

## Postal Stationery - Union Picture Postcards of 1927 to 1932: A Detailed Study of the 1931 Springbok Halfpenny Set

Between 1927 and 1932 the Union Post Office issued four sets of Postal Stationery Full Face Picture Postcards; the only official full face picture postcards issued during Union. The four sets comprised a 1½d set, re-issued as a ½d set, another ½d set and a 1d set. The controversial dates of issue will be discussed in this exhibit.

Three of the four sets have a very close relationship with a 36 picture postcard set of 1924 issued for the Empire Exhibition in London. This relationship will be examined very closely in the case of the second ½d issue as it raises interesting questions.

The 1d issue was similar in mode to the other three sets but, except showing it for the sake of completeness and for identification, it will not be part of this exhibit.

The 1924 Empire Exhibition set of postcards were made available at the Exhibition. The postcards had the Union of SA Coat of Arms printed on the back giving it semi-official status. The fact that the 1927 postal stationery postcards used the Empire Exhibition cards as their model and inspiration may mean that the Post Office regarded them as more important than generally assumed, especially if we remember that they could not have been imprinted with any stamp as they were destined for use overseas. A South African postage stamp would have been meaningless.

The Higgens & Gage catalogue as well as the South African Stamp Handbook dates the second ½d set as a 1934 issue. This exhibit will show conclusively that the dating is incorrect and that it was probably issued in 1931. The exhibit offers a possible solution to the discrepancy.

This second ½d set is numbered from 1 to 36 although it consists of only 24 postcards. 12 numbers are missing. This exhibit examines this error and discusses how it probably happened.

The main section of this exhibit will display the 24 postcards of the second ½d set and will show the set's intimate link to the 1924 Empire Exhibition set. It will also note the Empire Exhibition postcards that were not used for this issue.

### The Plan of the Exhibit

- Identification of the four sets of postcards
- The place of the Empire Exhibition set of cards
- The Problem of dating the second ½d set
- The Missing 12 numbers and how it came about
- The main display of the Postcards in comparison with their opposite Empire postcards
  - The Postcards that share exactly the same picture
  - The Postcards that share the same picture but cropped
  - The Postcards that share a similar picture
  - The Single Postcard that has no partner
- all arranged in the numbered order.

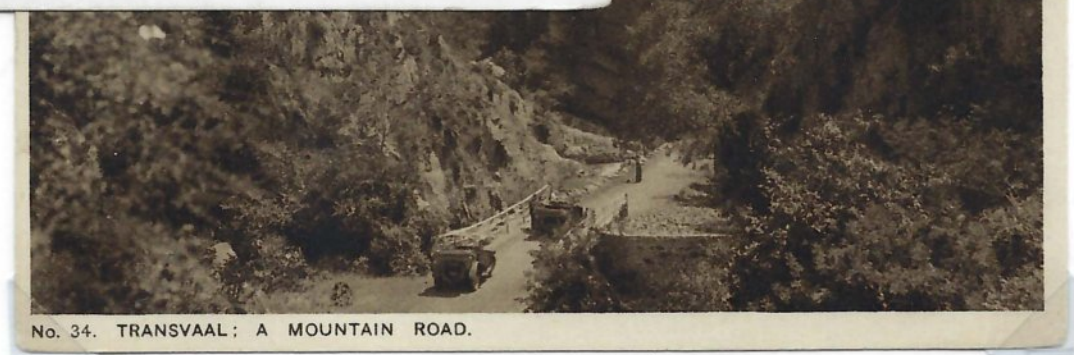
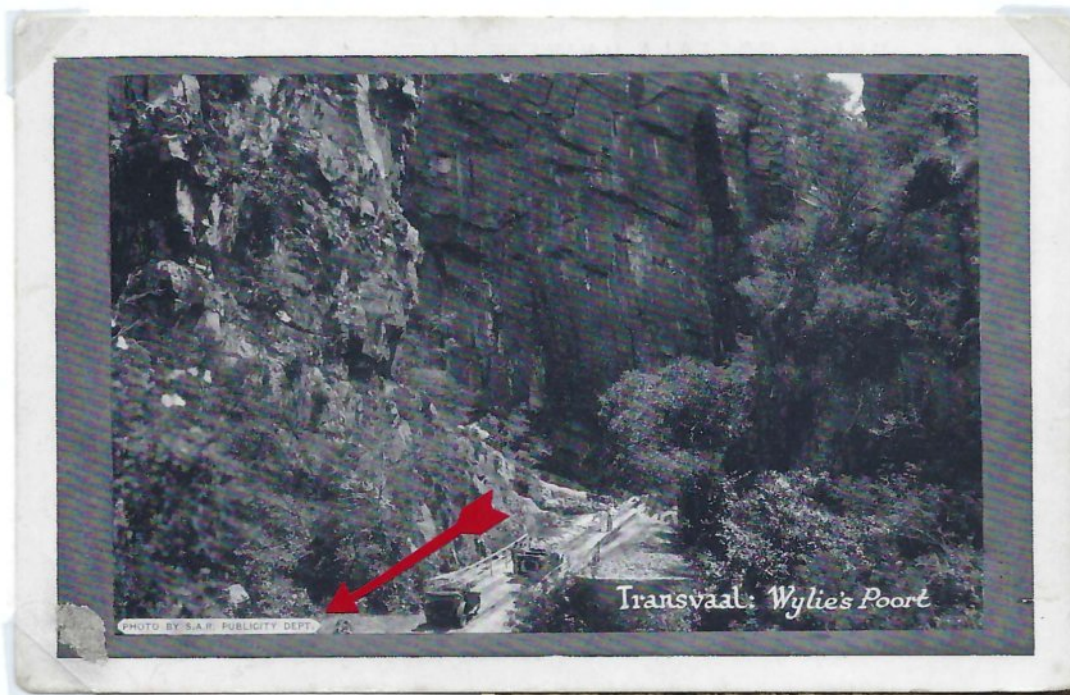
### Sources:

- Higgens & Gage
- The South African Stamp Handbook
- The South African Philatelist
- Eddie Bridges - The SA Philatelist February 2016 (Also personal communications)
- The Pictorial Postal Stationery Cards of the Union of South Africa - Tony Chilton
- The Postal Stationery of South Africa - Part 2 South Africa 1901 - 2000 - W J Quik - Feb 2000
- Glen Carpendale (1939- 2019) - 20 years with him in his shop gave me access to the stories of the previous generation of Union Specialists who consulted people not computers

## The First of Four Postal Stationery Picture Postcards Issue between 1927 and 1931

The first postcard was issued on 18 February 1927. It was imprinted with a 1½d stamp for overseas use. The colour of the back was orange. The pictures were drawn from the SAR&H photo library and the style was copied from the set of picture postcards issued for the Empire Exhibition of 1924. In the 24 postcard set it copied 6 exactly the same pictures and 9 of similar theme from the Empire Exhibition set. This makes the close link incontestable. Note that the Union postcards acknowledges the photo source as "Photo by SAR Publicity Dept" while the Empire Exhibition cards do not. You do not have to acknowledge yourself.

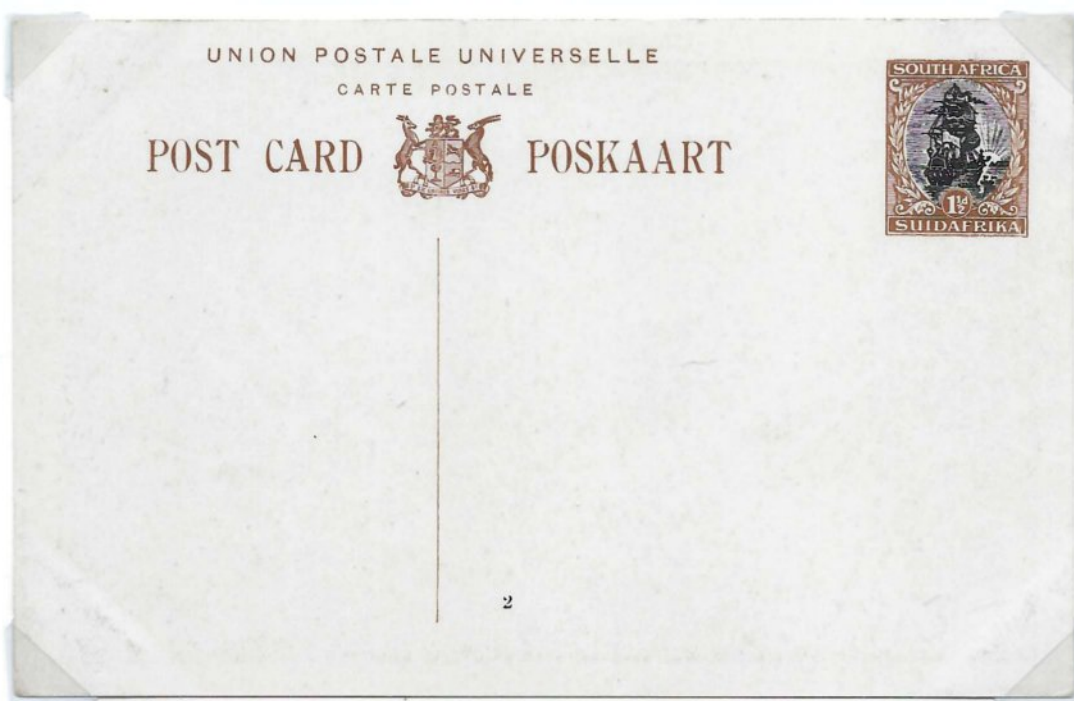
This was the only time the sailing ship stamp had a value other than 1d. The double framing is awkward but was retained for all full-face issues. Both sides of the postcard are shown as well as the comparable Empire Exhibition card.



## The Second of Four Postal Stationery Picture Postcards Issued between 1927 and 1931

The second postcard was issued on 24 November 1927 and was a re-issue of the first 24 postcards except for the imprinted stamp, now a ½d Springbok head, intended for local use. The full-face front picture remained unchanged. The back changed quite a bit. As the card was not intended for overseas use the wording changed: the French wording "Union Postale Universelle" and "Carte Postale" is now replaced with "Post Card" and "Poskaart". The colour of the back was changed to green that matched the colour of the ½d stamp. The stamp differs from the unilingual die, alternating between Afrikaans and English, used for the adhesives at that time. The bilingual ½d Springbok head stamp imprinted on these postcards used the same die as on other postal stationery.

The postcard is shown front and back. The previous issue is also shown to show the changes in the lettering.

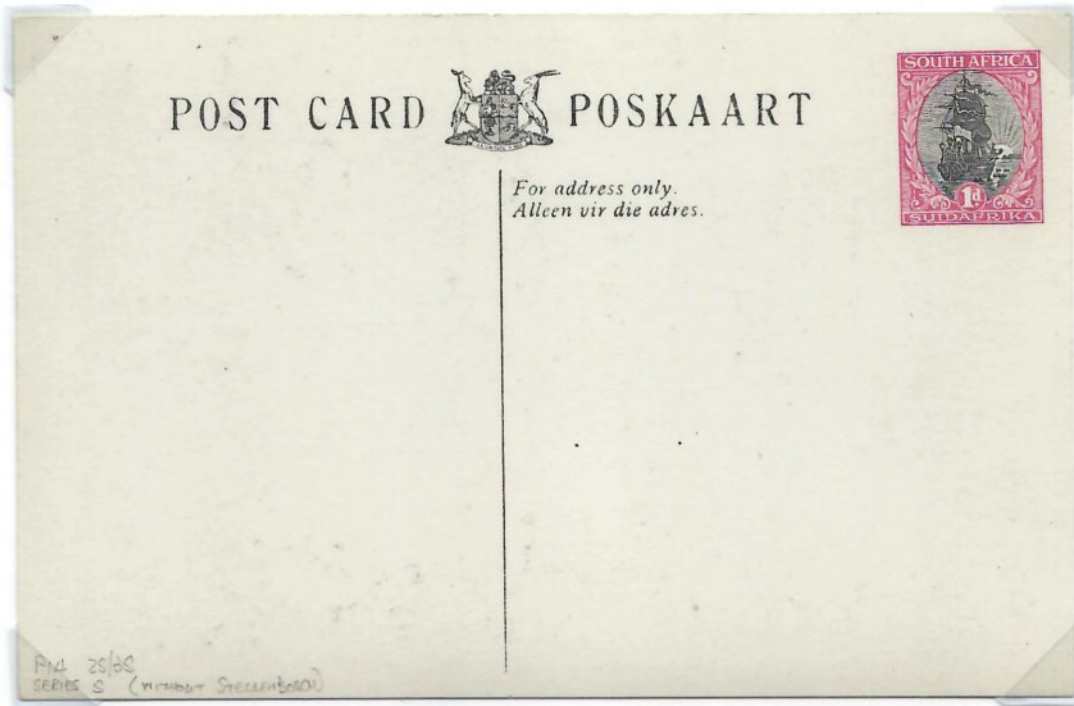


## The 1d Postal Stationery Picture Postcards - 1931

When the postcard postal rate changed in 1931 from ½d to 1d a new set of 12 postcards was issued. The pictures did not follow the pattern of the other three issues in that the scenes were all from the Western Cape. This postcard is shown for the sake of completeness but will not be pursued any further in this exhibit. The cards were not numbered.

Although the pictures were drawn from the SAR&H photo library, unlike the other three pictorial postcard sets, this set had no link to the Empire Exhibition postcards.

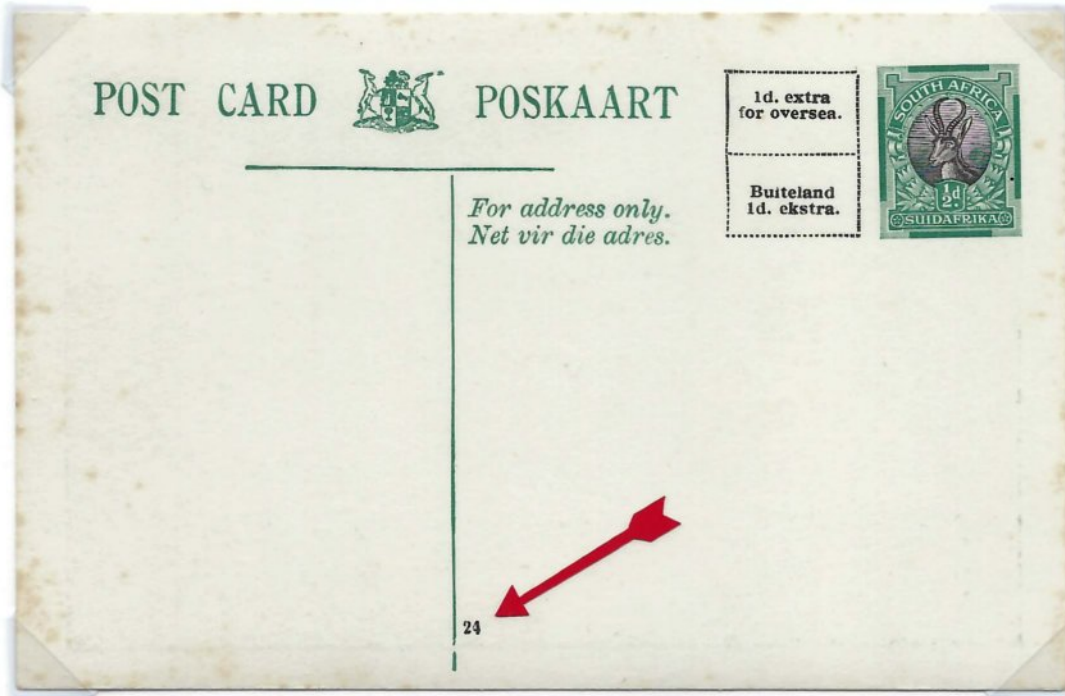
One of the 12 postcards is shown below back and front.



## The New Issue of the ½d Postal Stationery Picture Postcards - Date Uncertain

The exact date when the second set of 24 postcards with a ½d imprinted stamp was issued is uncertain. This set can be distinguished from the first ½d set by the face lettering on the horizontal postcards being moved from on the picture to below the picture. Further, the number on the back of the card is now in black, not green and the lettering and coat of arms printed on the back are smaller. The reference literature (Higgins & Gage, the SA Handbook and Tony Chilton) dates this issue of the ½d postcard to 1934. This is incorrect as will be shown in the pages following.

The postcard below is shown front and back. The front of the previous issue is also shown. Note how the placing of the lettering has changed to below the picture.



## Re-dating the Second Issue of the 1/2d Springbok Postcard Set

The release date of the second issue of the 1½d Springbok set of pictorial postal stationery postcards was traditionally dated to 1934. The four used and dated postcards shown below is convincing proof that an earlier date will have to be accepted.

The first card shown is dated 2 Dec 31. It appears to be the long looked for single stamp usage with only one ½d stamp instead of the double ½d stamp upgraded for the 1932 postage increase. An article by Eddie Bridges in *The SA Philatelist* of February 2016 stated that no used postcards with only a single stamp is known. This could be the only one known to date. The card was properly stamped for overseas use. The card was hand date stamped in Johannesburg.

The date is a clear indication that a 1934 date for the release of the set of 24 postcards is not tenable.



The next card is machine cancelled on Apr 13 1932. The card was posted in Johannesburg to a Johannesburg address and had been updated with the additional ½d stamp as the latest postcard postage rate demanded. This dated postcard is confirmation that the 1934 release date is incorrect.

Comparing the imprinted stamp with the added adhesive shows the difference between the two stamps, the adhesive being unilingual and the imprinted bilingual.



## Re-dating the Second Issue of the 1/2d Springbok Postcard Set

The third cover is machine cancelled with the date 27 Sept 32. The postcard was updated with the additional adhesive.



The fourth cover is machine cancelled with the date 26 Nov 32. The postcard was updated with the additional adhesive and stamped with a 1d stamp for overseas use, in this case Germany.



**Conclusion:** Four postcards; dated 2 Dec 31, Apr 13 1932, 27 Sept 32 and 26 Nov 32, all predating 1934, surely is conclusive proof that all the philatelic catalogues giving 1934 as release date are in serious error. All the earlier authorities (Higgins & Gage, Chilton, Union Handbook and Quik) and subsequent literature date the issuing of this set to 1934. As shown, that date cannot be sustained and should be dated to probably 1931.

The hypothesis offered is that the set was prepared as a reissue. Before the postcards could be issued the Minister of Posts and Telegraphs announced the increase in internal postage. Postcard postage was increased from 1/2d to 1d. In haste the recently prepared and unissued postcards had to be updated to 1d. This was done by adding one 1/2d stamp in the open space provided for foreign usage. Not all the postcards were updated. Updated postcards were issued to post offices who needed them. Those who were not updated were probably shelved. There had been no officially announced release date so the issue was not recorded in the literature.

Preparations were hastily made for the issuing of a new set of 12 postcards with the appropriate postage of 1d to accommodate the 1932 increased postcard postage rate. In 1934 the Minister of Post and Telegraphs announced that the postal rates would be decreased and postcards for internal use would again cost 1/2d. The remaining copies of the 1/2d issue are now distributed, probably only to philatelic dealers, and 1934 becomes the date of issue and is recorded as such in the literature.

## The SAR&H Empire Exhibition Postcards of 1924

The South African Railways and Harbours participated in the 1924/1925 Empire Exhibition in Wembley, London. They issued a set of 36 sepia-coloured postcards for distribution at the Exhibition. As will be shown in the pages following this set of postcards had a defining influence on the design of the subsequently issued full-face official postcards of the Union of South Africa. The pictorial content was drawn from the SAR&H photo library.

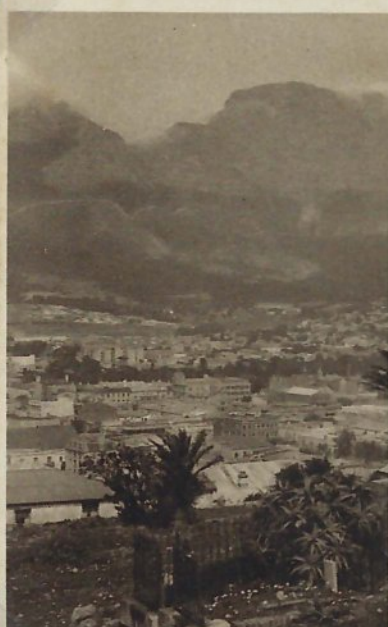
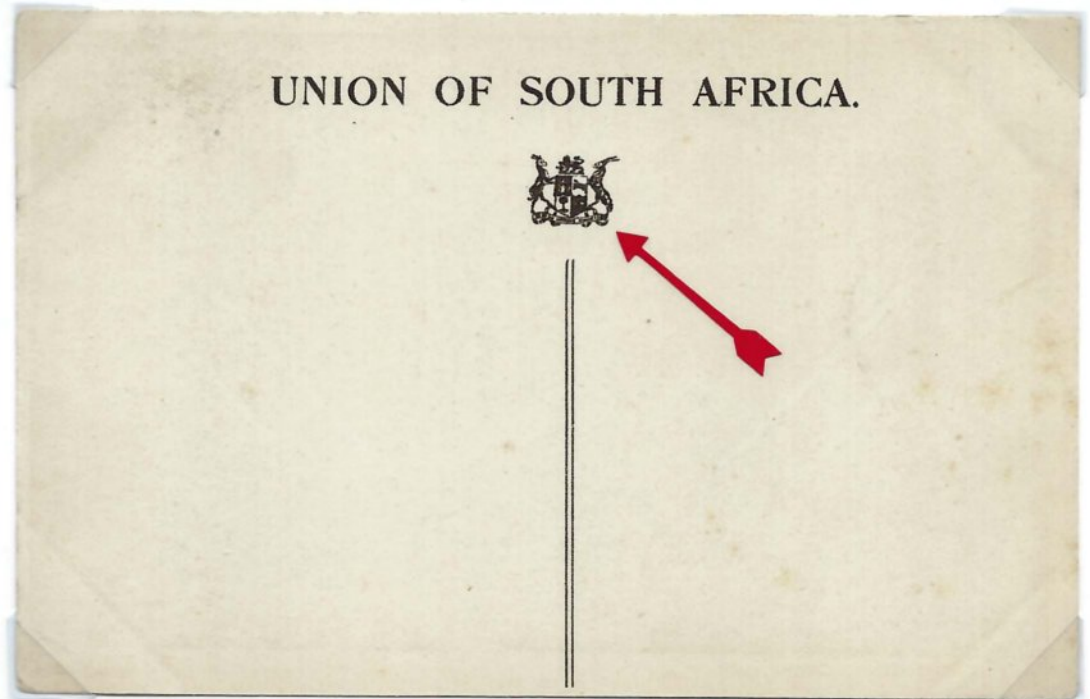
The official status of these postcards has never been clear. The cards had a divided back with words "UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA" and the Union Coat of Arms which made them look official. The role of the Post Office in this issue is also not clear. The very significant use of these cards as a model for their own later issues suggests some official recognition. The cards could not be imprinted with a stamp value as the cards were to be distributed overseas where a South African stamp would have had no postal use.

The printers of the cards are unknown. Over the years many suggestions have been made in the relevant literature as to who could have printed these cards but no convincing evidence for any particular printer was ever produced. This exhibit favours the local South African Government Printer who handled the massive SAR&H printing account and had all the expertise and equipment needed for such a job.

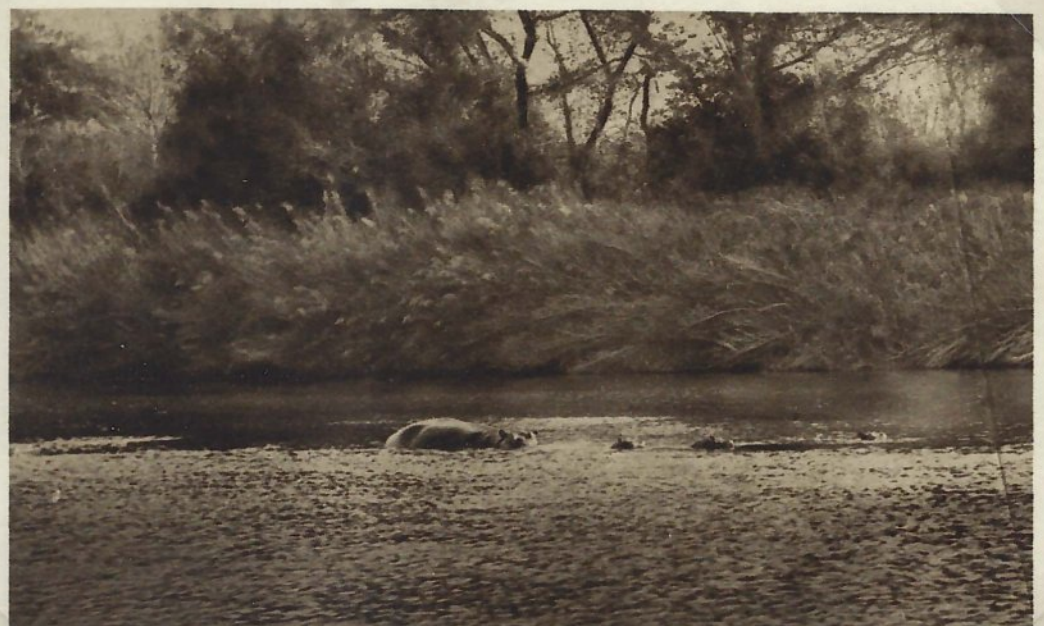
The back of a card is shown.

Note the words "UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA" and the Union Coat of Arms.

Also shown are the pictorials of the first and last of the numbered cards, number 1 and number 36.



No. 1. CAPETOWN & TABLE MOUNTAIN



No. 36. NORTHERN TRANSVAAL: "HOME OF THE HIPPOPOTAMI." S. AFRICA

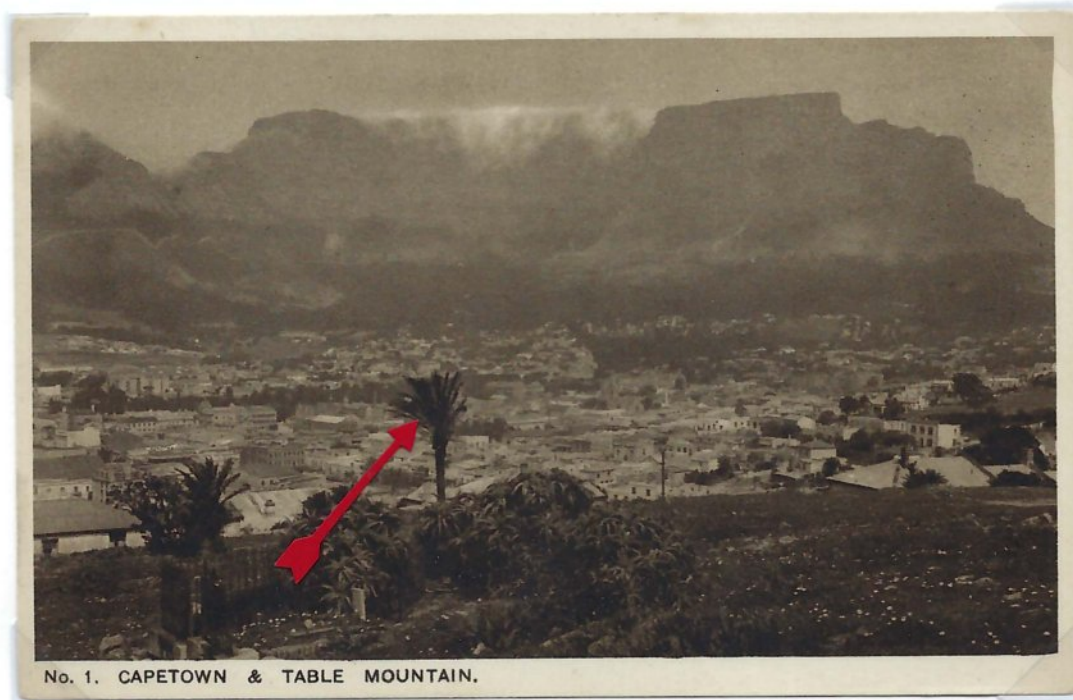
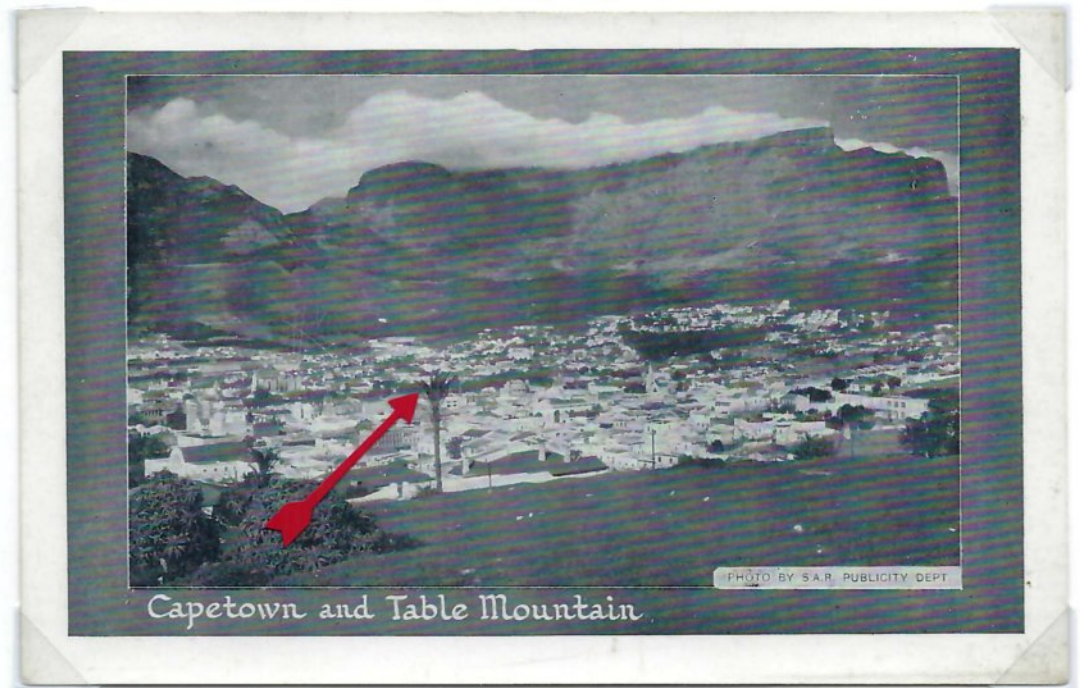
## The Empire Exhibition Postcards and the Second ½d Postcards Compared The "Missing Number" Postcards Recorded

While the first two sets of full face postal stationery cards had depended on the Empire Exhibition cards for style and pictorial content the second set of 1½d cards had a very much closer link. The 24 matching postcards of the 1924 Empire Exhibition and second set of 1½d cards are shown on the following pages. The 24 matching pairs come as 14 with exactly the same picture, 2 with the picture cropped, 7 with a slightly different picture but the same scene, perchance the same scene taken at a different time, and 1 card with a totally different picture.

On the pages following the cards will be displayed each with its matching Empire Exhibition card.

The first numbered card (1) belongs to the set of 7, those taken at a different time.

On this card the change of time is indicated by the change in the palm tree.



A collector trying for a complete set of this numbered set of postcards will discover that although the numbers go from 1 to 36 some cannot be found. The collector would on inquiry be told that an order for a reprint was given apparently with a reference to the Empire cards. The compilers understood this to mean that they had to go to the original Empire Exhibition set of 36 cards for the illustrations instead of the previously issued 24 card set. A set of 36 cards, duly numbered, was produced and sent to the printers only to have it returned with the comment that the printing machine could only accommodate 24 cards. 12 cards were then removed but the numbers on the remaining cards were not altered accordingly. It appears that discretion was used in choosing which to remove as the balance between the provinces was maintained. The missing cards will be noted on the pages following.



No. 2. CAPETOWN: HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT.

### Postcard No 2

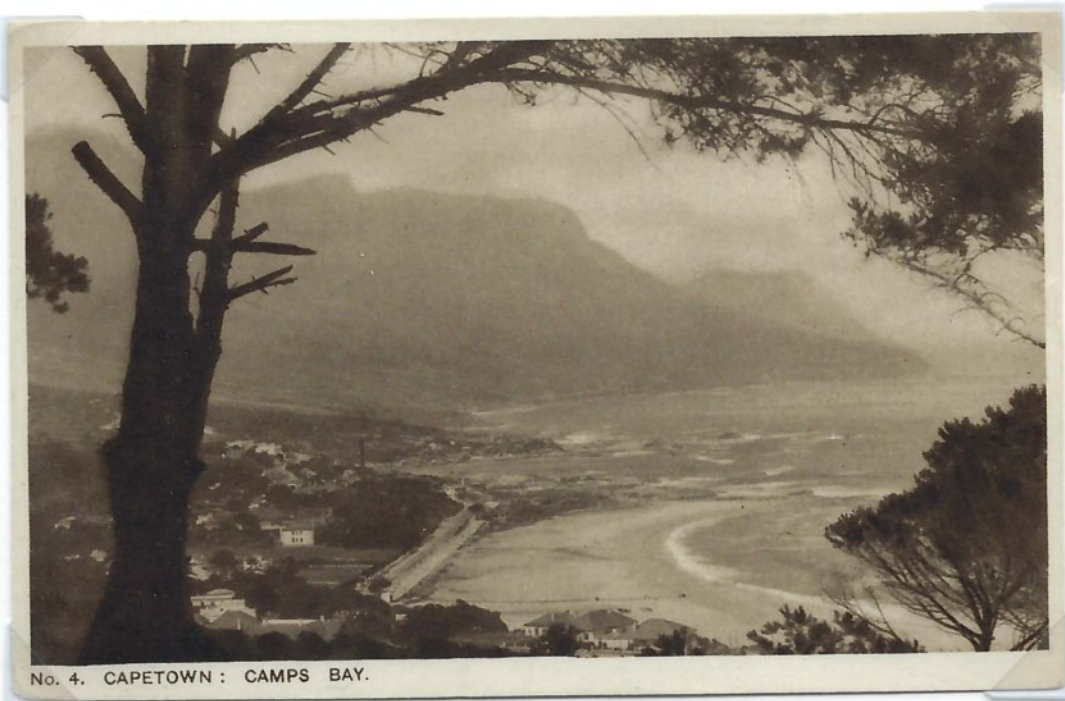
The Empire card on the left and the Union card below show the same scene, the Parliament Buildings in Cape Town, but the photos were taken at a different time. All photos were sourced from the SAR&H photo library.

### Card No 3 Below

The Empire card no 3 was withdrawn from the Union set leaving the Union set without a number 3 card. It is one of two Western Cape cards withdrawn from the Union set.



No. 3. CAPETOWN: ADDERLEY STREET.



No. 4. CAPETOWN : CAMPS BAY.

**Postcard No 4**

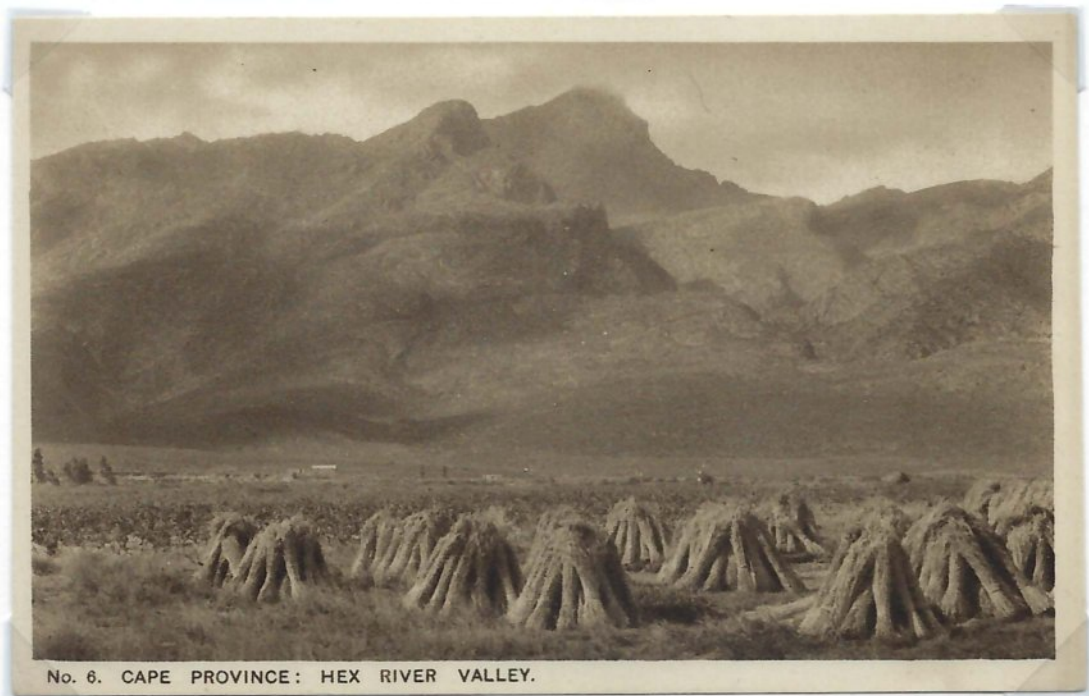
The Empire card on the left and the Union card No 4 below used the same photo for the card face, producing two cards of exact same pictorial appearance apart from the colouring, sepia and black and white. The scene is that of Camps Bay near Cape Town.

**Card No 6 Below**

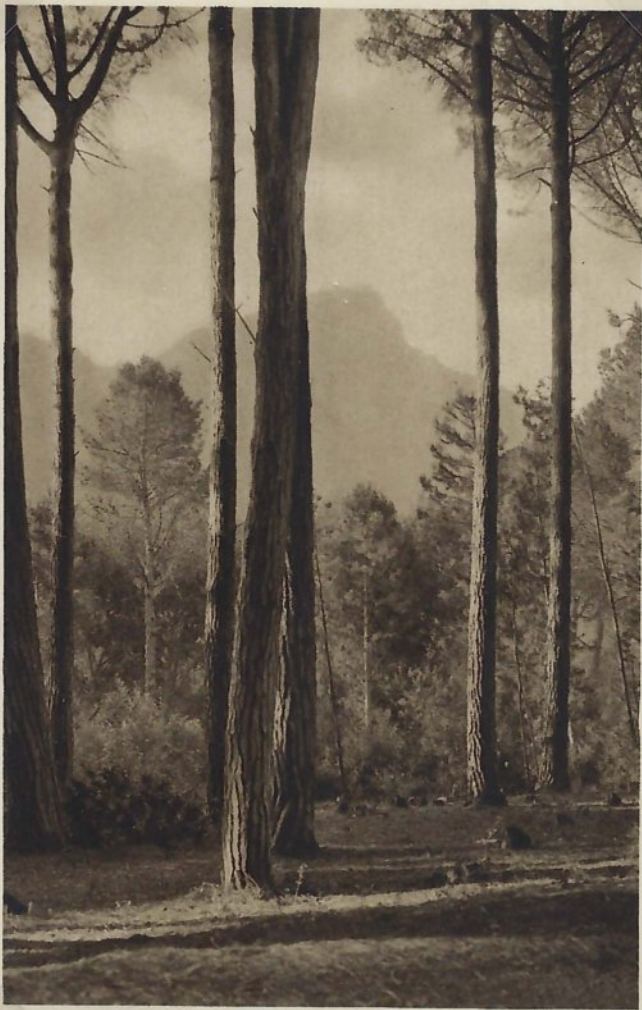
The Empire card no 6, The Hex River Valley, was withdrawn from the Union set leaving the Union set with another gap in its numbering. It is the second of two Western Cape cards withdrawn from the Union set.



PHOTO BY S.A.B. PUBLICITY DEPT.  
Camps Bay thro' the trees - Capetown



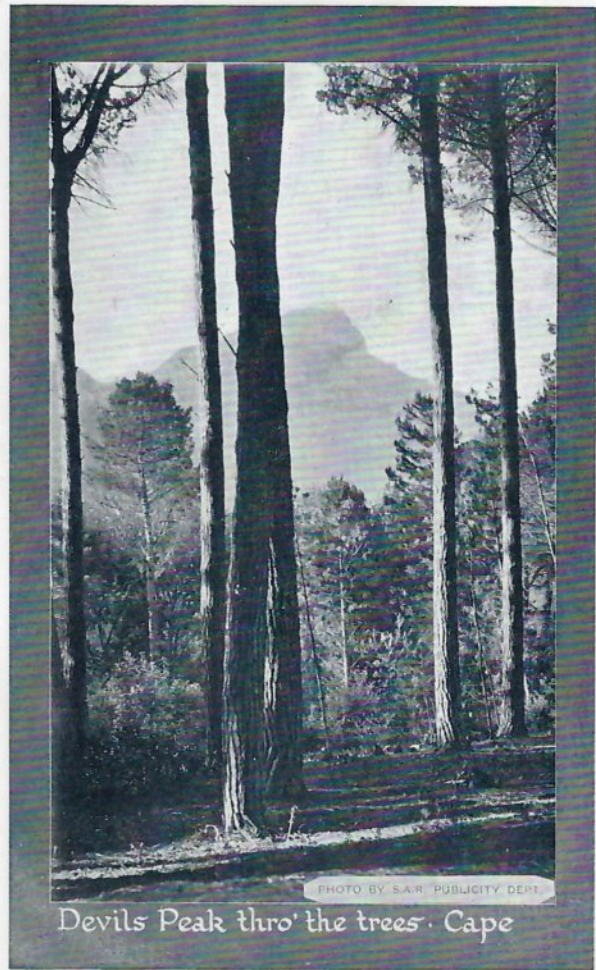
No. 6. CAPE PROVINCE : HEX RIVER VALLEY.



No. 5. CAPETOWN: DEVIL'S PEAK.

**Devil's Peak Card No 5**

The sepia coloured Empire card, on the left, and the black and white Union card, below, used the same photo, producing identical pictorials. Both cards have the same number.



No. 7. PORT ELIZABETH: 1820 SETTLERS' MEMORIAL

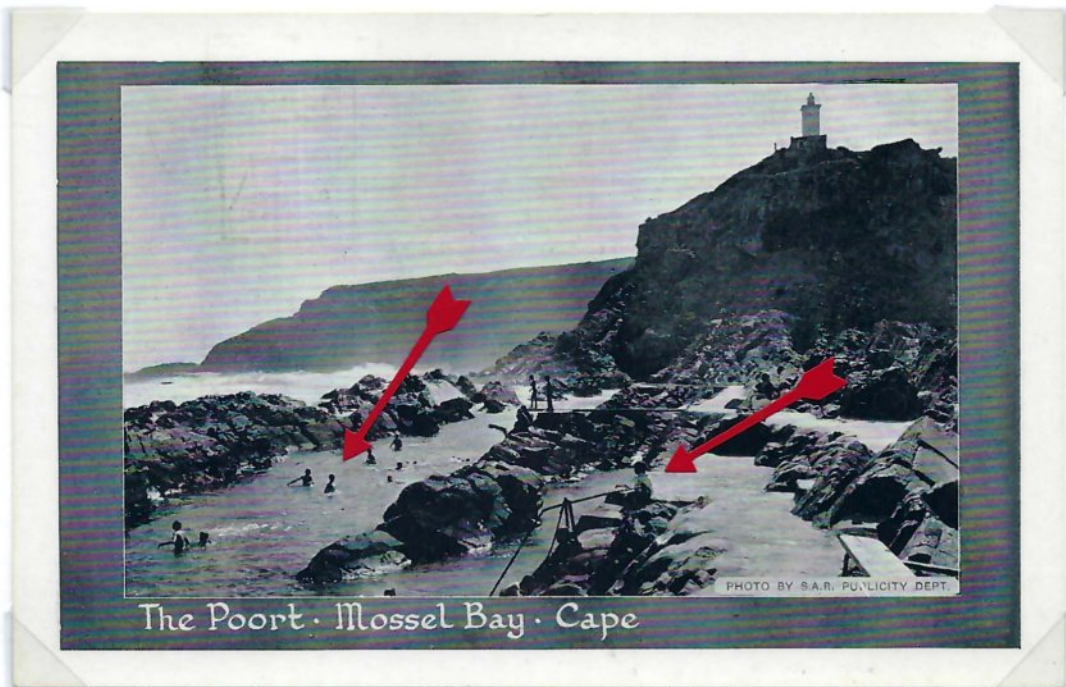
**Empire Card No 7**

This Eastern Province card, Port Elizabeth 1820 Settlers' Memorial, was withdrawn from the production of the Union set leaving the Union set without a No 7 card. Two Eastern Province cards were withdrawn.

### Empire and Union No 8 Cards

This Mossel Bay card is of great interest as the two cards display an almost identical scene which on close examination shows that the pictures are from two different photos taken within probably minutes of each other. Take note of the little white shirted boy standing in the Empire card and sitting in the Union card. Arrows indicate the boy's location. Also note the change of position of the children playing in the pool. As with the others both cards have the same number.

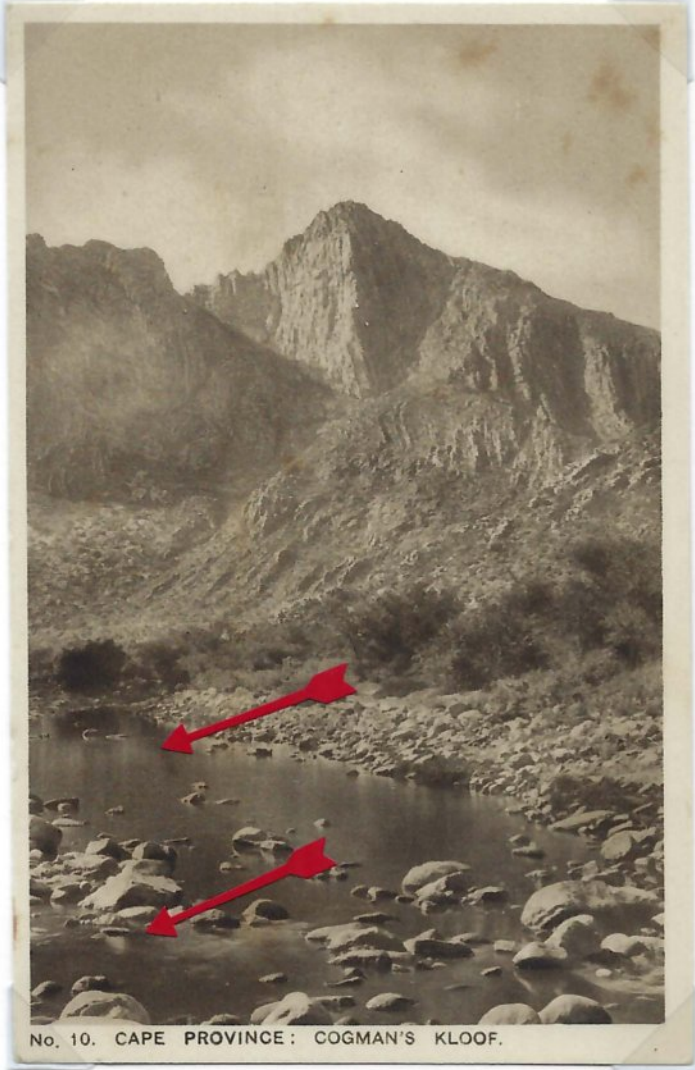
Most professional photographers when out on assignment would shoot multiple photos of the same scene. Clearly these photos were part of a series taken in one session.



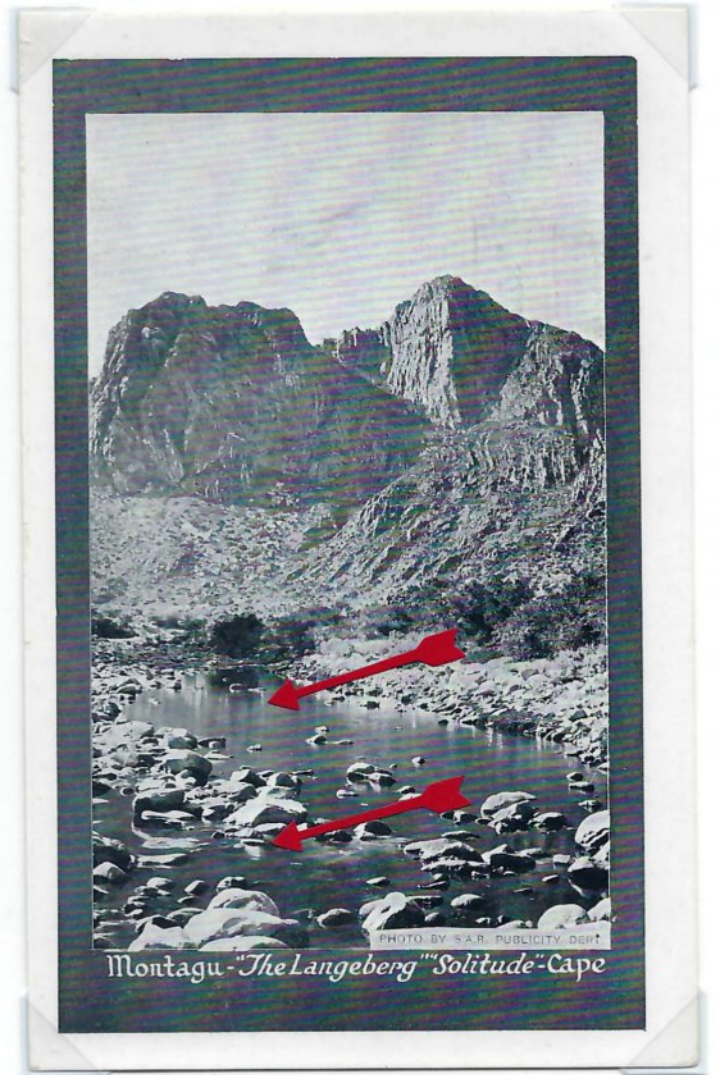
### Empire and Union No 9 Cards

These Montagu Pass, Cape Province, postcards have enough features to make an assessment of their similarity easy; the motor car, the railway line and the rock formations. They are exact pictorial copies. As is the norm for the Empire and Union sets of postcards, the same cards have the same number, in this case number 9.





**Cogman's Kloof/Montagu Cards No 10**  
 The movement in the water indicates that the same photo was used but cropped differently for the production of the two postcards. It is interesting that the descriptions are so different.



**Empire Card No 11**

The Eastern Province loses its other card. This card of Oxford Street, East London, shown below, was also withdrawn from the Union postcard set. Another numbering gap in the Union set to the dismay of new and inexperienced collectors.





No. 14. NATAL : BATHING ENCLOSURE, DURBAN.

**Postcard No 14**

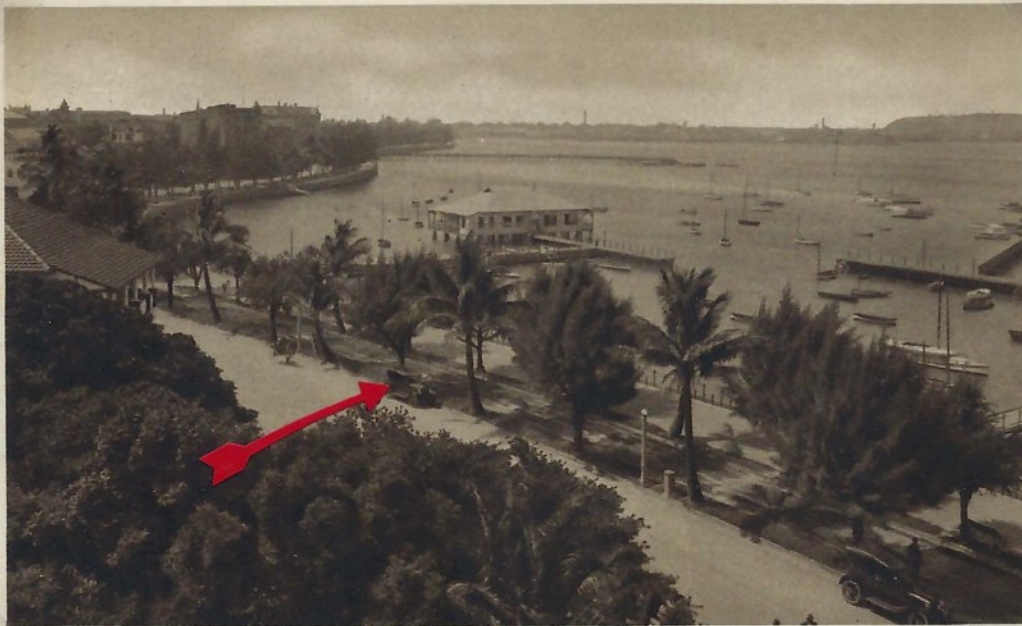
The Empire card on the left and the Union card No 14 below used photos of the same scene but taken from a different perspective and probably at a different time. The scene is a bathing enclosure at the Durban beach.



**Card No 12 Below**  
The Empire card no 12, Kimberley Town Hall, was withdrawn from the Union set. A loss to the Northern Cape.



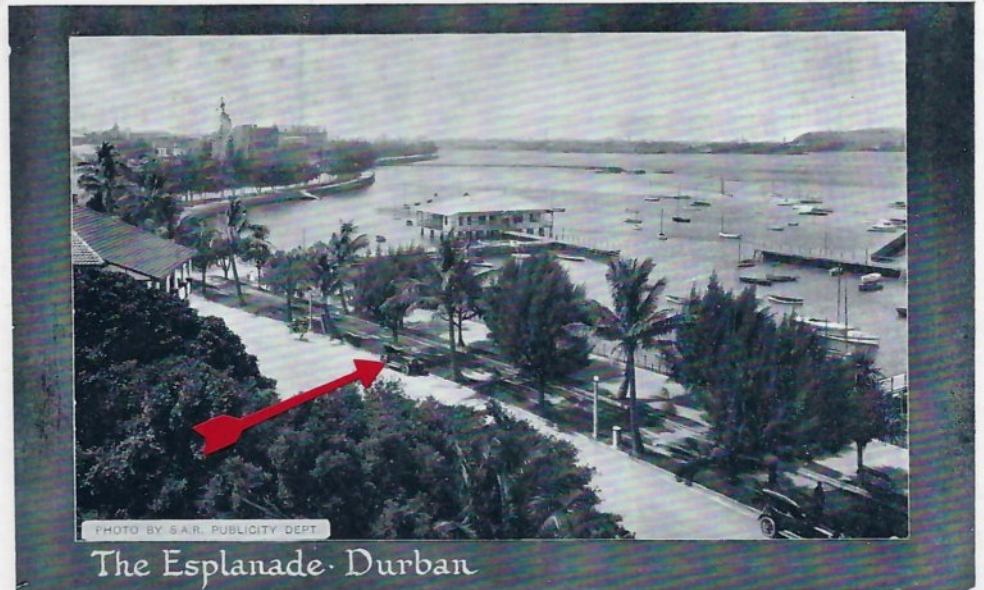
No. 12. CAPE PROVINCE : KIMBERLEY, TOWN HALL.



No. 15. NATAL: ESPLANADE, DURBAN.

**Postcard No 15**

The Empire card on the left and the Union card No 15 below used the same photo for the pictorial. The motor vehicles are there and the boats in the harbour.



**Card No 13 Below**  
The Esplanade is in but the Empire card no 13, West Street Durban, was withdrawn from the Union set. A loss to Natal and a number gap in the Union set.



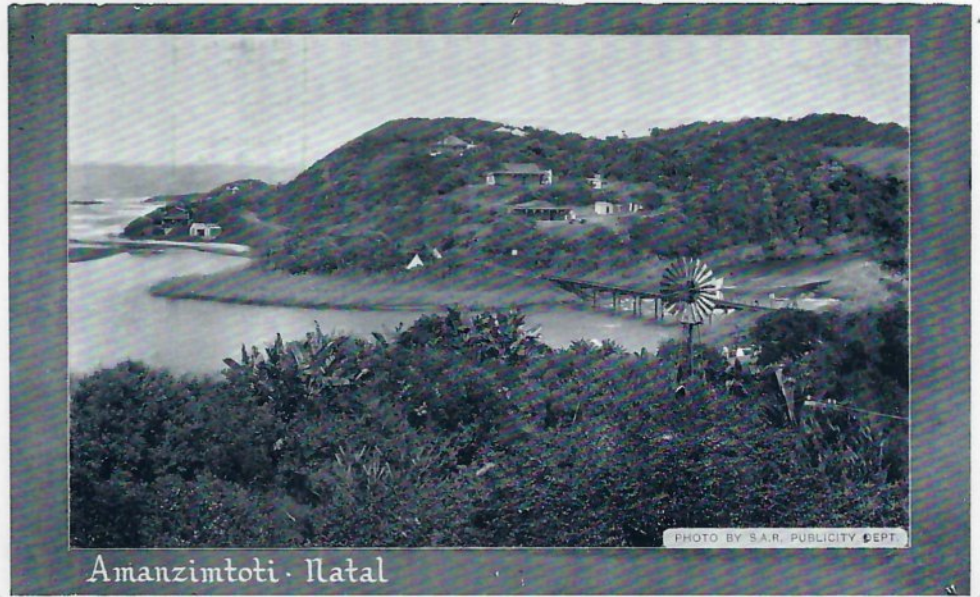
No. 13. NATAL: WEST STREET, DURBAN



No. 16. NATAL: SOUTH COAST.

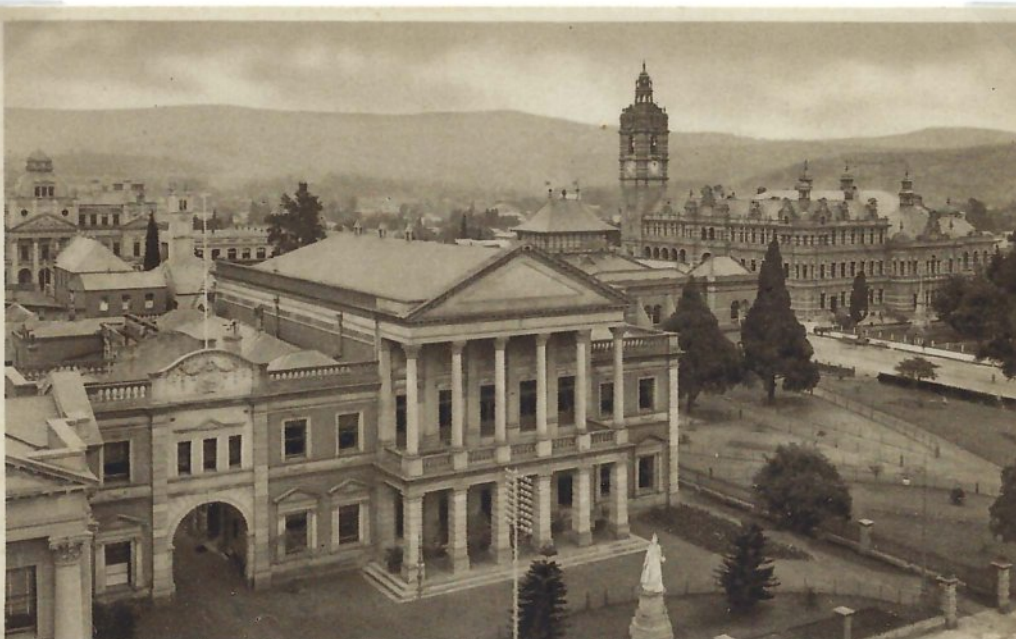
### Postcard No 16

The Empire card, Natal South Coast, on the left and the Union card No 14, Amanzimtoti, below used the same photo for the pictorial. Clearly, the Union card is an exact copy of the Empire card.



### Card No 18 Below

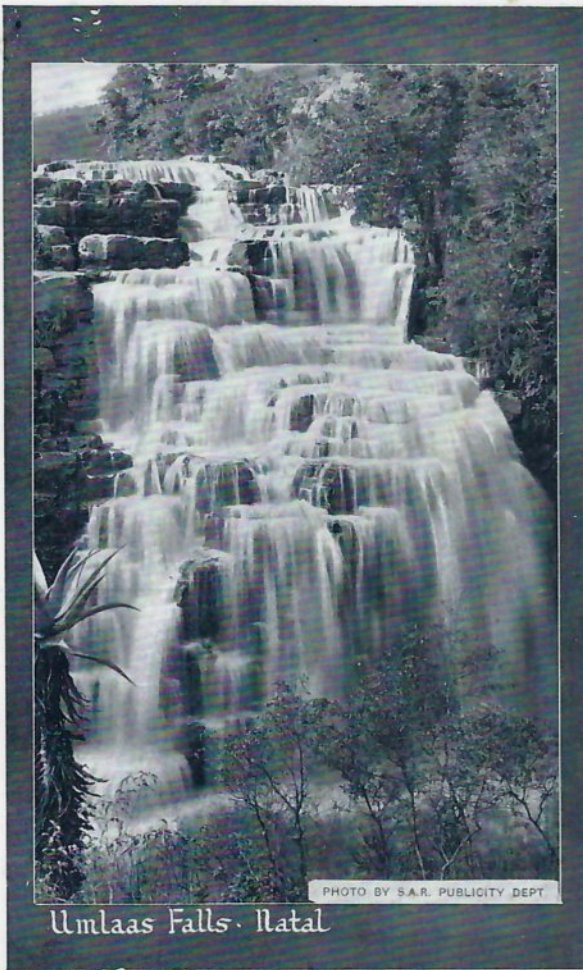
The Empire card no 18, Natal Pietermaritzburg, was withdrawn from the Union set. A loss to Natal and no card no 18 in the Union set.



No. 18. NATAL: PIETERMARITZBURG.

**Postcard No 17**

The Empire card, Natal Umlaas Falls, below and the Union card No 17, on the left, are exact copies. The flow of the water will not repeat exactly in two different photos

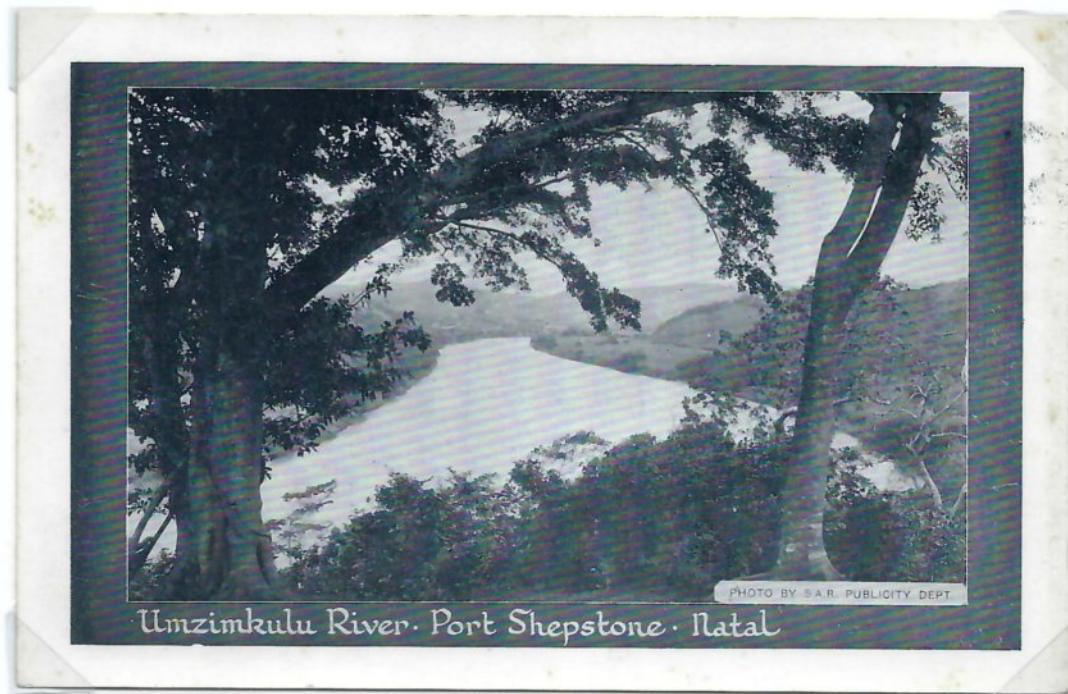
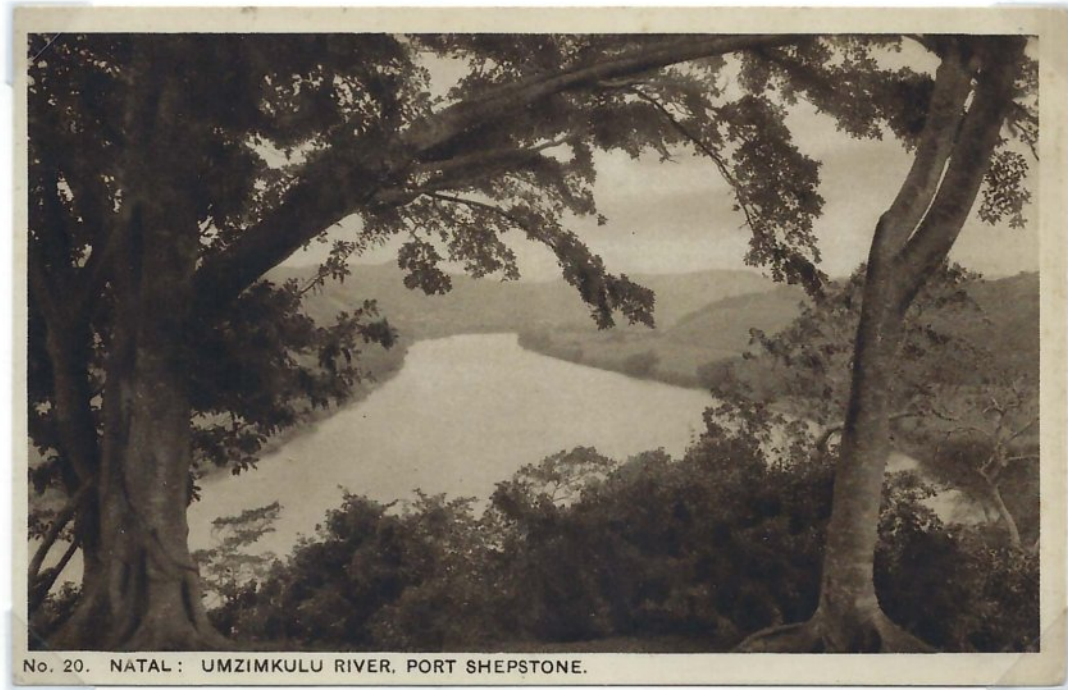


**Postcard No 19**

This Empire card of a Zulu Headman is interesting in that it was the only human figure in the full set of 36 Empire cards. The photo was already used by the Publicity Department of the SAR&H in 1903. It is not surprising that the card did not feature in the Union set as it would have been totally out of character in a postcard set of nature and town scenes.

Postcard No 20

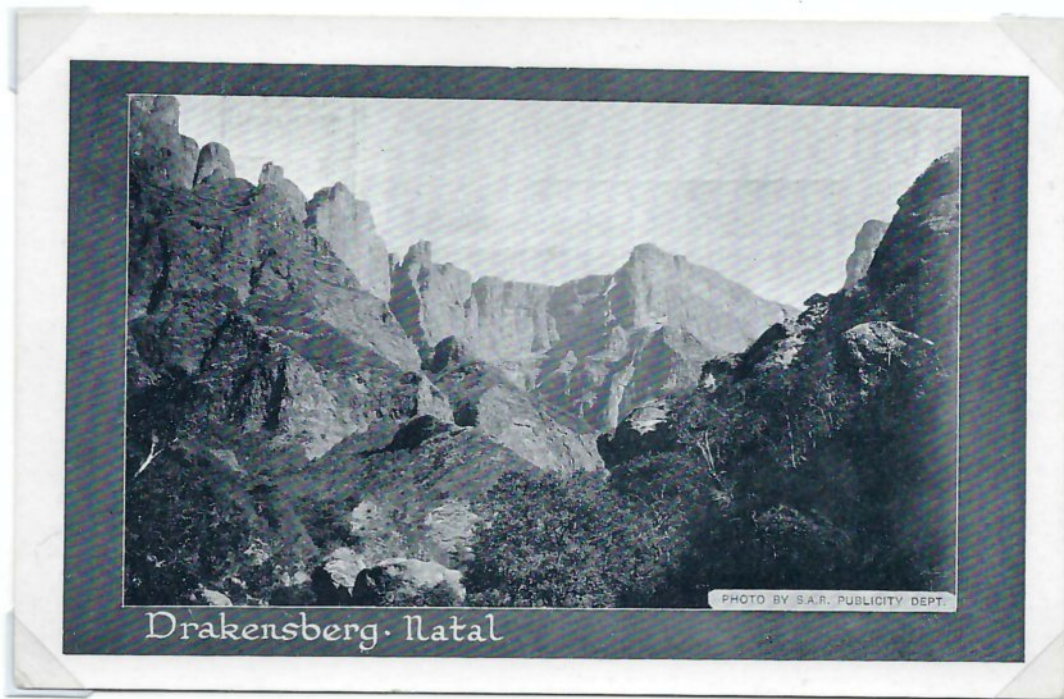
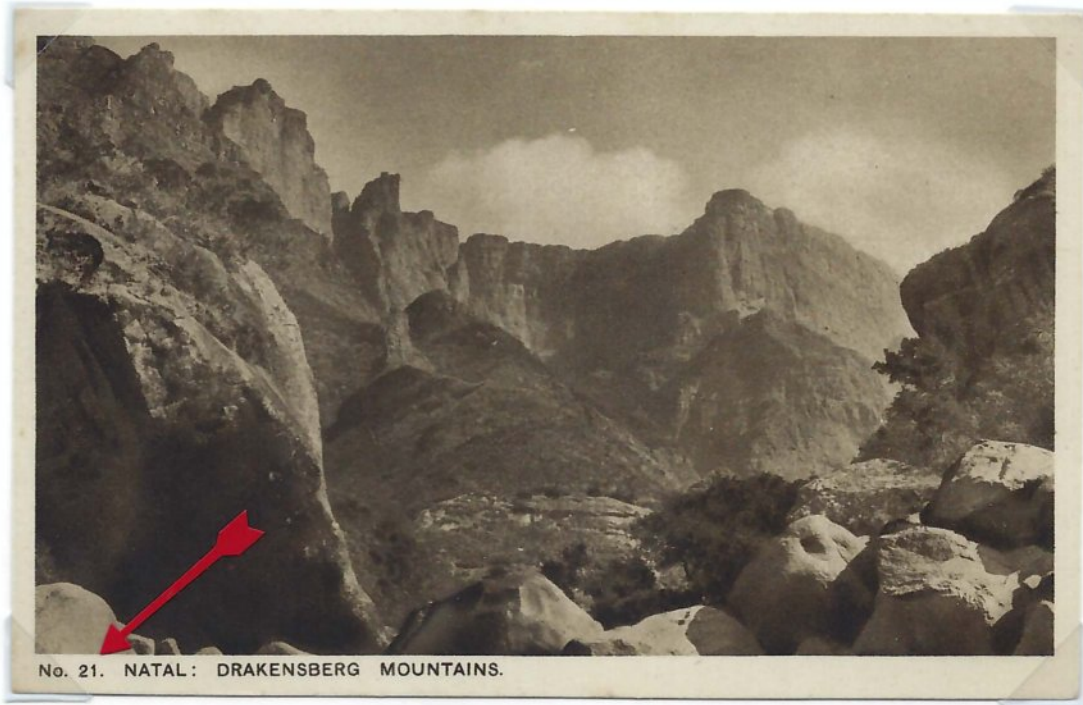
The Empire card No 20, Natal Umzimkulu River Port Shepstone, and its Union partner below are here featured. The pictorials are exactly the same using the same SAR&H photo. The Union card also had the number 20.



### Postcard No 21

The Empire card, Natal Drakensberg Mountains, and below, the Union card portray the same scene but processed from different photos. The photos were probably taken at the same time as professional photographers usually took many photos of a scene when on assignment.

The Union card is incorrectly numbered as 22, while the Union card on the next page is incorrectly number as 21. The error occurred when the printers set up the backing plate and interchanged the two numbers. These two cards are therefore out of sync with the Empire cards.



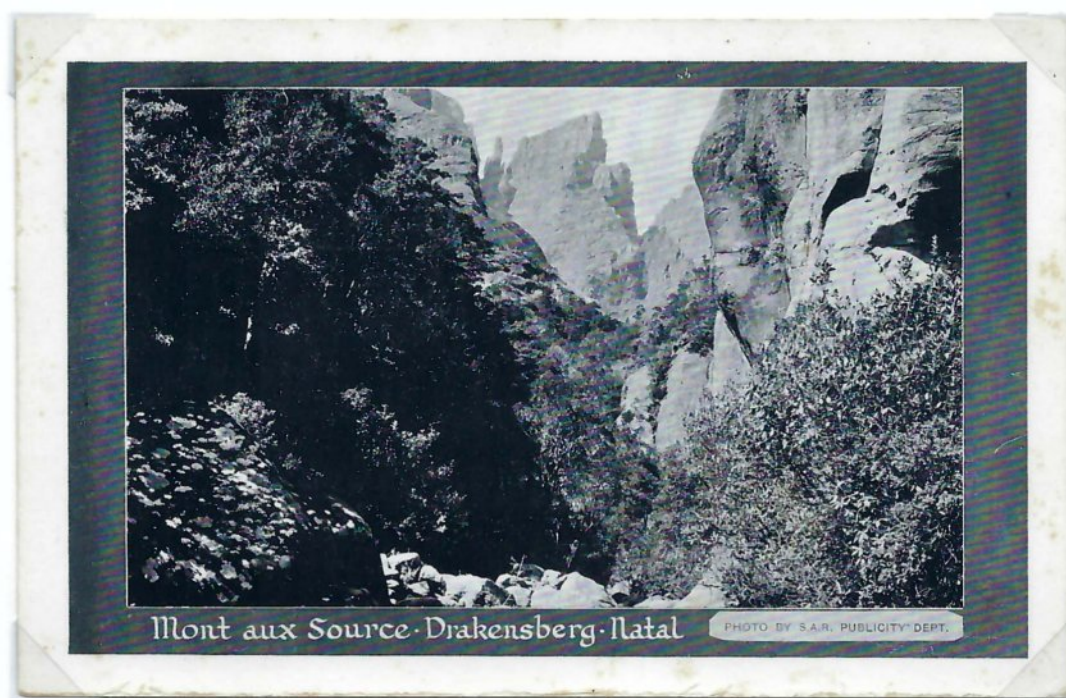
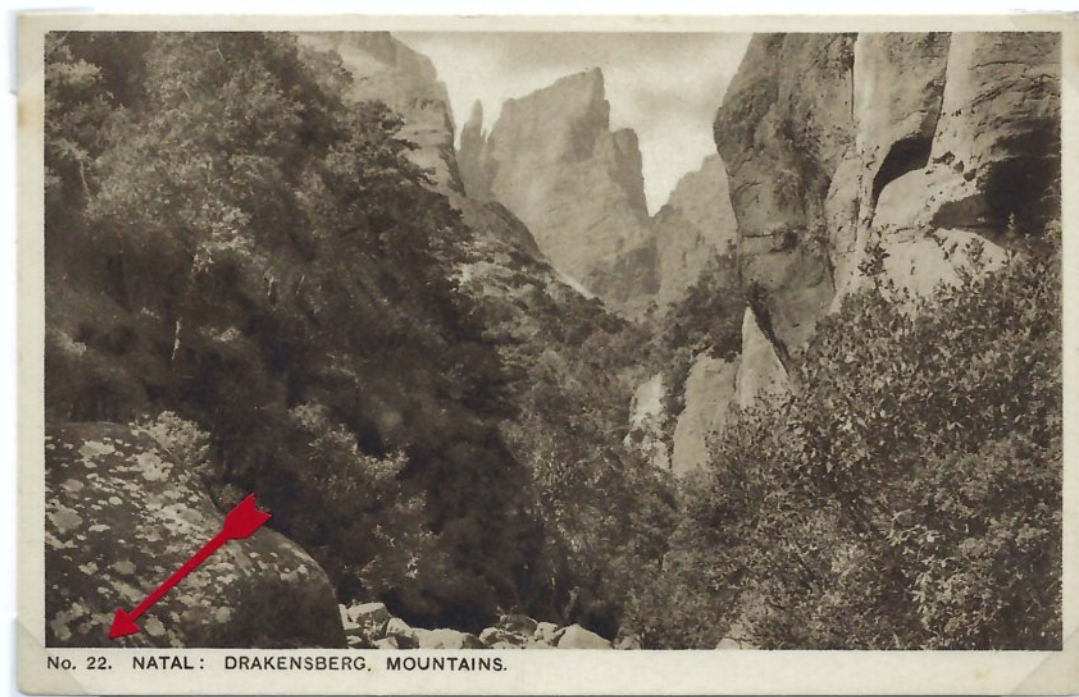
### Postcard No 22

This second Empire card of the Natal Drakensberg Mountains and the Union card pictorials were processed from the same photo, unlike the cards on the previous page which used different photos for the same scene.

The two cards are therefore exact copies.

The Union card is incorrectly numbered as 21 instead of 22, the error complimentary to the error on the previous card which was numbered as 22 instead of 21.

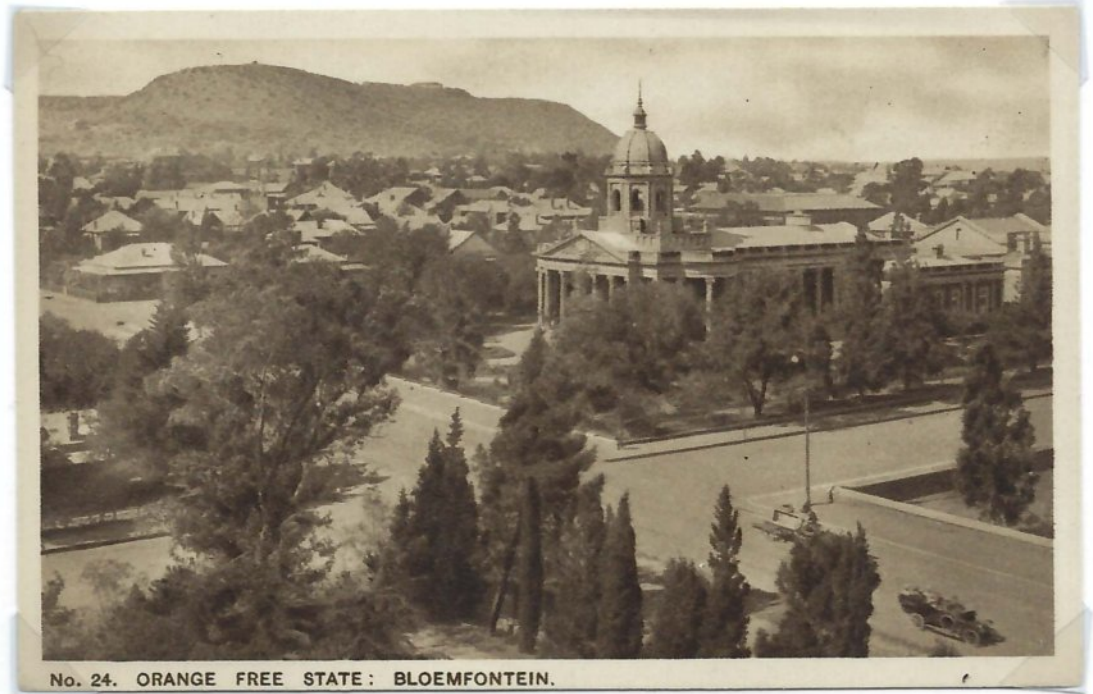
The two cards are number wise out of sync with the Empire cards.



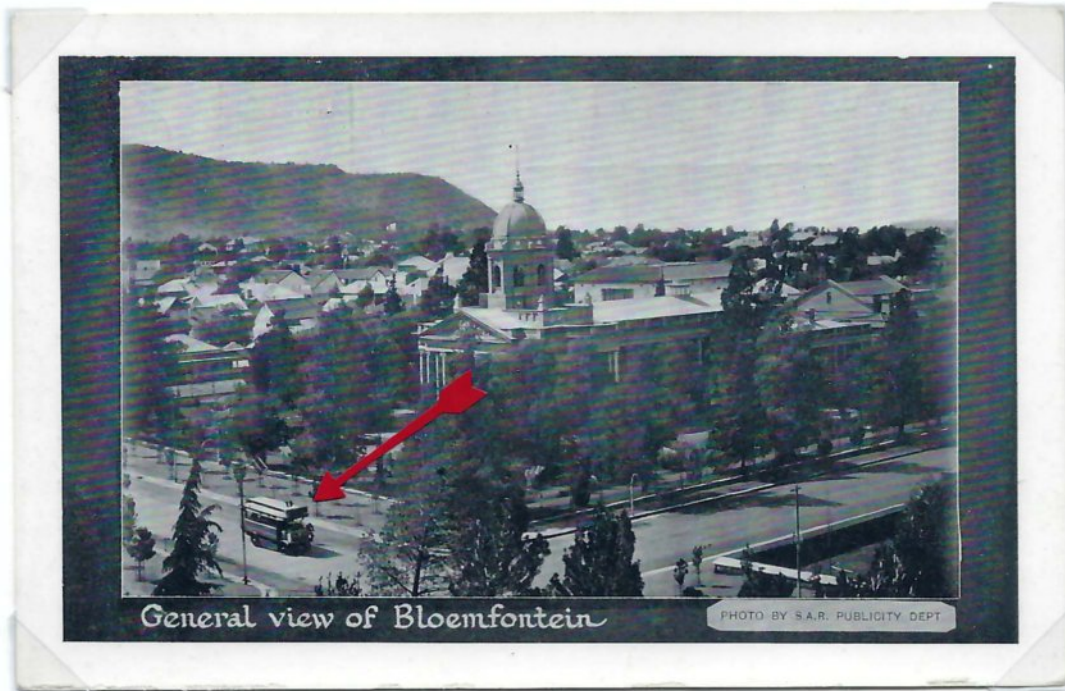
### Postcard No 24

The Empire card and the Union card of Bloemfontein are of the same scene but the pictures depict a different time and a different perspective.

Note the motor vehicle in the Union card image but not in the Empire card.



No. 24. ORANGE FREE STATE : BLOEMFONTEIN.



### Postcard No 23

The Empire card below was not used for the Union card set. The Union set already had two cards of Drakensberg scenes. As the Union set was reduced to 24 cards compared to the Empire set of 36, three Drakensberg cards would have created an imbalance. Thus no Union card number 23 in its number sequence.

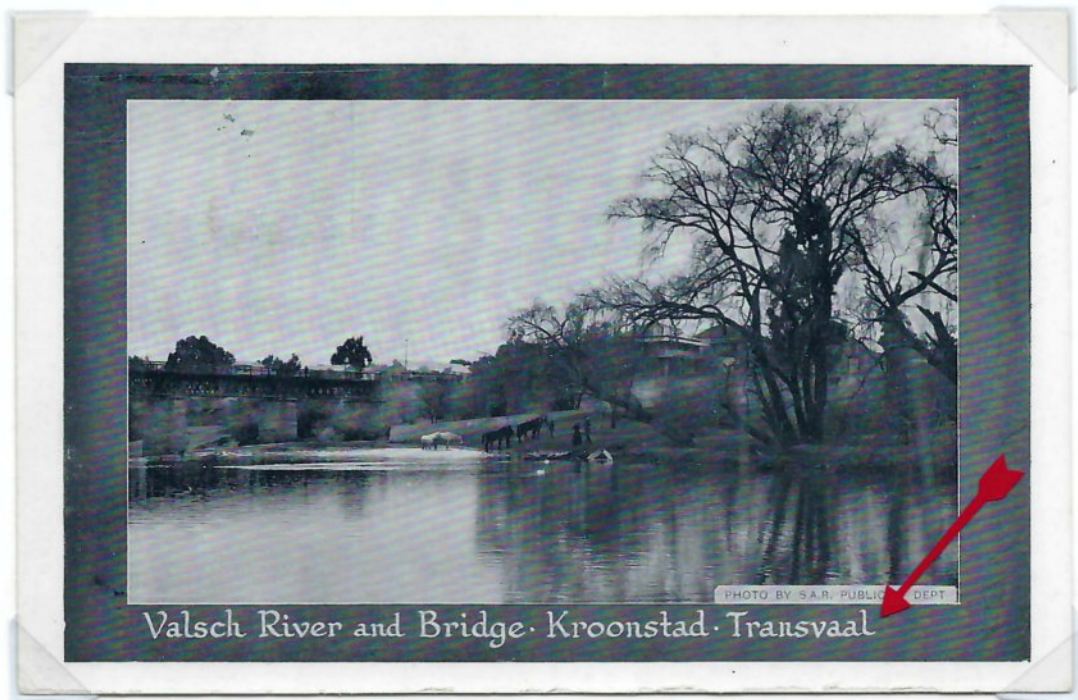
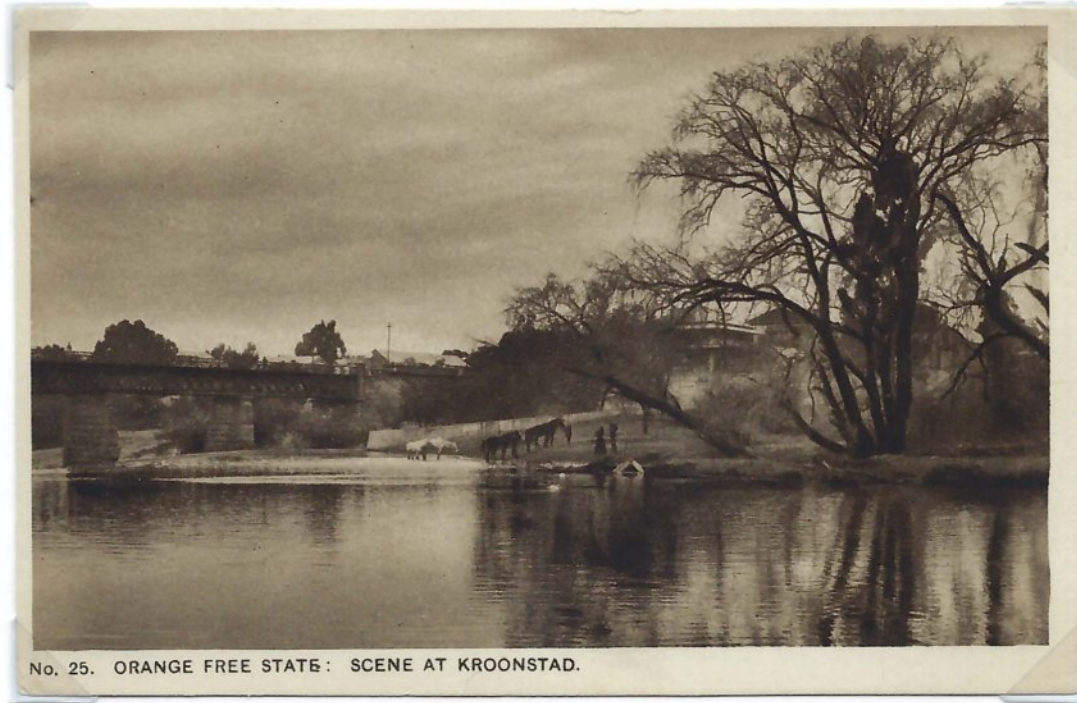


No. 23. DRAKENSBERG RANGE : MAIN TUGELA GORGE. S. AFRICA

**Postcard No 25**

This Empire card No 25 depicts a river scene at Kroonstad in the Orange Free State. The Empire and the Union card pictorials were processed from the same photo. The two cards are exact copies confirmed by the horses on the river bank, they have not moved.

The Union card has Kroonstad located in the Transvaal, the wrong province. Although the two cards show exactly the same scene the descriptions of the two cards differ significantly.



**Postcard No 26**

Port St Johns is the subject of both the Empire and the Union cards. The pictorials are exactly the same. The same SAR&H photo was used for both cards. The Union card is also number 26.



No. 26. CAPE PROVINCE: PORT ST. JOHNS.

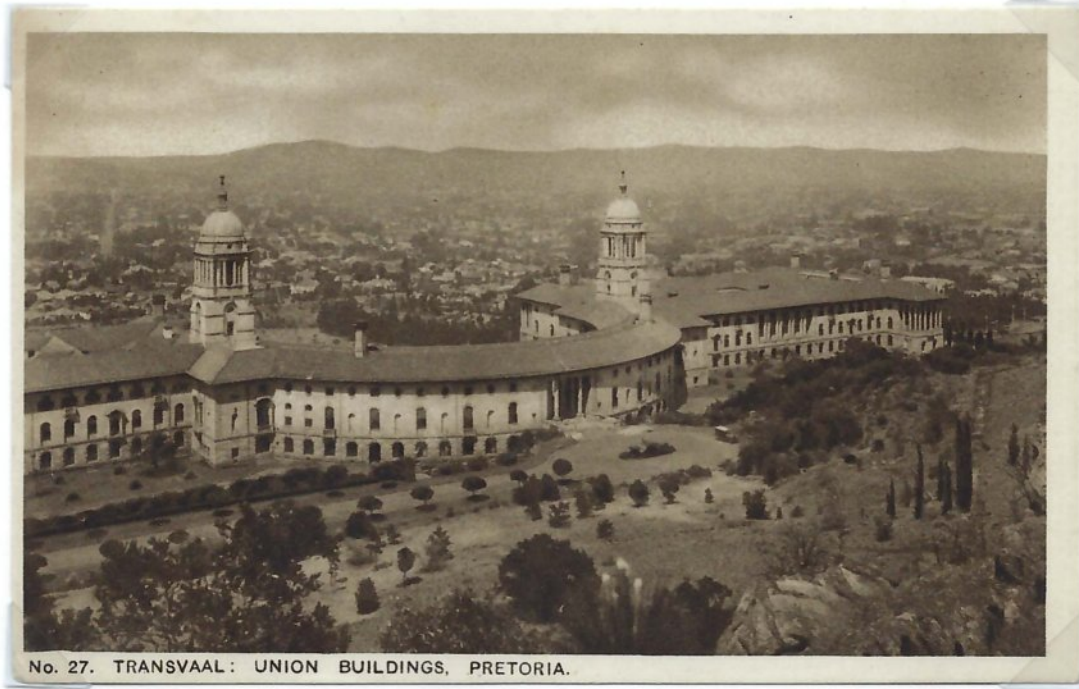


PHOTO BY S.A.R. PUBLICITY DEPT.

Port St Johns

Postcard No 27

The two cards, Empire and Union below, both show a view of the Union Buildings but from a different perspective and different time. It is not easy to determine which photo is the earliest. The tree growth appears different but not so that a time judgement can be made. This is an Empire card that was sure to make it into the Union set.





No. 28. TRANSVAAL: GOVERNMENT HOUSE, PRETORIA.

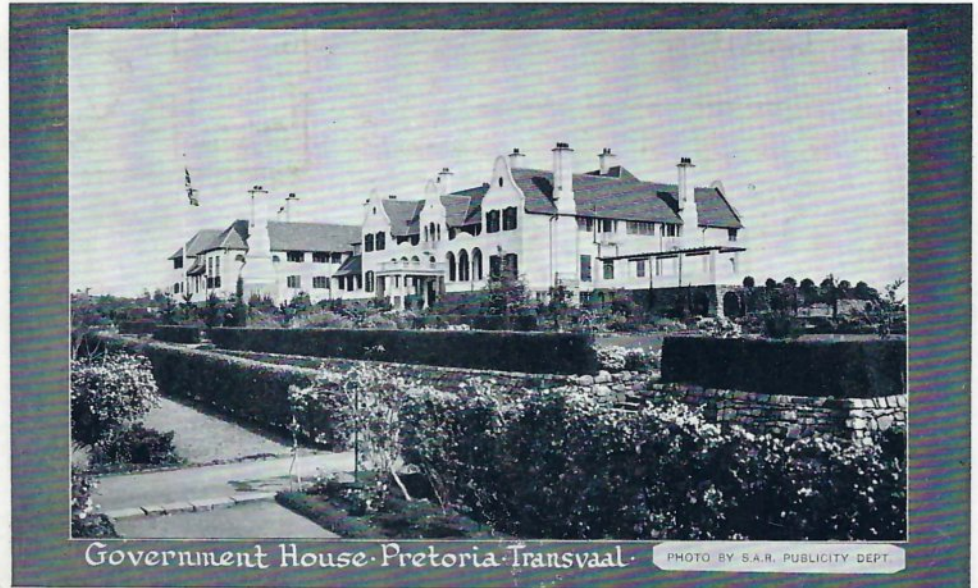
### Postcard No 28

The same picture in both the Empire and Union cards but slightly different in its cropping. When built it was regarded as one of the finest government buildings in the British Empire so it is not surprising that it should feature on a set of Empire postcards. It was also a certainty for inclusion in the Union set.

### Post card No 30

Although historically significant the Johannesburg Town Hall postcard did not make it into the Union set. The

Transvaal is well represented and its number had to be limited to keep a balance between provinces.



Government House Pretoria Transvaal

PHOTO BY S.A.R. PUBLICITY DEPT.



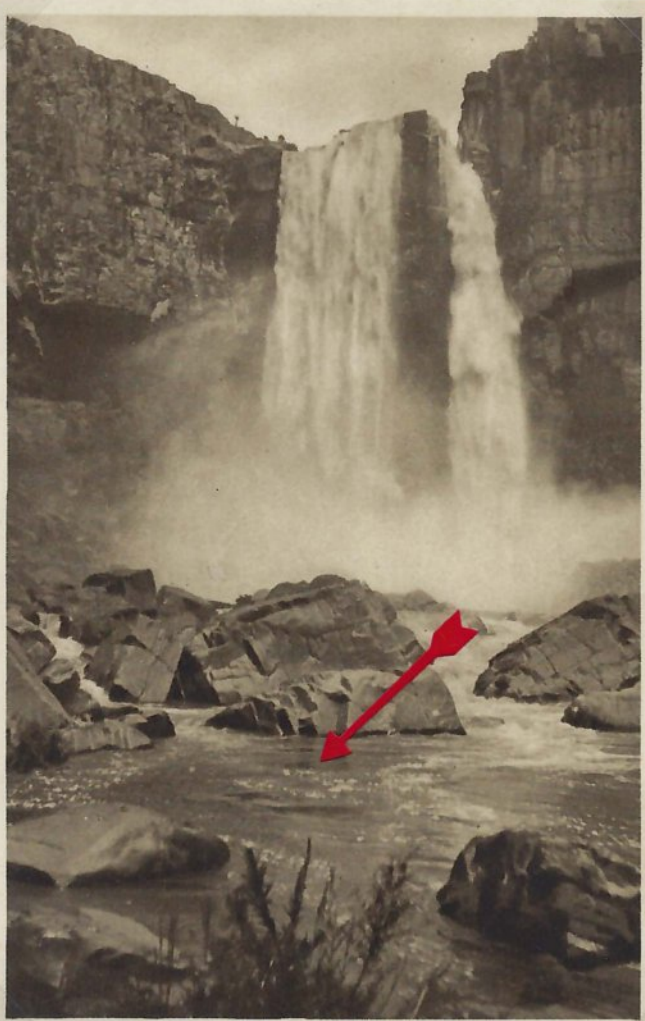
No. 30. TRANSVAAL: TOWN HALL, JOHANNESBURG.

## Postcard No 29

The Empire No 29 postcard of Church Square in Pretoria would have been a sought after card and would have been equally so as a Union postcard. However, the Union card No 29 is a totally different card. These two are the only cards with the same number in the Empire and Union sets that are completely unrelated to each other. Why and how it came about is an unknown story. It can only be surmised that at a late stage the photo or negative of the Empire picture was mislaid or lost and some substitute had to be found in a hurry. The Railway Line near Victoria Bay photo or negative was at hand and used as a replacement.

In the Union set the Provincial balance was altered, the Transvaal lost a card and the Cape gained one.

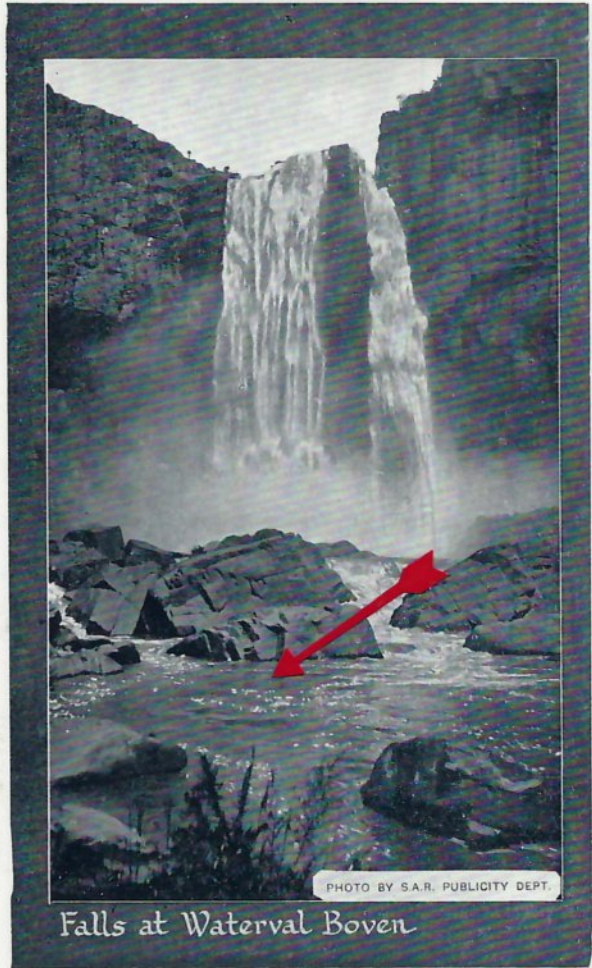




No. 33. TRANSVAAL: THE FALLS, WATERVAL BOVEN.

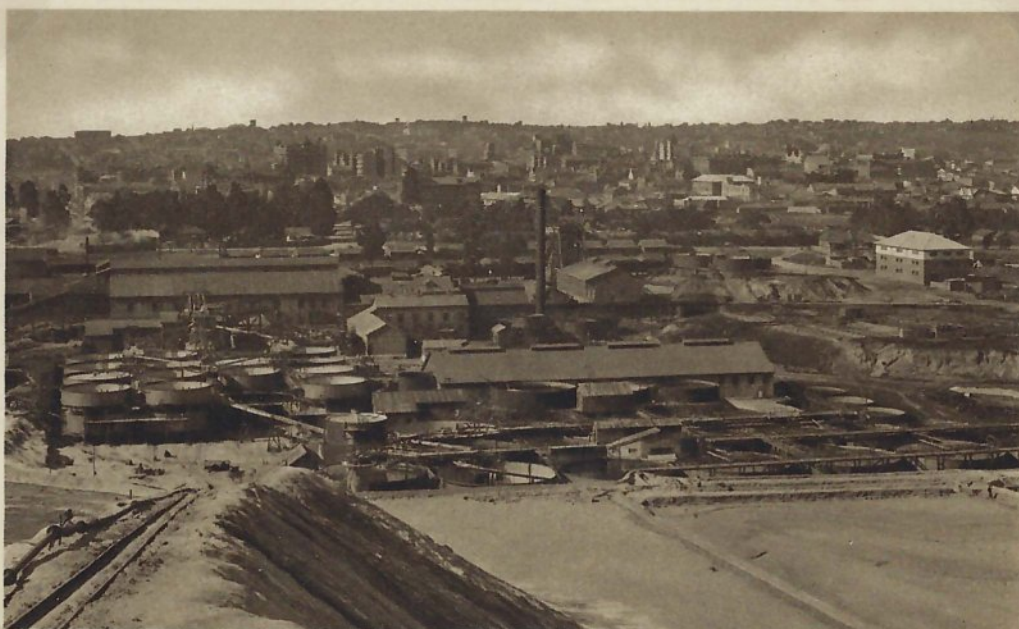
**Postcard No 33**

The Falls at Waterval Boven depicted in the Empire and Union sets of postcards. The unchanged reflections in the water confirm that the pictures are identical.



**Postcard No 31**

The Johannesburg Gold mine was not used in the Union postcard set leaving a number gap.

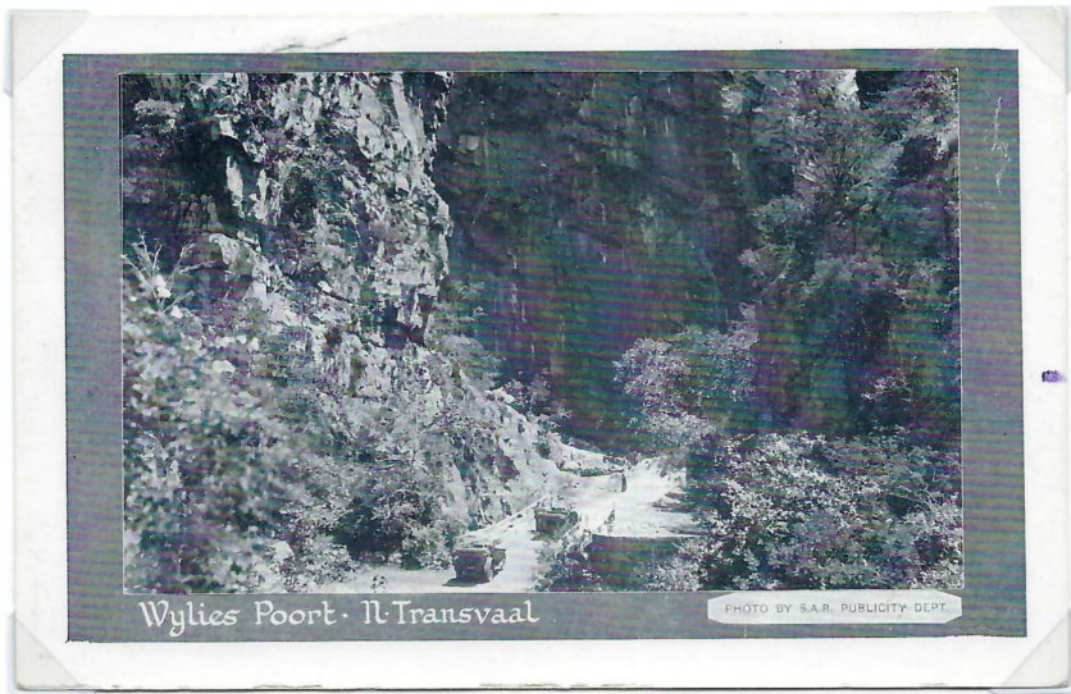


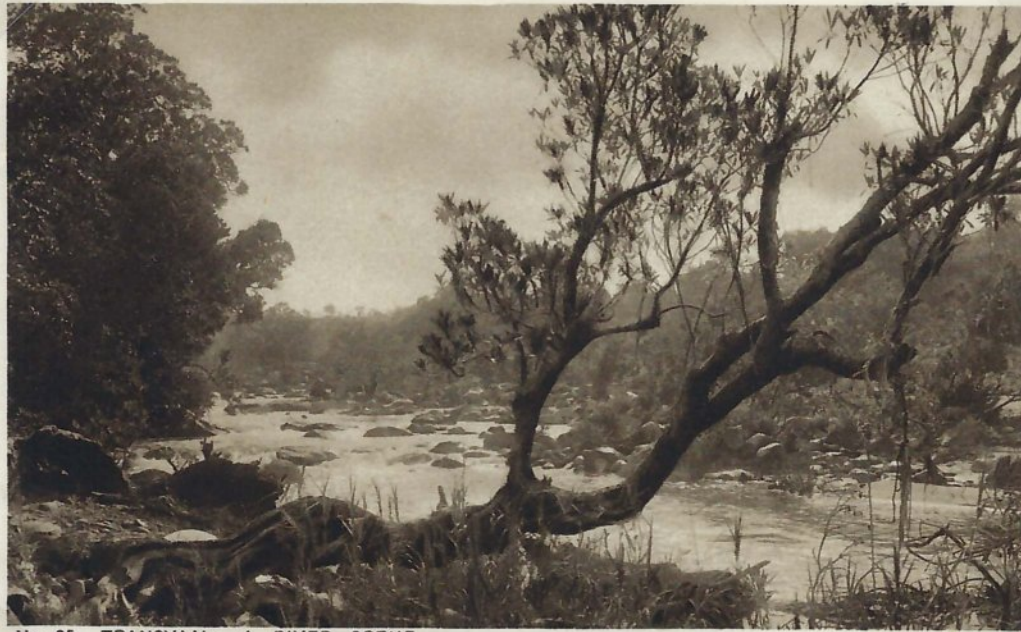
No. 31. TRANSVAAL: A GOLD MINE. JOHANNESBURG.

**Postcard No 34**

The Empire postcard describes the scene as A Mountain Road while the Union postcard was more definite with Wylies Poort N Transvaal. It is exactly the same scene on both cards.

Motor enthusiasts will probably be able to identify the vehicles seen on the road in the poort.





No. 35. TRANSVAAL: A RIVER SCENE.

### Postcard No 35

The Empire postcard and the Union postcard show exactly the same river scene in the Transvaal. The same photo was used by both sets.

### Postcard No 32

The Empire postcard below described the scene as Residential. Perhaps a residential garden was not dramatic enough for the Union set and was not included. The Union set thus has no postcard number 32.



No. 32. TRANSVAAL: RESIDENTIAL JOHANNESBURG.

### Postcard No 36

We arrive at card number 36 in both the Empire set and the Union set. The Empire set describes the scene as in the Northern Transvaal but the Union set offers a correction and describes the scene as as in the Komati River in the Eastern Transvaal. The Union card cropped the scene so that the hippopotami can be seen more clearly. The emerging or submerging heads is proof enough that the same photo was used.

Concluding with these two postcards this exhibit has been able to show all the cards in the two sets, the 36 set of the Empire Exhibition and the 24 postcards of the Union. This exhibit showed clearly how the two set were fully integrated.

