



Orange Free State at War 1892-1900

Postal history of the permanent
units and the Commando forces at
the start of hostilities

PLAN

- ▶ OVS Artillery
- ▶ OVS Police Force
- ▶ RDM Franks (Police)
- ▶ Commando Brief Franks
- ▶ Invading Commandos
- ▶ Mail and Censorship
- ▶ Epilogue



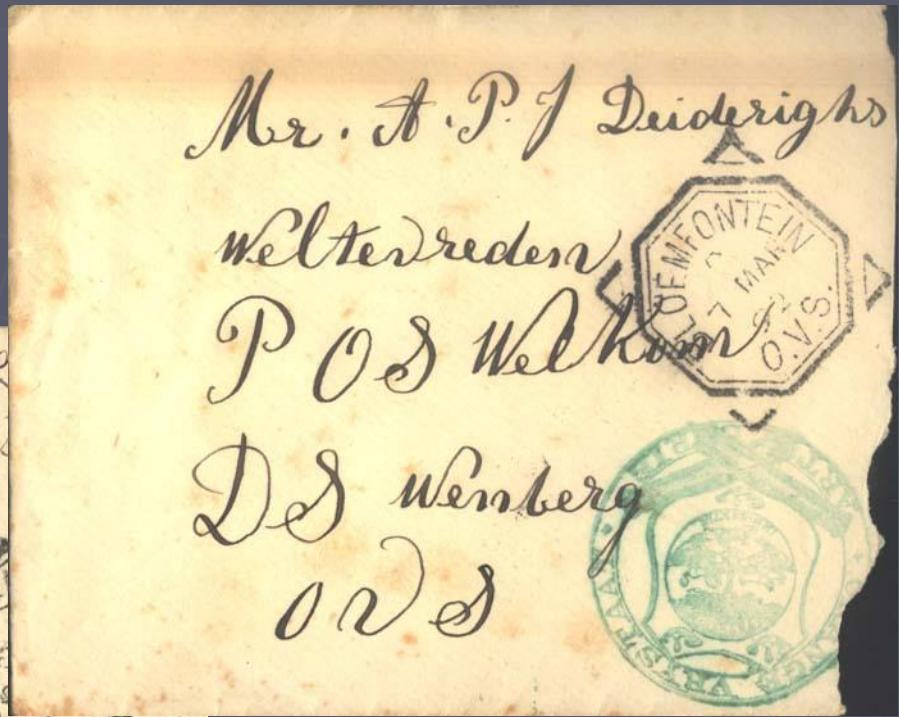
Orange Free State Artillery



- Corps of 5 officers, 13 noncoms, 100 men and 300 reserve, RFW Albrecht formed, 1854 to protect Bloemfontein
- 3 batteries of 4 cannon at time of war
- 1 in Kimberley, 1 at Bethulie, 1 in Natal
- Captured mostly at Pardeeburg Feb 1900

Orange Free State Artillery

Examples mailed to Winburg
from HQ in Bloemfontein
1892, in green, purple, black.



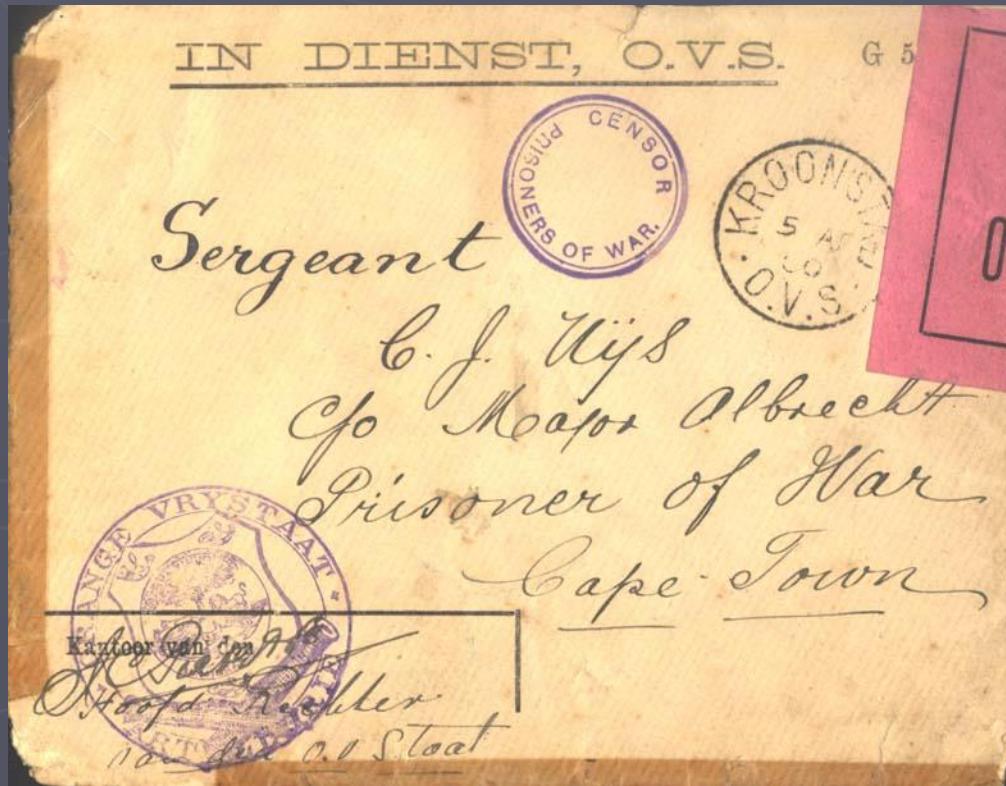
Orange Free State Artillery

In black on official stationery "Kapitan Kommandant" RFW Albrecht from HQ in Bloemfontein to Johannesburg.



Orange Free State Artillery

After fall of Bloemfontein 19 Mar 1900, Capital moved to Kroonstad. Remnants of artillery moved there. POW letter in official envelope addressed to "Sergeant C.J. Uys c/o Major Albrecht" who were captured by British.



Mounted Police Force

- ▶ Mounted Police (Rijdende Dienstmacht) was formed in 1862 similar to RCMP.
- ▶ By 1894, 81 men strong in 19 towns/cities covering an area of 50,000 sq miles.
- ▶ Postal communications by regular post until 1896 when special free frank stamps issued.
- ▶ By 1895 white population of 138,000, 85% of RDM mounted as paramilitary force.

Mounted Police Force



Type 1 issued 1896, horiz form of 5 with 8 ornaments vertical, each plated.

Mounted Police Force

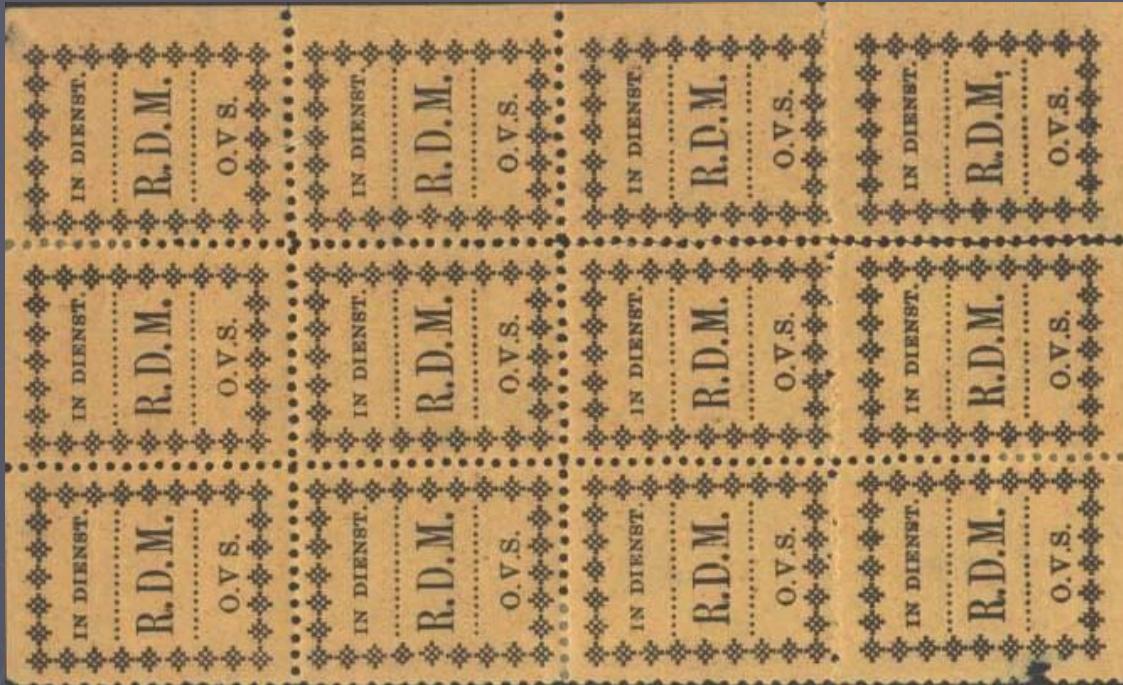
Type 2 issued 1898,
block of 4 format with
9 ornaments vertical,
each plated.



\$ Used Ficksburg, eastern
area of Free State next
to Basutoland.



Mounted Police Force



Type 1 issued 1896, form of 2x4 with new design, sheet of 24 per page.

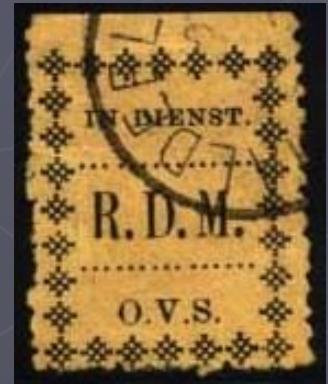
Used Bloemfontein



Used Smaldeel



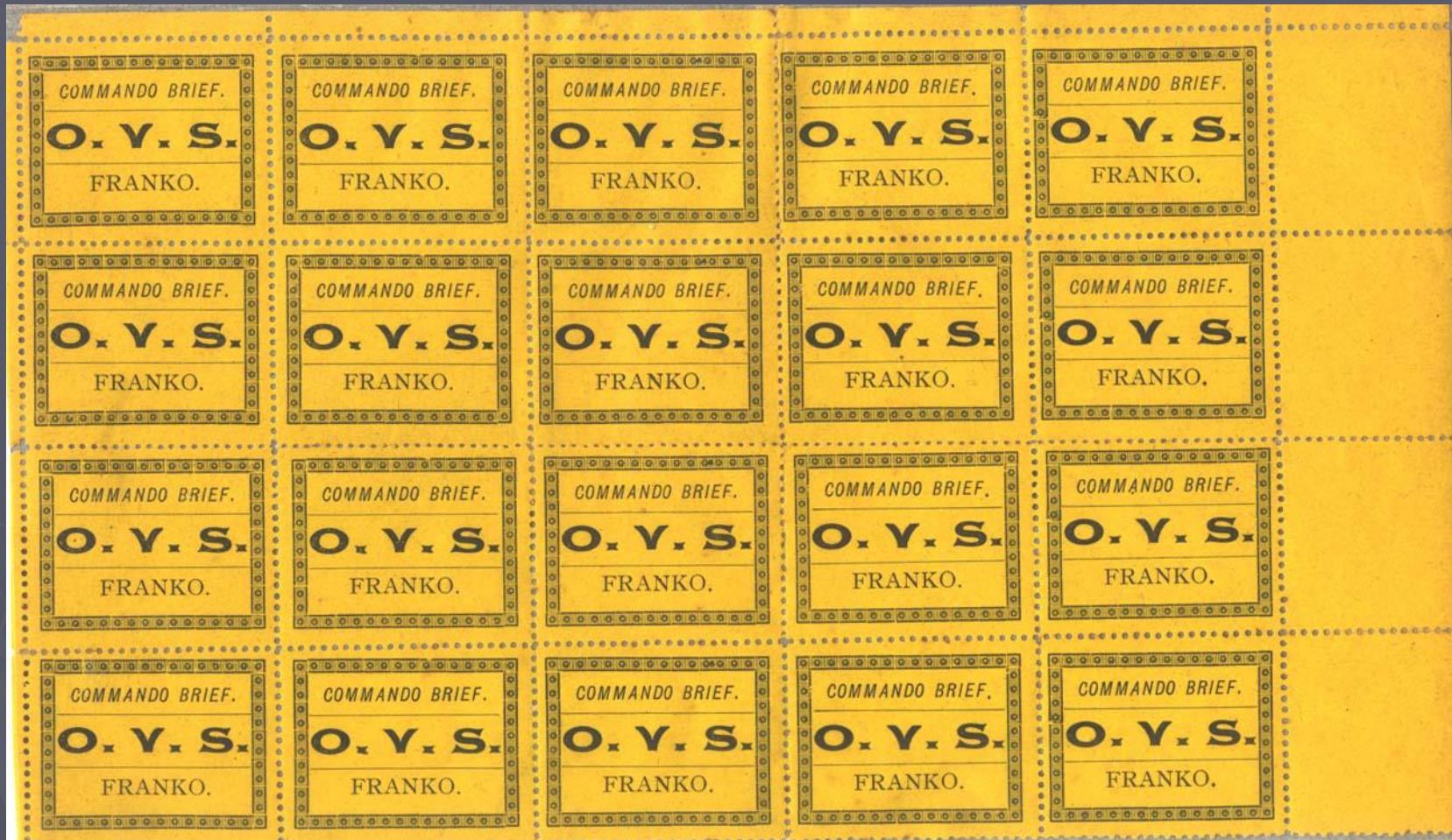
Used Ladybrand in far border next to Basutoland



Commando Brief Franks

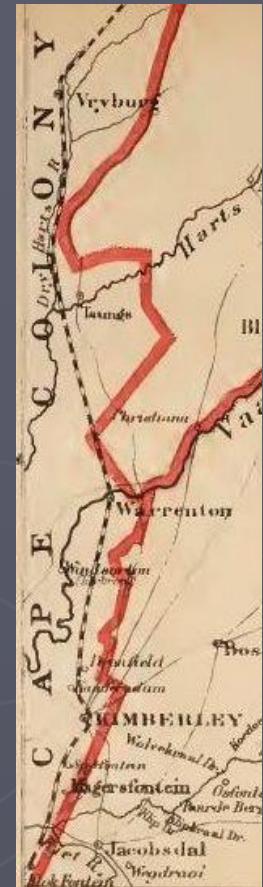
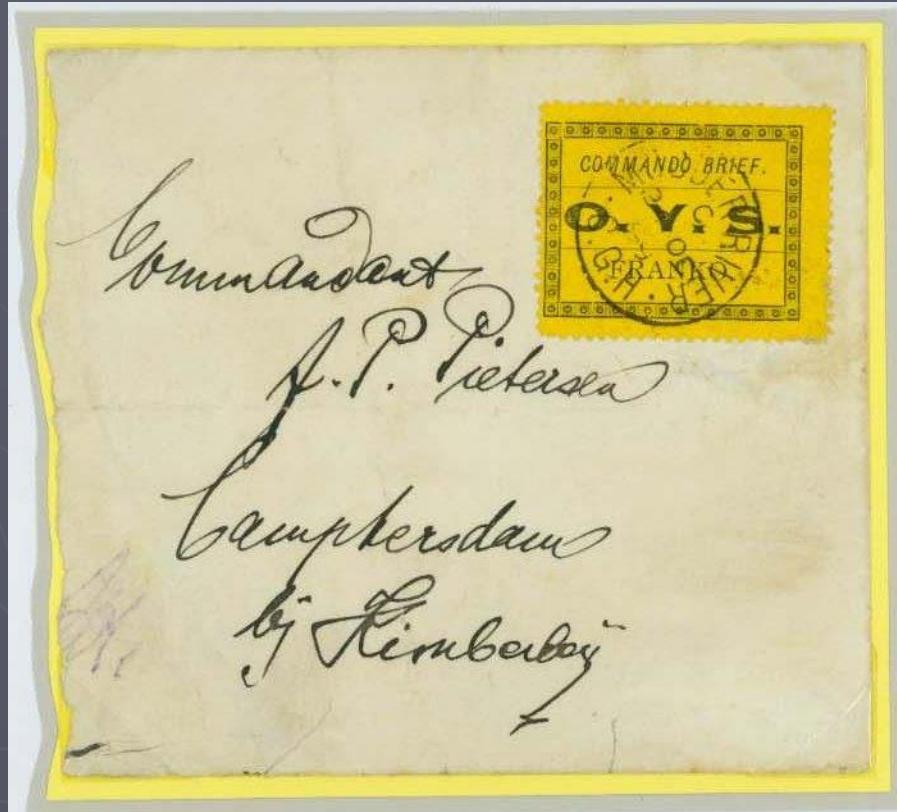
- ▶ Peace-time chemist A.F. Hochapfel was appointed Field PO Commander
- ▶ Printed a label for free frank privileges so commanders did not have to initial letters
- ▶ About 10,000 printed but much scarcer than that and about 115 or so covers exist.
- ▶ Used until fall of Kroonstad in May 1900

Commando Brief Franks



Form of 5 different printed in sheet of 20, 5x4 with gum by Hochapfl

Commando Brief Franks



Early use during siege of Kimberley. Modder River on border to Commandant Pietersen at Campersdam near Kimberley.

Commando Brief Franks



Latest recorded use 13 Ap 1900 from town to Kroonstad telegraphs on RR

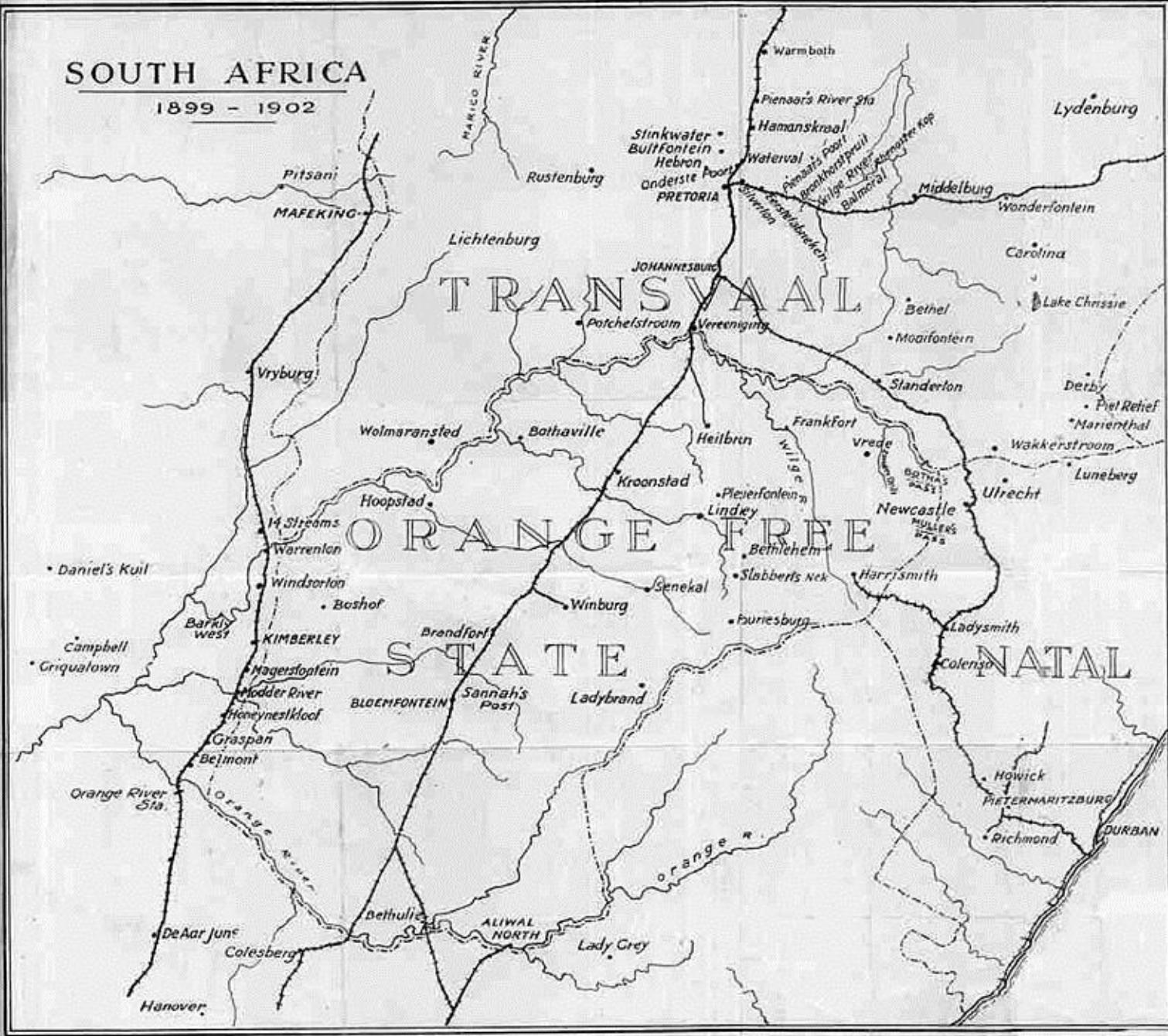
Clouds of War



Last ditch effort by President Steyn to reach a compromise between Pres. Paul Kruger and High Commissioner Alfred Milner on the Uitlander problem. Began 30 May and ended in failure 5 June 1899. Ultimatums followed.

SOUTH AFRICA

1899 - 1902



Invading Commandos

- ▶ October 11 1899, commandos from ZAR/OVS invaded the Cape & Natal
- ▶ 9000 Free Staters invaded the W/N Cape
- ▶ 6000 Free Staters invaded Natal
- ▶ About 23,000 Transvaalers were involved in the invasion, mostly into Natal.

Invading Commandos

Invading Free Staters crossed the two bridges into the Cape at Bethulie and Norvals Pont to capture the railway towns south of the Orange River.



Invading Commandos



Examples of captured cancels

Invading Commandos



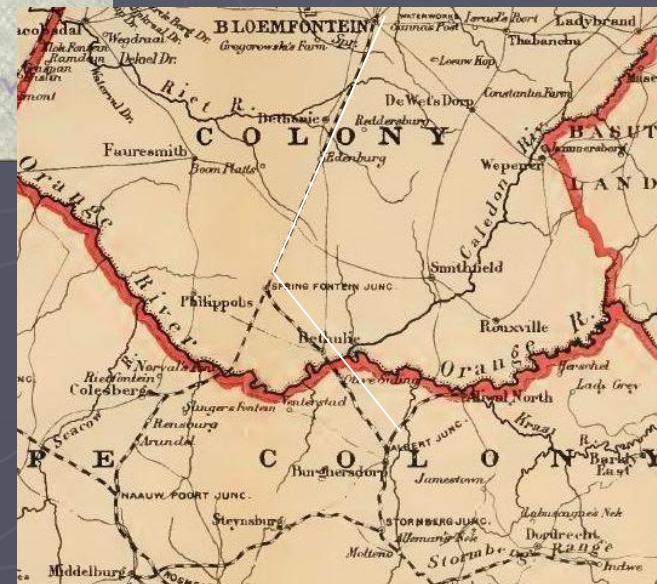
Government pass for an OVSS employee to have free access issued on the day prior to hostilities. Special Government seal applied.

Invading Commandos

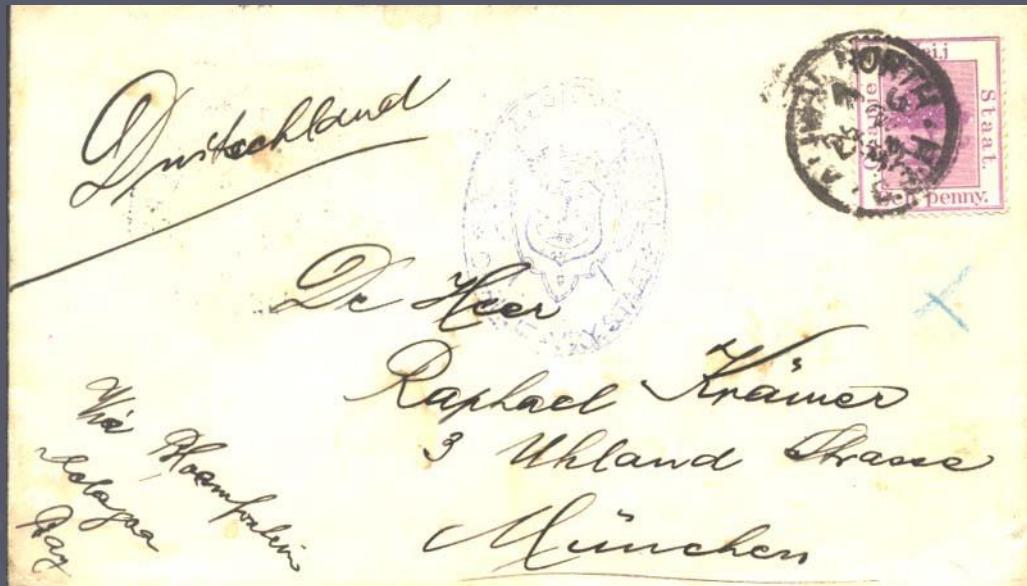


Rare example (3 known) of Resinde Post Kantoor (RPK) Noord cancel from Burgersdorp to Bloemfontein

Having taken over the TPO system from the ZAR earlier, OVS ran the system from late 1899 into early 1900.



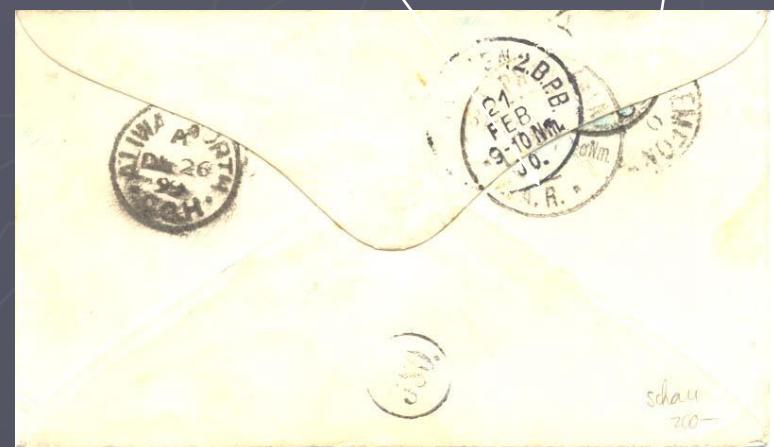
Invading Commandos



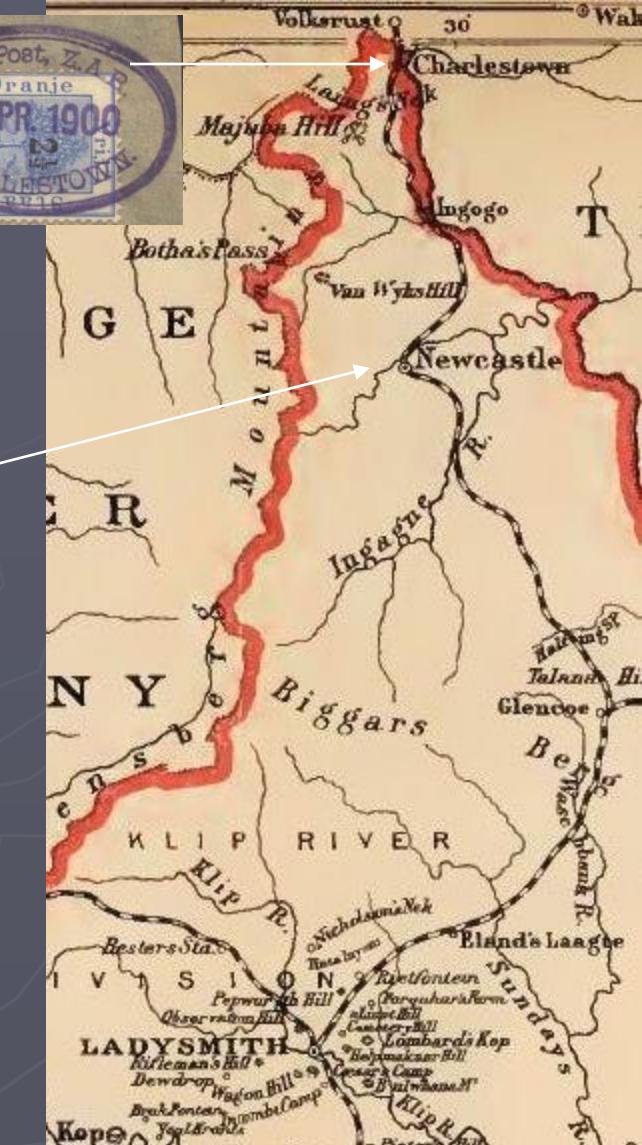
Commercial printed matter sent to Germany
from Aliwal North in December at 1d rate.
Note blue

Bloemfontein transit

Pretoria transit



Invading Commandos



Boers reached Charleston 13 Oct and Newcastle 15 Oct until 18 May and 12 June (Charleston). Numerous cancellers were used this being 16th out of 17 different cancels for Newcastle and 7 of 8 for Charleston. Both are late examples.

Mail and Censorship 1899-1900

- ▶ No formal censorship set up at beginning of war, only simple blue pencil marks if any
- ▶ Circular PMG cachet used short time
- ▶ Oval PMG commonly used on revenue docs used in blue, black, purple
- ▶ Fall of Bloemfontein, capital moves to Kroonstad, Heilbron and Harrismith

Mail and Censorship 1899-1900



Much mail was stopped due to messages on cards or in letters. This going to Durban was "Stopped by Censor/Return to Sender". RLO Durban

Mail and Censorship 1899-1900



Very early censorship at Bloemfontein was denoted by a blue pencil mark over the upper left corner. Supplanted by the PMG circular cachet in October.

2½d for letter and 1d for postal card in effect, assuming UPU rates.



Mail and Censorship 1899-1900



Beginning late October to November, old double-edged, double circle cachet "Kantoor van den Postmeester Generaal O.V. Staat" in blue as censor seal

Reverting back to non-UPU rate card to Germany 1½d and non-South African convention rate of 1d for card to Cape, postage due



Mail and Censorship 1899-1900



From late November through February the oval PMG cancel from the head office was used as a censor marking until the fall in March



Mail and Censorship 1899-1900



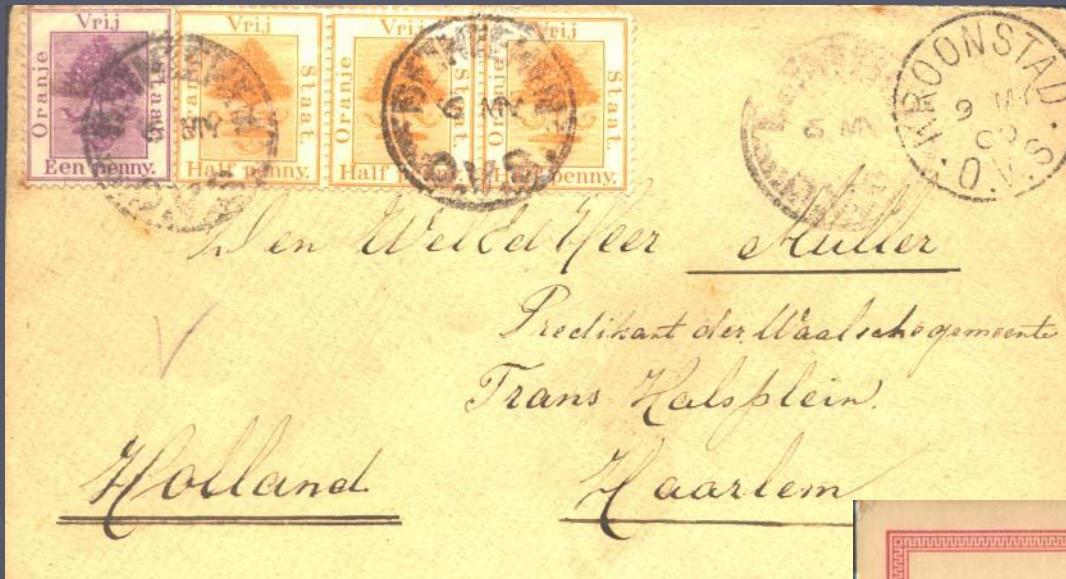
Prior to fall of Bloemfontein,
mail went there, censored and
by train to Pretoria and LM, and
ultimately via neutral ship to its
destination.

Mail and Censorship 1899-1900



Close ties to Europe existed between the Boer States. German consulate maintained offices in both Bloemfontein and Pretoria.

Mail and Censorship 1899-1900

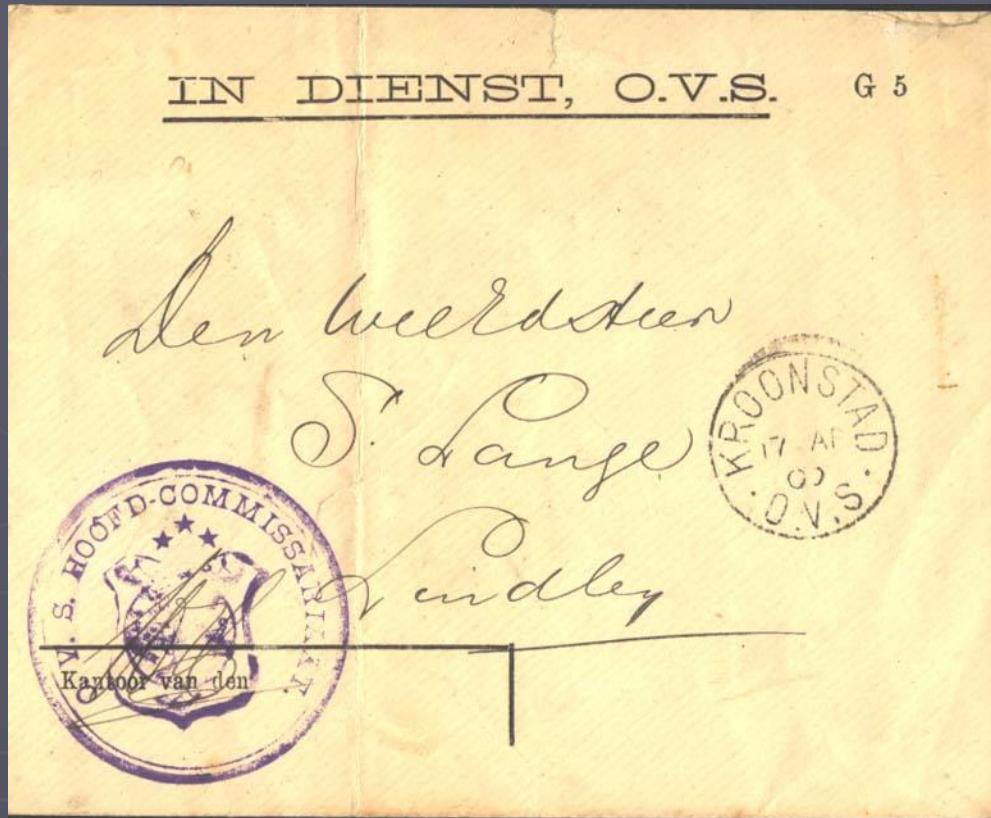


Examples of normal mail movement in Eastern OVS. Taken north to go through Pretoria, mostly without censor markings.

Lord Roberts entered Bloem 13 Mar causing the capital to move to Kroonstad

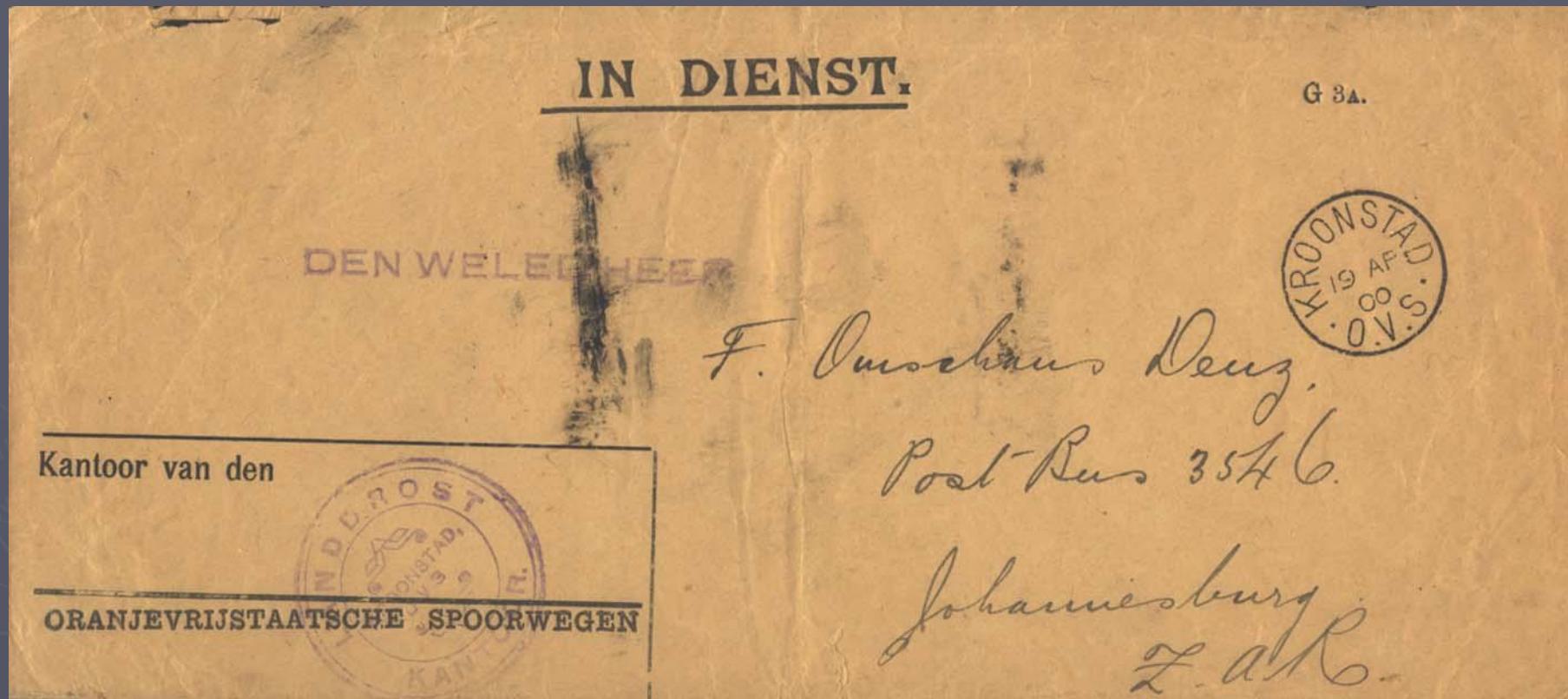


Mail and Censorship 1899-1900



Official mail from new capital to Lindley just SE of Kroonstad. Official cachet of the Hoofdlager commandant signifying free franking.

Mail and Censorship 1899-1900



Official OVSS stationery from Kroonstad to Johannesburg 19 Ap with free frank
cachet of the Landrost Kantoor (official office) Kroonstad

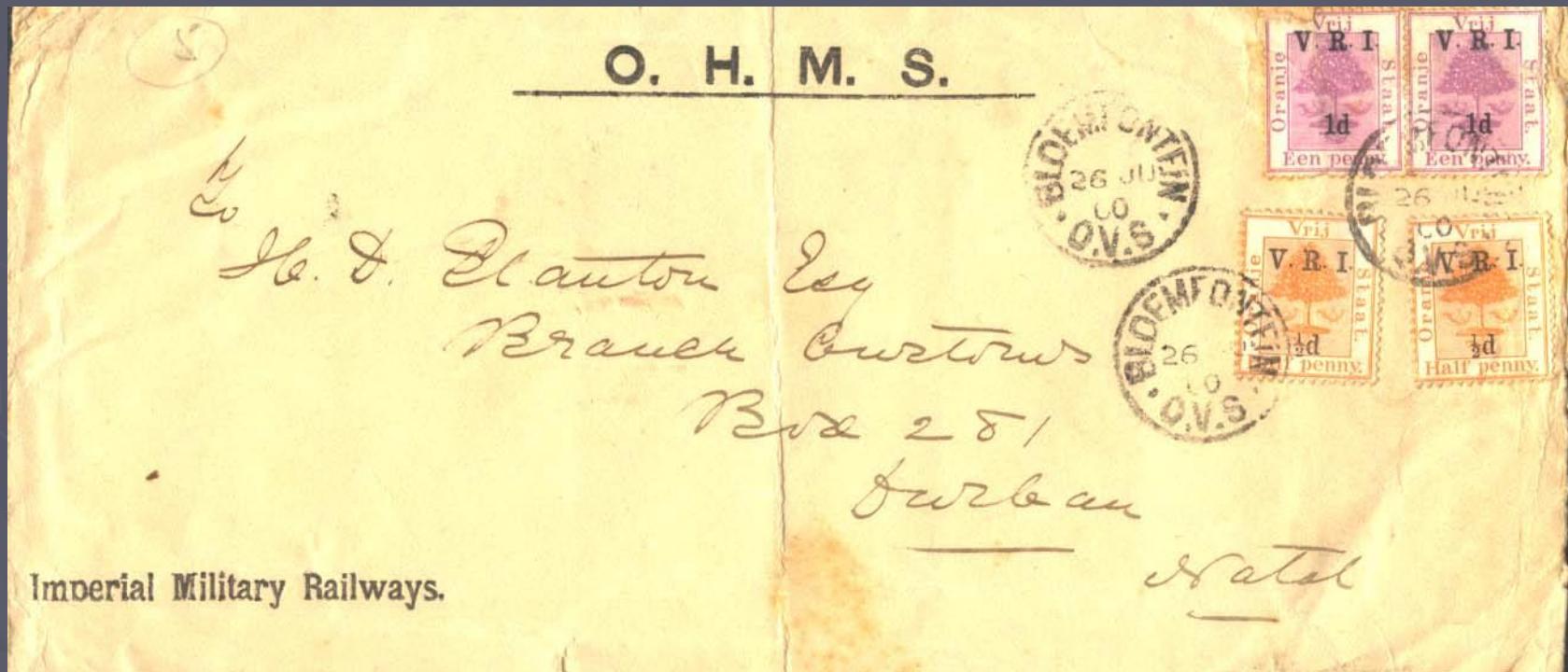
Mail and Censorship 1899-1900



Kroonstad fell to the British 12 May. Capital moved to Heilbron and then Harrismith. Mail still made it out of SA though slowly.

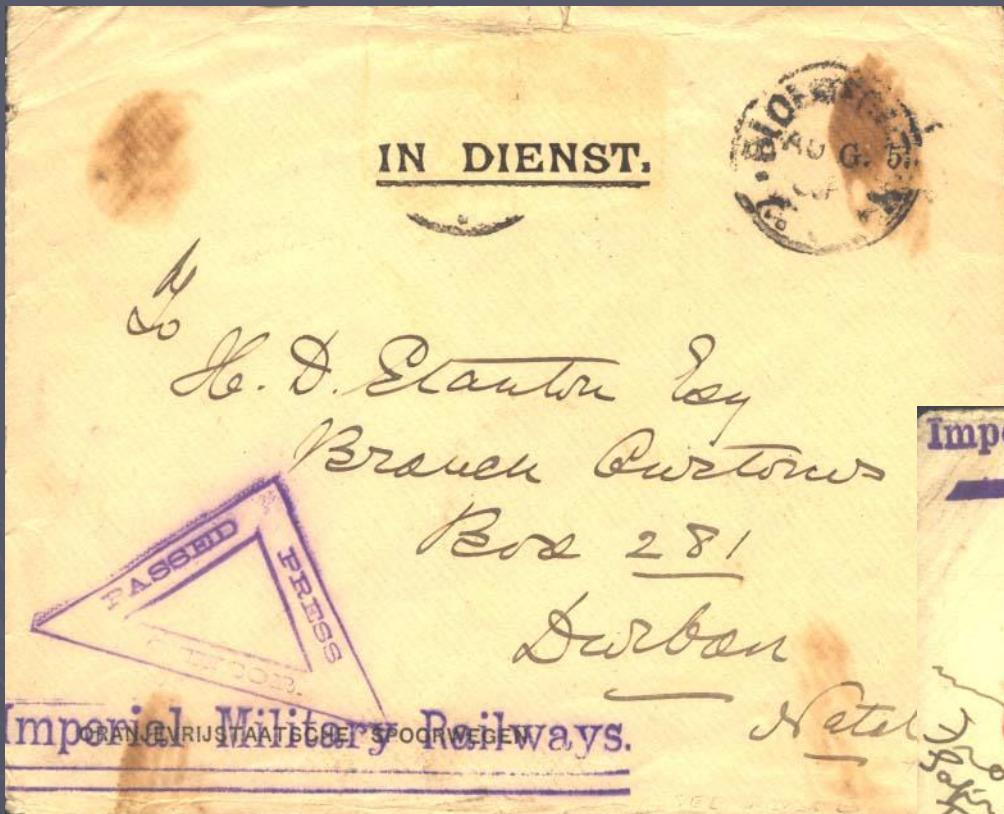


Epilogue



With the advance of Lord Roberts, most of the Free State came under the control of the British, particularly the railway system, IMR. Official envelop paying triple rate to Durban. Note OVS still in cancel.

Epilogue



Guerilla activities continued until the peace treaty was signed May 31 1902

Activities of the Commandos did not cease but consolidation of the RR system was maintained by series of block houses. Note OVS removed from cancel

