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THE STAMPS OF NATAL.

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I HAVE experienced great difficulty in gathering information regarding the stamps of Natal, as I found that very few papers had preceded mine and there were few authorities to refer. I have, nevertheless, done my best to give a detailed description of the postage stamps from the first to the last issues.

Before describing the various issues I wish to point out a few facts in connection with the early postal days of Natal, and the progress that has been made in the method of dealing with and conveying the mails from the first mail service to the present day.

About 1850, prior to the use of postage stamps the only two towns of Natal were Pietermaritzburg and Durban. The population of both being small, there was very little correspondence and on the arrival of a sailing vessel from England with the mails, which only took place once in about three or four months, the Postmaster at Durban, whose name was known in early days as "Indigo Wilson," took over the mails and despatched the Mantzburg portion from Durban by native carriers. There were three changes along the road. The first carrier would convey the mails to a stopping place about twenty miles distant, and hand the mail over to a second carrier who would convey them to a second stopping about the same distance off, and transfer to a

third native, who delivered them at their destination; the whole journey being covered within twenty-four hours.

The sailing vessels on leaving would take a return mail with them, occasionally touching at India or Mauritius for trading purposes; consequently, it was often from nine to twelve months before a reply was received from England. See what a great change has taken place within the last forty years, for instead of only receiving letters once in every three or four months, a mail is received and despatched regularly every week. The letters between Pietermaritzburg and Durban were forwarded by native carriers in the same way as the foreign letters.

This method of conveying mails continued for a number of years, until a person of the name of John Welch started a postcart, since when the mail service has gradually become more regular. At first these postcarts I believe ran but once a week, but as the population at both these towns increased, the postcarts ran every day from each town and continued to do so until 1880, when a railway was constructed.

Since the completion of this railway the postal department has greatly improved and at the present time three mails are delivered daily at both Pietermaritzburg and Durban, as well as a mail in every place at Natal.

I will now turn back and point out the method by which letters intended for delivery from one place to another were paid for before the use of postage stamps.