Despite earlier exploitation, South Georgia remained uninhabited, but proved useful to Antarctic Expeditions, the Swedish no exception. Their ship, SY Antarctic, visited the island 22 April - 15 June 1902 enabling Captain CA Larsen to explore Cumberland Bay. During his stay, Larsen selected the location for his future whaling station.

1902 (12 July) - From Stanley, FI to Sweden - a very early South Georgia related Postcard

Sent by CA Larsen, when he arrived at Stanley on 11 July with SY Antarctic ex Antarctica, via South Georgia. He wrote to Anna, mother of Dr Otto Nordenskjöld, Expedition Leader, who was then over-wintering at their Snow Hill Antarctic base. The card with SY Antarctic oval marking; cancelled 20 July 1902, and four Stockholm arrival strikes, 22-23.8.02.

The photo-card, made on board, showing Nordenskjöld unloading the lifeboat on the beach on 12 February, reads: “18/7 1902 Dear Mrs Colonel, I herewith send you greetings from the winter base as your son, who is bent over the boat, goes ashore on Snow Hill Island. Here at the winter base there is some ice along the beach and rich fossil mountains in the background. I hope to see my friends as happy and satisfied in December as when they went ashore. Sincerely CA Larsen”

Postcard - South Georgia pitching the tent in Cumberland Bay, 28 May 1902

Wharton CI-1 Published in 1902 when the Expedition returned to Stanley
With the Expedition returned to Sweden, Carl Anton Larsen set off on 17 September 1904 for South Georgia via Argentina to execute his ambitious Antarctic whaling project centred on a whale oil refining factory to be built at Grytviken with Norwegian technology and skilled Norwegian labour. Argentina provided the risk capital.

**1904 (1 November) POSTCARD - From CA Larsen, Buenos Aires, Argentina to Norway**

Addressed to “High-borne Colonel Fru A Nordenskjöld” the message congratulated her on her son’s engagement to Karen Berg, from Iceland. [Otto Nordenskjöld wanted the announcement to be delayed until after his return from Antarctica.] Carl Anton Larsen sent this hand written card headed “1/11 1904 Buenos Aires”. He had arrived on 28 October 1904 aboard *Fortuna*, his new whale catcher, *en route* to South Georgia where he intended to construct and operatePesca’s new whaling station. He departed on 3 November 1904.

Postcard front scanned at 60% size

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Map of South Atlantic showing locations of Buenos Aires and South Georgia, red circled.
Before the Grytviken Post Office opened in early December 1909, inward mail for South Georgia was routed via Argentina. Mail would be addressed either to a consulate or company in Buenos Aires from where it was collected by whalers for transhipment to South Georgia and local distribution amongst the whaling community.

**1905 (10 October) - Postcard from Norway routed via Buenos Aires, Argentina**

Addressed to Signe Larsen, Carl A Larsen’s daughter, for onward despatch from the President of Pesca, Hr H(erman) Schlieper, in Buenos Aires, to the company’s whaling station at Grytviken, South Georgia, where the Larsens resided, since arrival November 1904 to build the first whaling station there. One of the EARLIEST KNOWN mail items linked with South Georgia sent 4 years prior postal services began.

**1907 (28 October) - Postcard from Norway routed via Norwegian Consulate, Argentina**

Wishing Signe Larsen Happy Christmas on South Georgia, directed via Pesca transport ship *Cachalote*, (c/o) Norwegian Consulate, Buenos Aires. The blue “A” indicated dock A where *Cachalote* would moor mid way on a round trip from South Georgia (having left on 10.12.07)
During 1911, London, Postmaster General and Christiania, Norwegian Post Office, corresppond on the routing of Norwegian mail to South Georgia and agree despatch alternate Tuesdays via London for onward shipment to Buenos Aires by Royal Mail Steam Packet Copany from Southampton, leaving on the following Friady.

1908 (29 September) - Cover to Hans Wold, CA Larsen’s Secretary, sent from Kristiania to Buenos Aires

Direct to Argentina, forwarded by Pesca offices, central Buenos Aires, arrival datestamp OCT 24 1906, to their whaling station, South Georgia where Hans Wold worked until 1914, since arriving with the Larsens in 1904.

1911 (18 April) - Cover to Hans Wold sent to South Georgia with SG 1 arrival datestamp July 12, 1911

Within two years after the opening of Grytviken PO, mail from Norway was routed via London. Long letter, headed Kristiania, 17 April 1911, enclosed written by the Mother of Hans Wold.
Grytviken Post Office opened in December 1909 without a full set of equipment and stocks. Critically short of the ‘South Georgia’ type SG1 datestamp, the work-around was to apply Falkland Islands datestamp F.4D jointly with the first ‘SOUTH GEORGIA’ handstamp pending receipt of a UPU-compliant ‘South Georgia’ purpose made datestamp.

**HUSVIK WHALING STATION**

Arriving with the floating factory ship FF (Floating Factory) Bucentaur, Søren Berntsen established the on-shore ‘Husvik’ whaling station at Husvik Harbour in 1910, and became its first Manager. The station operated until the 1930s and was eventually sold to Albion Star in 1960.

**1910 (January 31) - Postcard from Husvik whaling station to Norway, sent second mail**

From Søren Berntsen to his wife at home in Norway; dated 30/1/10 sent at UPU postcard rate 1d (1898-1921) with large ‘SOUTH GEORGIA’ handstamp & Stanley F.4D datestamp, JY 31 10 [note ‘JY’ for January].

Second mail, one bag for London, carried by SS Cachalote, departing 17 February 1910 to Buenos Aires for onward shipment therefrom to Europe.

There are very few covers or postcards known with this rare combination of markings
Still waiting the ‘South Georgia’ purpose made datestamp, a second ‘South Georgia’ handstamp was deployed, earliest known date 17 February 1910. It replaced the first. Used jointly as before; this pairing continued until 25 May 1910. The Postmaster reported receipt of SG1 on 23 June, brought by Cachalote inbound with mail from Buenos Aires. This delivery, despatched from London, foretold the ending of the era of provisional handstamp being used jointly with a Falkland datestamp. Grytviken PO was now set up to operate in the way

1910 (May 23) - Cover to Stanley, routed via New Island sent sixth mail

Sent at Universal Empire 1d rate, with small South Georgia handstamp & Stanley F.4D datestamp, MY 23 10. Vere Packe took over Packe Brothers, sheep farmers on West Falkland, in 1895 and ran it until 1934 when he sold out and retired to England.
On 30 June 1910, the Postmaster reported by letter (now held in the Scott Polar Research Institute, Cambridge) to the Colonial Postmaster, Stanley that he had received on ‘23 instant’ two parcels containing ‘Postal Stores’ released from Customs, Buenos Aires and onward transported by SS Cachalote.

The content of the parcels included one ‘Post Office Seal’, South Georgia’s first ‘Date stamp’ and ‘Box of Type’, known as SG1 (first recorded in use on 27 June 1910 with a strike of 27 JU 10) plus 2 ‘Registered Letter Receipt Books’, ‘Registered Letter Tickets’ (registration labels), Quantity 2,000’, and Quantity 2 ‘Stamp-inking Pads’. The parcels were dated ‘from London, 20 January 1910’.

1910 (26 June) - Postcard to Sweden at 1d rate tied by SOUTH GEORGIA handstamp & cancelled SG1

Postmarked “JU 27 10”- this is the EARLIEST RECORDED DATE.

The seventh mail was taken by SS Cachalote on 5 July 1910 bound for Buenos Aires
The mail comprised one bag for London, one for the Falkland Islands and one for Buenos Aires.

This postcard correctly franked with 1d KEVII tied by SG1 datestamp in combination with a strike of the large ‘SOUTH GEORGIA’ imprint is unique
1 Pioneering Era | 1.5 : FIRST SOUTH GEORGIA DATESTAMP

Once ‘SG1’ the first ‘South Georgia’ datestamp, entered service, the use of both South Georgia handstamps became unnecessary, and the Falkland Islands datestamp F.4D was returned to Stanley for further duty.

Postcard 1d Empire rate January 1892 ~ 31 December 1921.

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PESCA WHALING STATION, GRYTVIKEN, CUMBERLAND BAY

1912 (April 19) - Postcard to Norway, datestamp SG1
From Mrs Carl Anton Larsen, mother to daughter, Signe & son-in-law, Architect Kielland in Norway sent at UPU postcard 1d rate, SG1 datestamp; mail taken that day by SS Harpon to Buenos Aires

Kielland was the Architect of the Whalers Church sent in kit form for assembly at Grytviken, consecrated Xmas, 1913

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SALVESEN WHALING STATION, LEITH HARBOUR

1911 (September 1) - Postcard to Drøbak, Norway, with message headed "Leith Harbour/30-8-1911"
Franked at 1d rate, tied by double strike of datestamp SG1; with 8 X 11 Drøbak arrival datestamp
The combined British and Falkland Islands Administration established itself in a settlement at Kind Edward Point, remote from Grytviken station across the Bay, housing post office, customs, police, legal and other staff.

**KING EDWARD POINT, CUMBERLAND BAY**

British whaling management policy was to regulate whaling on a long-term strategy, introducing legislation and a tax regime in an endeavour to create a sustainable industry. Customs/Whaling Officers on board factory ships were the front line enforcers.

1913 (December 11) - ‘Christmas’ Postcard at 1d rate datestamped SG1, DE 11 13 to Stanley

From Albert Newing, Customs Officer based at King Edward Point, taken the next day, 14 December by Pesca’s transport ship SS Harpon 1 to Buenos Aires with onward shipment wherefrom to Stanley

Albert Newing (1891 - 1957), a Falkland Islander, was first appointed as a Whaling Officer for the 1910 – 11 season on the FF Sobraon, operating in South Orkneys extracting oil from worked, flensed, whale carcasses abandoned by other expeditions. His report prompted the FI Governor Allardyce to strengthen regulations to reduce waste. He then became Customs Officer at South Georgia for three seasons, 1913 to 1916.
South Georgia mail rates adopted those set in Stanley and remained very stable throughout the King Edward VII era. Those set in 1898 continued with some beneficial weight adjustments in 1907. The labour force was largely Norwegian resulting in 2½d stamp, for the UPU / foreign letter rate, having the highest sales numbers.

**UPU MAIL**

*UPU Letter 2½d rate 25 December 1898 ~ 31 December 1921*

1910 (August 16) Cover - sent to Kristiania [now Oslo] at UPU 2½d rate, tied by datestamp SG1

![Image of cover with datestamp](image)

Taken by SS *Cachalote* to Buenos Aires, departing with the tenth mail later that same day. Norwegian arrival Kristiania datestamp, 26 IX 10 on reverse.

The tenth mail comprised 313 ordinary letters and 23 registered letters and 87 postcards.

A very early cover correctly datestamped by the delayed UPU-compliant ‘South Georgia’ canceller.
SG Postmaster received Registered Letter Receipt Books and labels (2,000 off in sheets of 250) in the ‘Postal Stores’ delivery on 30 June 1910. The seventh mail, despatched 5 July 1910 per Cachalote, was the first for which Registered Services were offered. JI Wilson’s annual return stated 39 registered letters were processed.

**REGISTERED MAIL**

*2d Registration fee introduced by Grytviken Post Office, June 1910*

In a letter, No.25/1910, dated 1st July 1910, JIW reports to the Hon. Colonial Secretary, Falkland Islands that

>“3. Notices have been sent to the whaling stations to the effect that letters can now be registered here.”

**1910 (July 4) Cover- to Louis Williams, Port Stanley, datestamped SG1**

Registered with first South Georgia registration label, type SG1

The seventh mail comprised 509 ordinary letters and 39 registered letters plus 115 postcards

SS Cachalote departed next day, 5 July 1910, bound for Buenos Aires

One of the earliest registered covers, posted on the earliest known date for registered mail, from South Georgia.
1 Pioneering Era

1.5 : FIRST SOUTH GEORGIA DATESTAMP

The first South Georgia registration label, reference SG1, lasted for some four years to 1914. The next, SG2 with different wording, was first seen in 1913. Both stocks appear to have been exhausted by the end of 1914.

1912 (June 29) Registered Cover - to Liverpool at 3d Empire registered (label type SG1) rate

Overseas mail taken by SS Cachalote, departing 30 June to Argentina

1913 (February 4) Cover - datestamp SG1 to England at 3d Empire registered (label type SG1) rate

Taken by SS Bylgia outbound 6 February for Buenos Aires; Kempston arrival marking, MR 12 13
New Island Post Office, in operation 29 July 1909 - 25 July 1917, was set up to offer postal services to whalers working at Salvesen’s New Island whaling factory. The venture fell short of its target. From 1915 the factory was dismantled for relocation to Leith Harbour, South Georgia. Salvesen ships plied between company sites.

**NEW ISLAND** located within the Falkland archipelago off the west coast of West Falkland.

**1912 (2 November) Postcard - South Georgia to Buenos Aires routed via New Island**

Photo-postcard headed ‘South Georgia, 2.xi.1912’ taken by Salvesen’s whale catcher *Sonja* that day arriving New Island, 8 November was datestamped by New Island N.2 cds on 15 November, routed for onward shipment to BA.

Unique example of mail from South Georgia being cancelled at New Island en route to Argentina

**1911 (November 22) ‘RMS Columbus’ Photo-Postcard - from New Island to South Georgia**

Postcard headed “New, 21/11-1911” to Edward B Binnie, Acting Postmaster. Salvesen’s new FF *Neko* arrived on 2 December at New Island *en route* to South Shetlands 7 December to begin, belatedly, her first whaling season. [RMS *Columbus* carried much of the internal mail to & from New Island and elsewhere within the Falklands archipelago.]

Unique example of mail between whaling stations, New Island to South Georgia
Between October 1911 and February 1912, Grytviken Post Office suffered with shortages of low value stamps, exacerbated by the extended visit of the German South Polar Expedition [GSPE] but resolved by Deputy Postmaster Edward Beveridge Binnie. He assembled a small ‘Paid at SOUTH GEORGIA’ handstamp to indicate pre-payment of postage, with the rate and authorising Postmasters’ initials added by hand.

1911 Cover [Osborne F2] with two strikes of datestamp SG1, 31 NO 11 and 1 NO 11

‘31 NO 11’ seen as erroneous, so second correcting strike applied; believed to be the last day of use of handstamp SH 1A in its first state with lower case ‘a’ in ‘at’. Cover taken by SS Cachalote, Pesca’s transport ship, leaving for Buenos Aires on 12 November 1911 with a cargo of whale oil, sperm oil, guano and mail

At Framnæs shipyard, Sandefjord, many generations of whale catchers were built and maintained

BISECTED King Edward VII 2½d

In an endeavour to stretch his rapidly diminishing stamp stock, recently received, to meet unforeseen demands for 1d stamps caused by GSPE’s final mail, significantly larger with numerous expedition postcards, Deputy Postmaster Binnie wrote saying he had been ‘reduced to bisecting’…

This is the only known surviving bisect; tied by SG.1 DE 16 11 cds to piece, cut from a GSPE postcard
1 Pioneering Era

1.7: ‘PAID at SOUTH GEORGIA’ PROVISIONALS

The handstamp initialled by EBB has been recorded from October 1911 to 2 January 1912, with the second state, capital A in ‘At’, seen from 16 December 1911. In Germany, but not by all post offices, Postage Due was charged, clearly not accepting that pre-payment of postage had been charged and correctly paid.

Postcards at 1d UPU rate

1911 (11 November) Postcard [Osborne J.4] datestamped SG1 to Sweden

Handstamp SH 1A [with lower case ‘at’ & initialled by ‘EBB’]
Cover taken by SS Cachalote, Pesca’s transport ship, leaving for Buenos Aires the next day

1911 (December 16) Postcard [Osborne N.11] datestamp SG1 plus German ‘Porto’ [Unpaid] - thus Taxed*

Handstamp SH 1B [with upper case A in ‘At’ & initialled by ‘EBB’]
Sender GSPE Deutschland’s Doctor Dr Ludwig Kohl, who after appendix operation left the expedition on 11.12.1911 and later married one of Larsen’s daughters. Postcard taken by SS Harpon on 20.12 11 to Argentina

* One of only four known Taxed GSPE postcards
1 Pioneering Era

1.7: ‘PAID at SOUTH GEORGIA’ PROVISIONALS

Whaling covers at the 2½d UPU rate. Husvik opened - 24 December 1907; New Fortuna Bay - 10 October 1909

1911 (31 October) Cover [Osborne E.4] datestamp SG1; Handstamp SH 1A, sent from Husvik Harbour

Oscar Hytten, a ship owner, was a founding owner of A/s Tønsbergs Hvalfangere, Husvik Land Station

1911 (December 16) Cover [Osborne N.10] datestamp SG1 Handstamp SH 1B, sent from New Fortuna Bay

Received 26 1 1912. Tjølling was the birth village of Carl Anton Larsen

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4 January was the first outgoing mail of 1912 and the last to be dispatched by Edward Binnie, as he approached the end of his temporary Deputy Postmaster appointment. Only one cover to England at the 1d letter rate is known with the provisional ‘Paid At’ marking.

Cover at Empire 1d rate

1912 (2 January) Cover [Osborne R.3] at 1d Empire rate, datestamp SG1

Handstamp SH 1B [with upper case ‘A’ in ‘At’ & initialled by ‘EBB’]
Taken by SS Cachalote outbound 4 January 1912 for Argentina
Arrival marking, North Shields, FE 6 12, on reverse

The only known “Paid At” cover to England sent at 1d Empire rate
Postmaster JI Wilson resumed his duties early February 1912, relieving his Deputy, and used the handstamp, now in its second state. Wilson inserted his own initials JIW, so creating the third version of the handstamp.

1912 (February 14) Cover [Osborne T.6] addressed to Herr Albert Böe in Larvik at 2½d UPU letter rate

Handstamp SH 1C [with upper case ‘A’ in ‘At’ & initialled by ‘JIW’] overstruck with SG1 datestamp, FE 14 12

Lauritz E Larsen, brother of CA Larsen, was the Manager of the shore station at New Fortuna Bay where Hvalfangerselskap Ocean operated, 1909-20. Carried by SS Harpon, on her fourth voyage bound for Buenos Aires, departing Grytviken on 15 February 1912 with Larvik, 26 3 1912 arrival marking

Albert Böe (1860-1935) was one of the most prosperous merchants in Larvik, he owned the ironmonger store through which he was a large supplier to whaling stations and whaling ships.

The current ‘Paid at/At’ archive records just 14 items signed by JI Wilson, with the other 54 by EB Binnie.
1912 Cover [Osborne T.3] unsealed at 1d UPU Printed Matter, double rate, datestamp SG1, FE 14 12

Handstamp SH 1C [with upper case ‘A’ in ‘At’ & initialled by ‘JIW’]

On her fourth voyage SS *Harpon*, bound for Buenos Aires, left Grytviken on 15 February 1912 laden with 6,140 barrels of whale oil, 5 tons of guano and carried the mail

J. P. Scheitlie, the addressee of the above cover made several unsuccessful licence applications to the FI Government in 1912 ‘to utilise the bones and old carcasses of whales in the harbours of South Georgia’.

The only known “Paid At” 1d rate cover signed by SG Postmaster JI Wilson
1 Pioneering Era

1.8: GERMAN SOUTH POLAR EXPEDITION

Wilhelm Filchner, Leader of GSPE [German South Polar Expedition] arrived on Deutschland on 21 October 1911 to refuel with Cardiff coal en route to Antarctica and left on 11 December 1911. Their demand for stamps were considerable, especially for postcards, sales of which plus Expedition vignettes, both helped fund the expedition.

Expedition Postcards sent at 1d UPU rate

1911 Postcard dated 10/XII/1911 - to Godhavn Meteorological Station, Greenland

From Expedition Officer Felix König; GSPE Vignette tied by Expedition's four-line cachet, dated 10 December 1911
Mail taken by SS Harpon (I) departing for Buenos Aires on 20 December 1911

1911 (December 16) Postcard, dated 4.XII.(19)11 - to Bremen, Germany

1d UPU rate; datestamp SG1, 16 DE 11 sent by Expedition Leader Wilhelm Filchner
GSPE vignette tied by Expedition’s four-line cachet, dated 30 November 1911, a rare marking
1 Pioneering Era

1.8 : GERMAN SOUTH POLAR EXPEDITION

After escaping the ice, Deutschland and Expedition home bound revisited South Georgia, 19 - 30 December 1912

Expedition registered mail sent at 4½d UPU registered rate

1911 (December 16) Cover - flap pre-printed ‘DEUTSCHE ANTARKTISCHE EXPEDITION’

½d over-franked for UPU registered (label type SG1) rate to famous far-east explorer Sven von Hedin in Stockholm from Leader W Filchner; datestamp SG1, DE 16 11; transit marked London, 21 JA 12

Expedition four-line cachet exhibits the ‘Grytvikeu’ flaw caused by the ‘n’ being inverted

1912 (December 27) Expedition Postcard - to Germany with 1d tied by SG1 datestamp, JA 7 13

1d UPU rate; datestamp SG1, JA 7 13; taken by SS Harpon (I) departing on 11 January 1913
It is possible that the sender had hoped that the ½d Printed Matter would be deemed an appropriate rate, but the Grytviken post office clearly decided otherwise.

The postcard, addressed to Señor Wold conveying “an invitation for afternoon coffee” has caught Post Office attention receiving a “T” in manuscript and struck with “Insuff. / Postage / 1d” marking to indicate it has been deemed under paid and taxed with a postage due charge of 1d, calculated at twice the deficiency (½d).

This is the only known surviving example of the use of this “Insufficient Postage” marking. It is very unlikely that this postcard left South Georgia before being collected by Hans Wold so the marking has to have been applied in Grytviken, and is therefore a South Georgia marking, one of the rarest.
Grytviken Post Office did not provide a postal service between the whaling stations on South Georgia. Very few examples are known, transported privately between harbours with whaling stations, on or off shore.

**HUSVIK TO LEITH HARBOUR**

Husvik Harbour to Leith Harbour, 5 May 1912 to Captain Johansen, Master of SS *Imberhorn*, delivered by his brother privately by small boat.