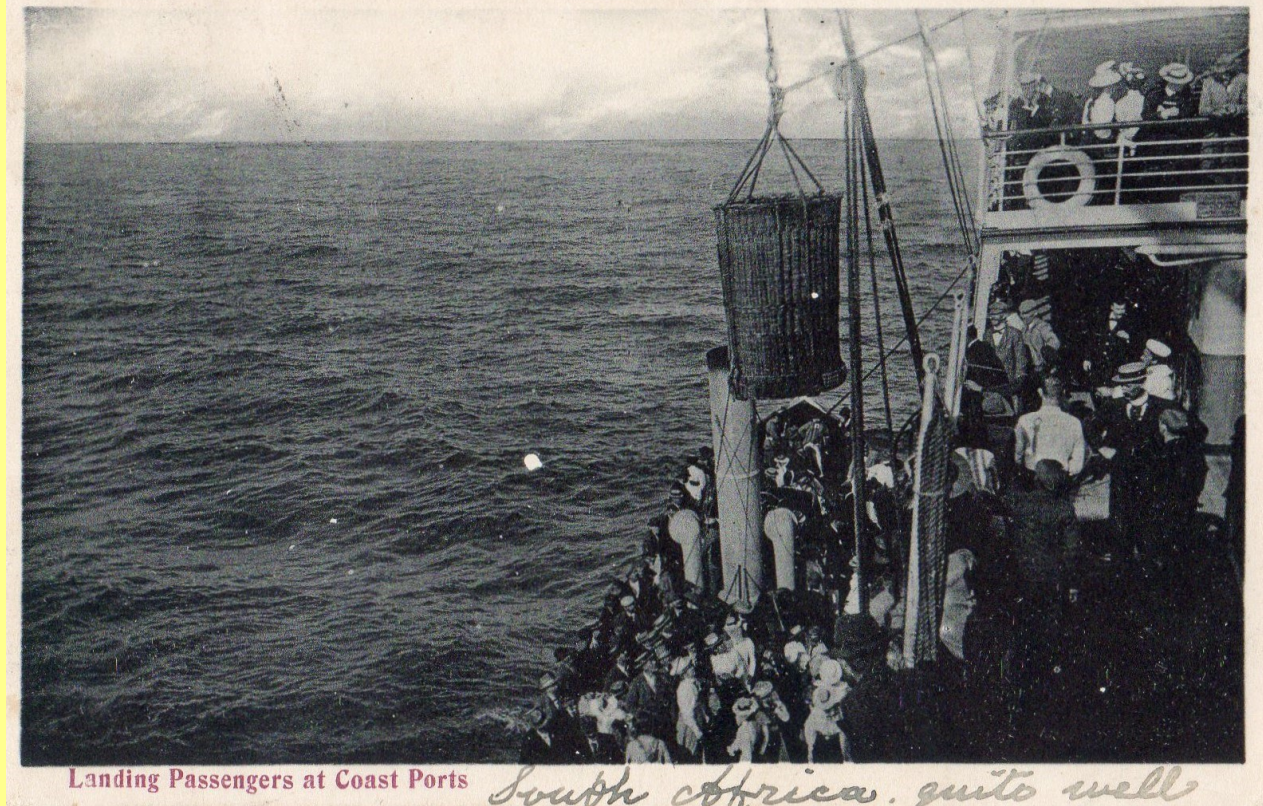
“Basket Trick” Postcards

In this context definitely not a staged skilful illusion act, sequence of a magic routine or circus performance



Postcard from a passenger, Bella, to her father
SAPSCO Real Photo, PO Box 5792, Johannesburg - DB

It refers to a crane-operated transfer device used for boarding or landing passengers from a vessel or Mailboat



G.W.W. Series. (George Washington Wilson) Posted E.L. to Lancashire 1904 - UB

The Basket

SAPSCO Real Photo. P.O. Box 5792 Johannesburg

Dear Father, these are
the Baskets you get into
when being flung off the
big boats into the tenders
which land you into East-
London. This is a view from
the ship which show you
the coast of East-London at
a distance. I landed
here the day after Xmas.
it took me four days
from Hannhausen, I
travell'd through the free
States into the Colony
and the journey was a hot-
one. John and I are going
to try and get home this
year for a holiday. if
it is possible. we could
leave from here and get
slung on to the Boat in
these Baskets.
your Loving
Daughter Bella.

POST CARD
STAMP
HERE

Postcard from a passenger,
Bella, to her father
SAPSCO Real Photo, PO Box
5792, Johannesburg - DB



Printed in Germany for F.
Howe & Co. Booksellers, East
London - DB

The Process - Arrival

It was practiced at many colonial-era surf ports in Africa. In South Africa, East London were well known for this.
It surely was a somewhat stressful exercise for some, but quite an experience for all

The experience commenced with the arrival of the Mailboats and concluded with their subsequent departure



Tugboat on its way to assist the incoming steamer
Publisher unknown



Passengers awaiting their fate
Publisher unknown

Transfer from Steamship

This method was used long before modern gangways or deep-water harbours existed

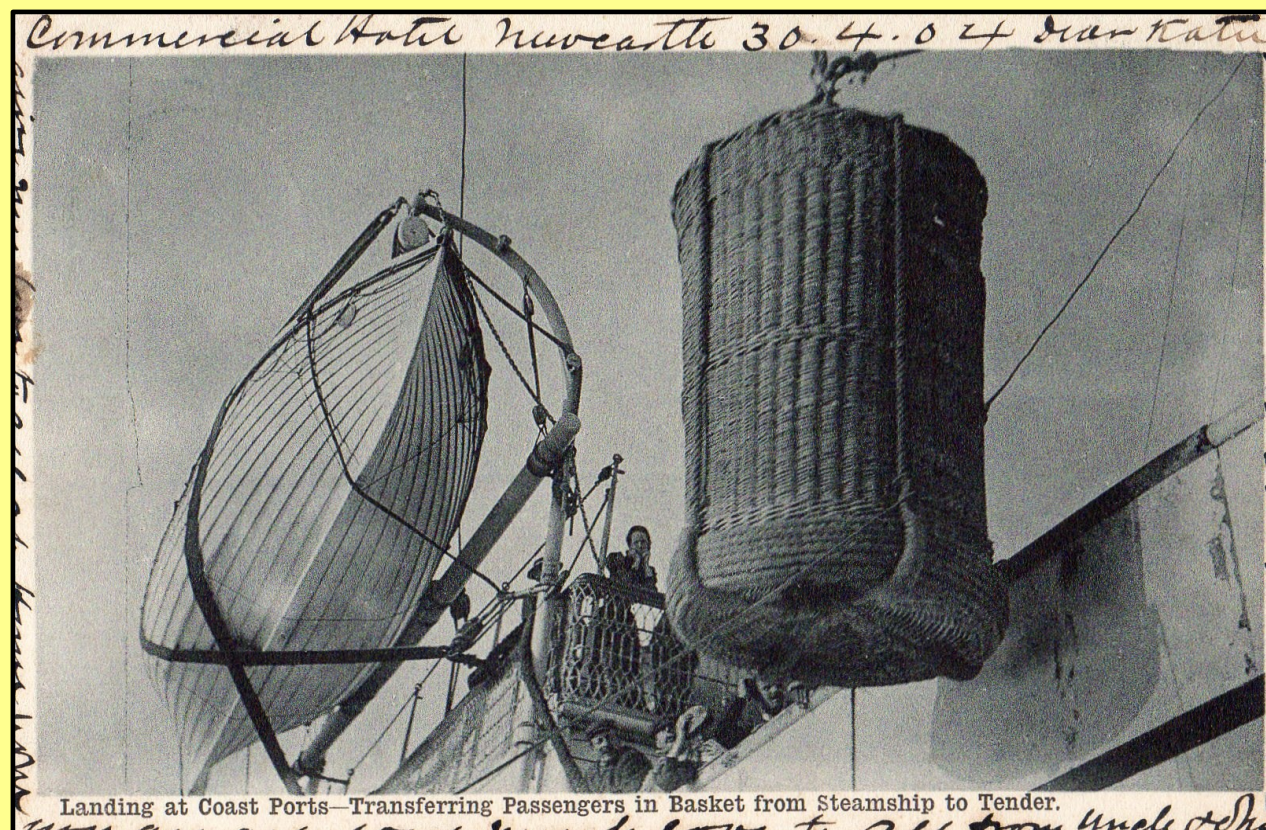
People entered the basket for the operation to start

The basket was then hoisted out over the ship's side...



Entering the Basket - The notice above the door reads LADIES, CHILDREN FIRST

Publisher unknown



G.W.W. Series. (George Washington Wilson) Posted E.L. to Lancashire 1904 - UB

The transfer



Ungeni The basket trick - In mid air 16. 7. 04
Der kommer di mellem vand
og luft men di er sløjet om
alle di store Passagerer læder
gør ind me til Durban
Billedet er Sallo Epstein & Co. Durban

Posted from Cambridge, East
London, to Salisbury in Wiltshire in
1904
J.C. Juta & Co., East London - UB

...dangling above the water

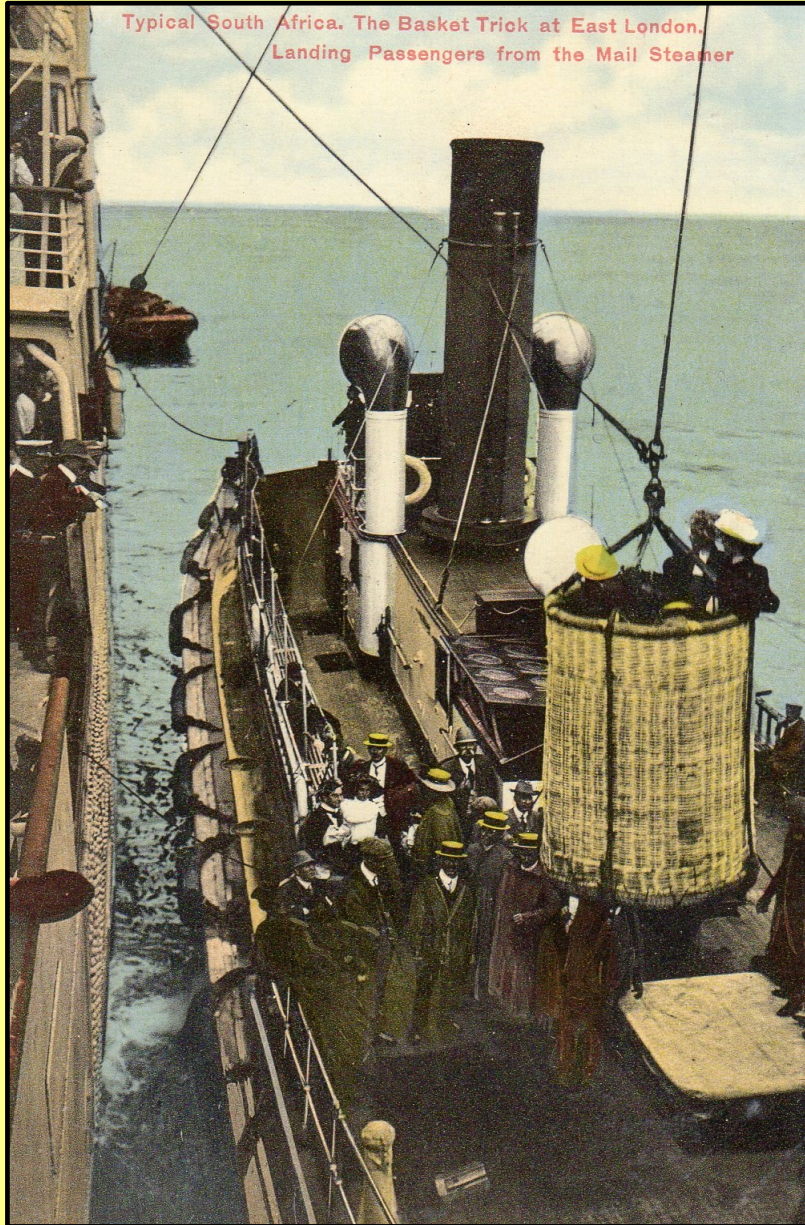
Posted from Durban on 16
July 1904 to Bergen, Norway
*Sallo Epstein & Co. Durban -
UB*



Landing Passengers in Basket, East London Roadstead

With love & very good wishes for the
coming year from Auntie Gertrude

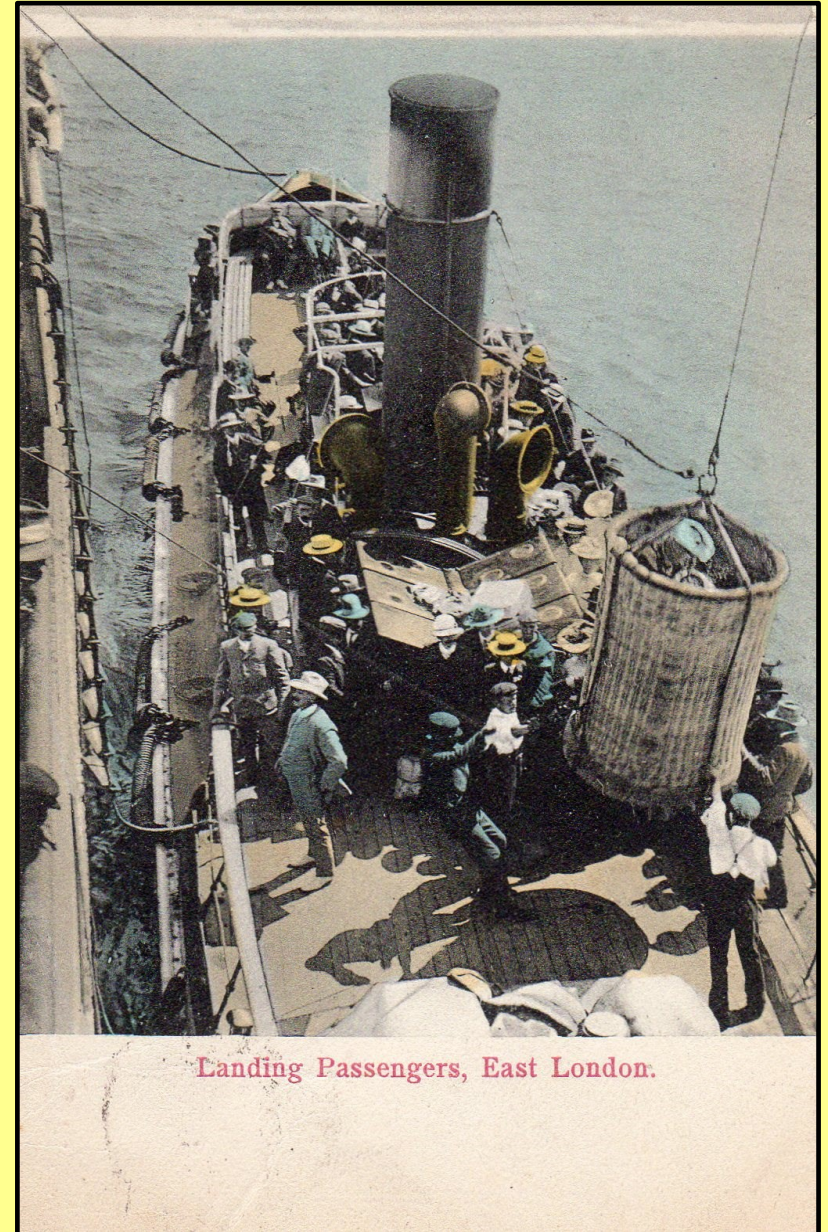
Transfer



Boatmen reached up with
outstretched arms to
steady the swinging load

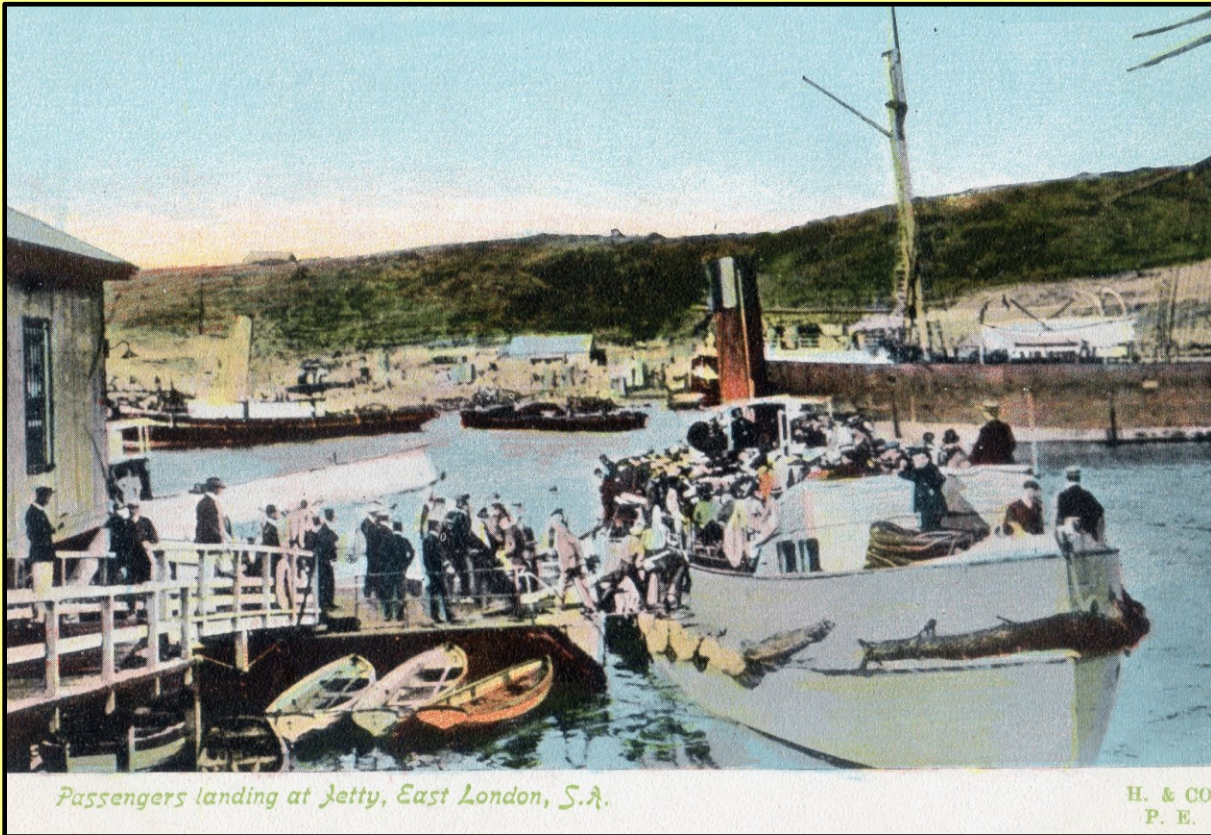
Publisher unknown - DB

*DB Hallis & Co. Port
Elizabeth - DB*



Onto Dry Land

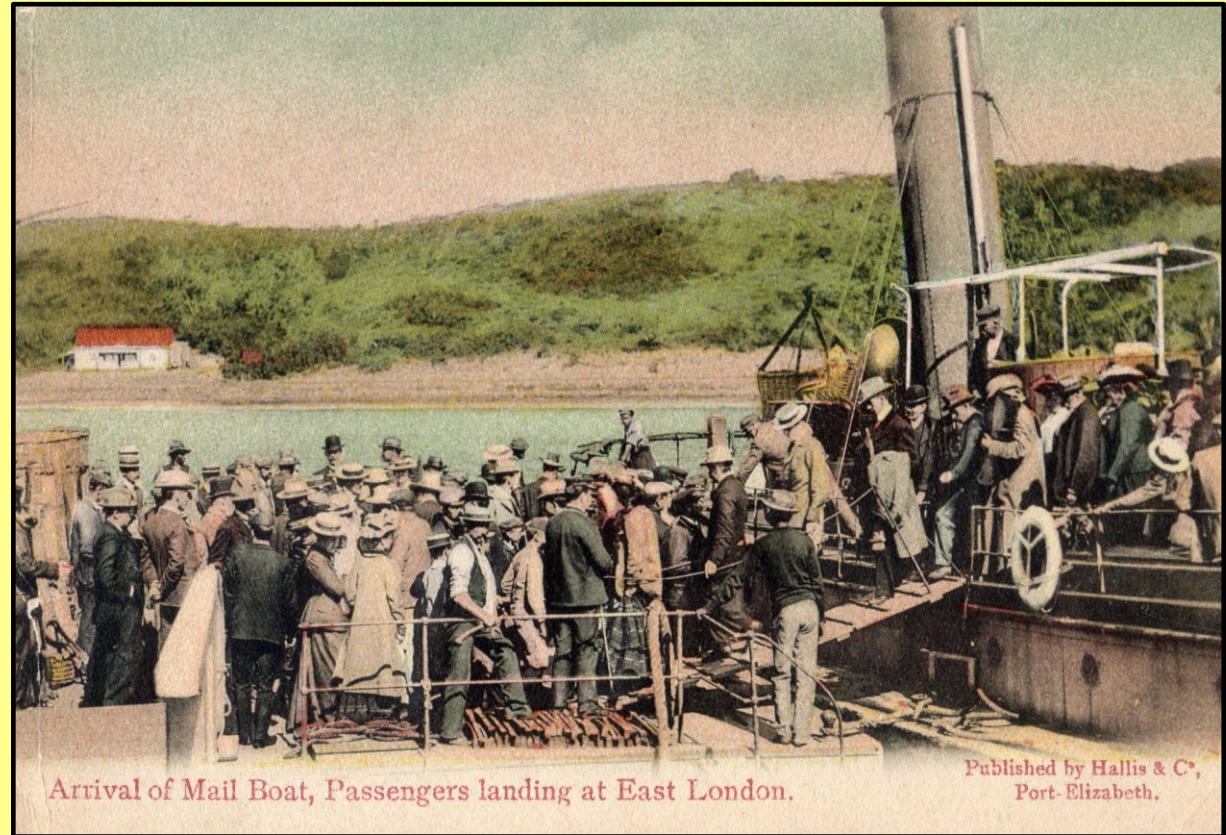
Safe landing at the jetty



Passengers landing at Jetty, East London, S.A.

H. & CO
P. E.

Tender shown identified as S.S. Penguin, (1899-1924)
Hallis & Co. Port Elizabeth - DB



Arrival of Mail Boat, Passengers landing at East London.

Published by Hallis & Co.,
Port-Elizabeth.

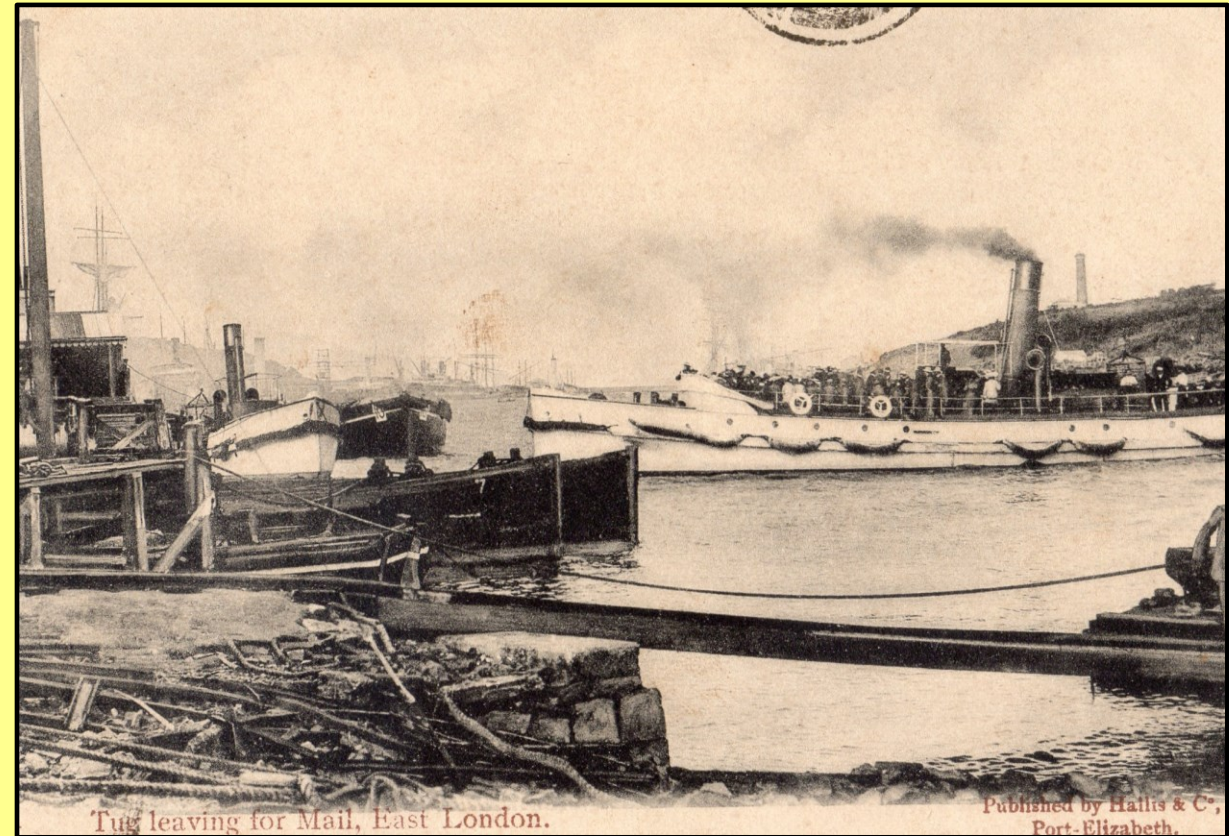
Posted from East London to Barkly East in 1908
Hallis & Co. Port Elizabeth - DB

Departure

The experience started with the arrival (and departure) of the Mailboats



"Departure of a passenger steamer of the Deutsche Ost-Afrika Linie" written on back
C.A.W. Grün - DB



Posted from Bolo to East London in 1906
Hallis & Co. Port Elizabeth - DB

From vessel



Posted from Johannesburg to St. Louis, Missouri,
in 1905.

Sallo Epstein & Co. Durban - UB



*Valentine & Sons Publishing Co. Ltd. Cape Town
- DB*



Tender identified as "Stork", Built Leith, Scotland
Scuttled near Durban 1958

Publisher unknown - DB

From vessel



Landing along the Africa coast
Publisher unknown - DB