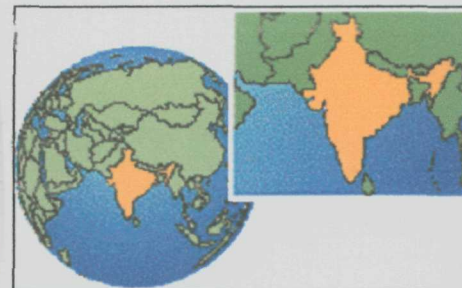




# THE EVOLUTION OF SLAVE ISLAND, CEYLON



Map showing Ceylon, now Sri Lanka, located just below India.

## Postmarks of Slave Island AND ITS POSTMARKS



Victorian Postmarks



Edwardian Postmarks



George V Postmarks



George VI Postmarks



Elizabeth II Postmark

### Exhibit & Scope

A display exhibit of Slave Island, Ceylon and its postmarks showing the evolution of the town through its mail.

### Background

The town of Slave Island is located just a mile outside of Colombo, the capital of the country now named Sri Lanka. Slave Island seems like an unlikely town name, particularly in this modern age. But that is the postmark used by a branch of the Colombo General Post Office for over 110 years.

From a start in 1880 when rail reached Slave Island, the post office remained sufficiently vital to the overall postal scheme that the branch exists to the present day. The post office name of Slave Island remained until 1994, when a Sinhalese language name replaced it officially. In conversational use, the location name is still Slave Island, it is a neighborhood within the city of Colombo today.

### Exhibit Plan

A. Pre-Stamp Mail	F1 P1
B. Victorian Slave Island	F1 P7
C. Edward VII Slave Island	F3 P4
D. George V Slave Island	F4 P2
E. George VI Slave Island	F4 P13
F. Elizabeth II & Independence	F5 P9

### Highlights

- ◆ Earliest known Slave Island-directed cover: 1860 and predating the post office
- ◆ Earliest and Latest recorded uses of Slave Island postmarks
- ◆ Ending uses: postmark changed and Slave Island Registry label remaining

### Why the Name?

"Slave Island" derives its name from when the Portuguese brought Kaffir tribesmen from east Africa to Ceylon in the 1600s. Portuguese, and later Dutch, rule lasted for 300 years, during which slaves were plantation labor.

After a rebellion, the slaves were herded onto Slave Island, which is located within the capital city of Colombo. To prevent escape, *the waters were stocked with crocodiles*, the slaves were moved by boat to work.

The British abolished slavery in 1845, removed the crocodiles, and filled in portions of the lake. Slave Island was expanded for a military garrison and government buildings. Later business came in and tourist enjoyed the island.

### Format

Rarity is indicated by the items in **orange boxes**. Cancels details are on the headings left, social history on the right. Earliest and latest recording of use are in **green**. Research is in **green**. The exhibit is ordered chronologically by monarchical reign, postmarks within the reign by type, and ordered by local, domestic and foreign and special use.



# A. Pre-Stamp Mail Ceylon Slavery During Pre-British Rule

The **Portuguese** brought more than 1,500 East African “Kaffirs” to Ceylon as slaves around 1630.

During **Dutch** rule, 1650s - 1796, **Slave Island** housed over 4,000 African slaves.

## The price of a slave?

Often slaves were traded for just a few coins, horses cost more.



Ceylon native coins:

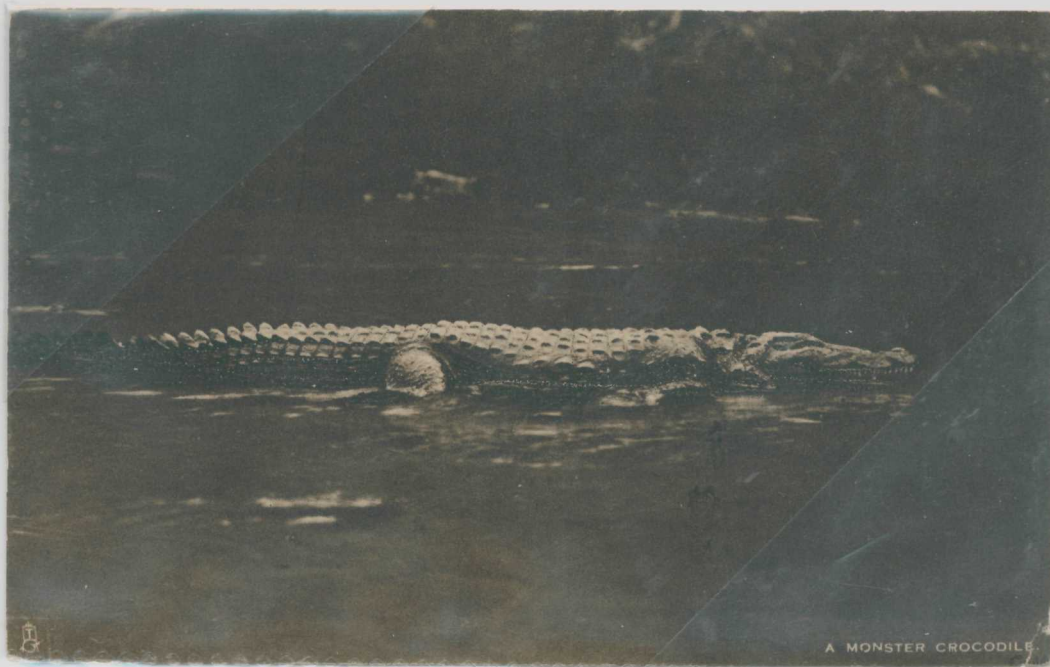
The Kahavanu “octopus man.” of 1600s. Later replaced by the Dutch Stuiver imprinted VCC.

**Alain Mallet's 1685**

*Description de L'Universe* →

Drawn while serving under the King of Portugal.

Portuguese “Isle Ceylan” located just below India. Shown on 1800s colorized map.



The Dutch stocked the waters with “**Monster Crocodiles**” to keep the slaves on the island by night.

Tucks Ceylon lithographed divided back post card.



# A. Pre-Stamp Mail

# Colombo Cancel for Slave Island

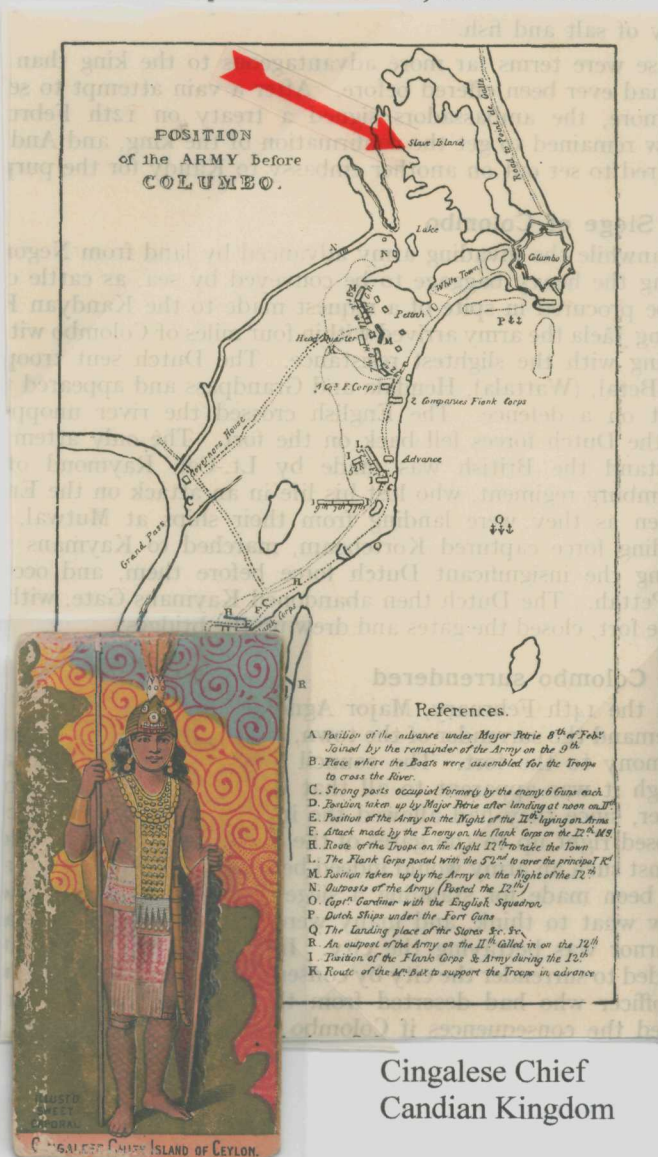
Colombo Crown Shield Post Free, Handstruck 1829

**Kornegalle, Ceylon**  
Interior Ceylon.  
**Colombo Post Free**  
front September 14,  
1829. Any Slave Island  
mail sent via Colombo  
post to Government  
Agent.

**Original 1814**  
**Map of Ceylon** ↓



## 1800s Map of Colombo, Slave Island



British control of Ceylon began in 1796, early settlement served passing ships. By 1820s, plantations expanded into the fertile interior of "Candian Ceylon" shown on map. **Slaves used on plantations island wide numbered 22,000 by 1817.**



## A. Pre-Stamp Mail

Ceylon became a British Crown Colony in 1815. British appointed James A. S. Mackenzie Governor of Ceylon. Mackenzie worked for years to abolish slavery in Ceylon.

**Governor Mackenzie abolished slavery in Ceylon,**  
but not until 1845.

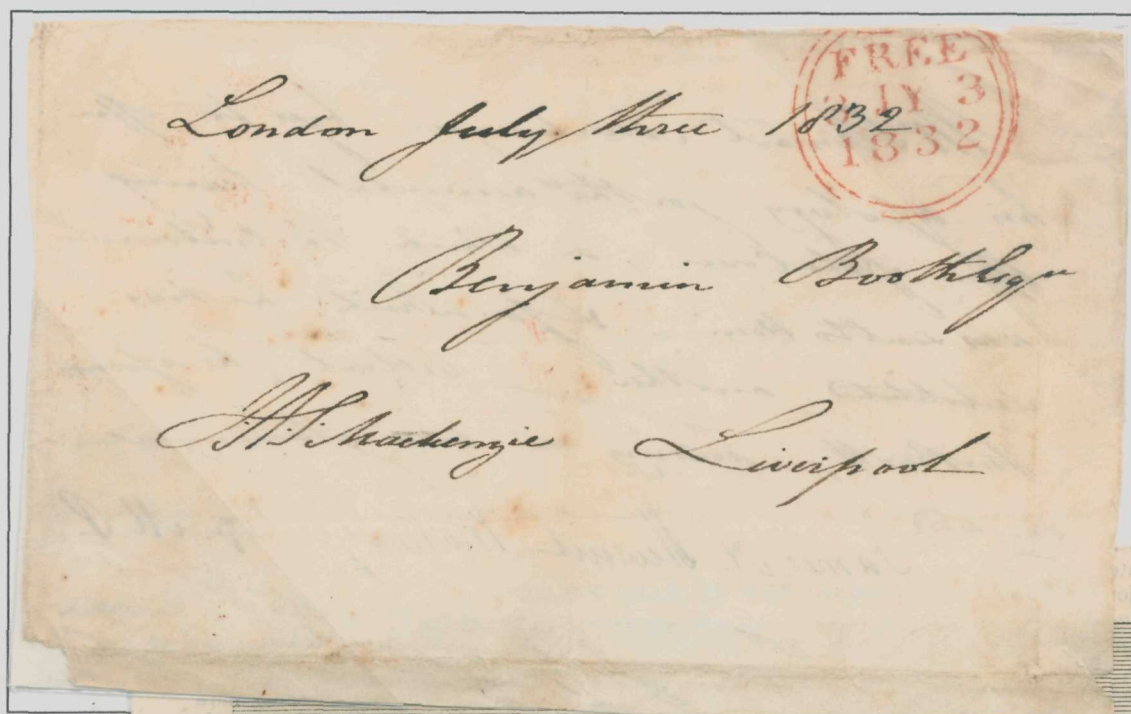
*James A. Stewart Mackenzie Esq.*

Mackenzie signature from reverse.

## British Abolish Slavery

*"Hence, let the eye a circuit take  
Were gently sloping to the lake,  
A smiling, lively scene appears,  
A verdant isle, its bosom rears,  
Have once, to all but int'rest blind,  
The Colonists their **slaves** confin'd;  
But now the name alone remains,  
Gone are the scourges, racks and chains!"*

—Ajax Anderson, "Wanderings in Ceylon" 1819

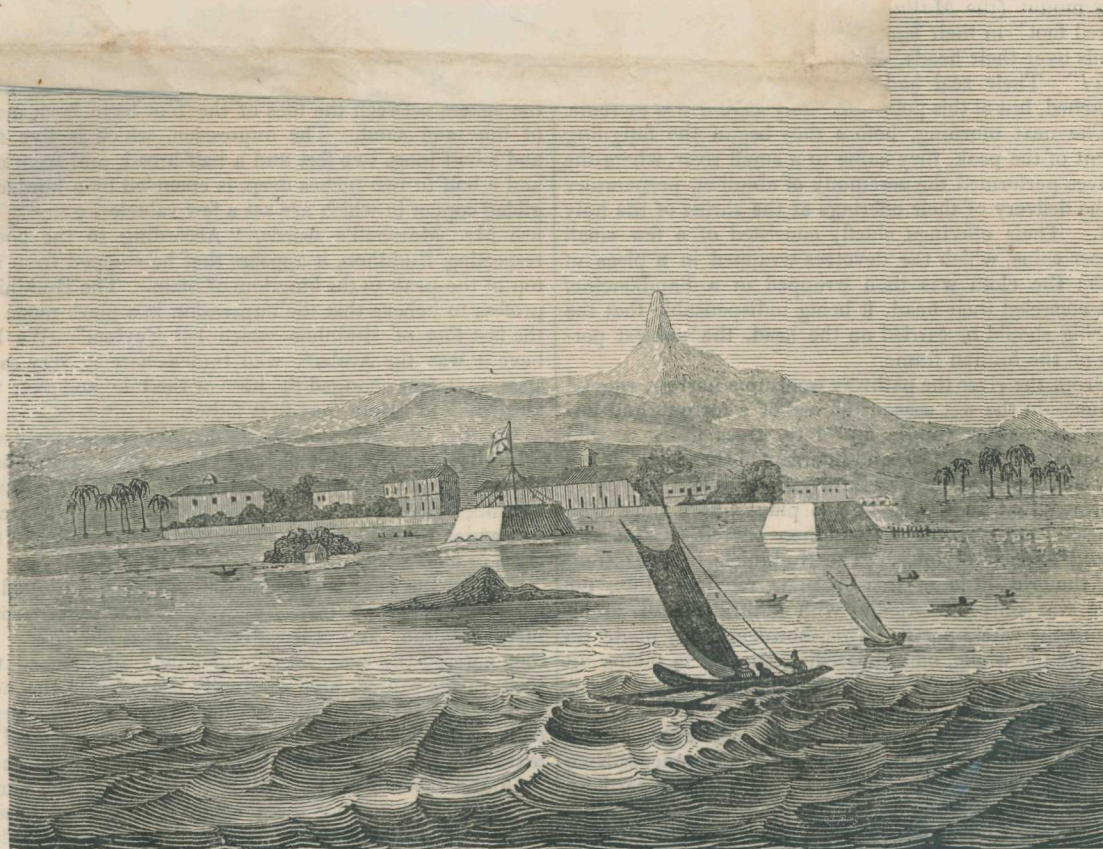


Mackenzie Free Frank  
front, London.  
July 3, 1832.

### Slave Population Grows:

- ◆ 1800 4,000
- ◆ 1817 22,000
- ◆ 1837 27,000

View across  
waters to  
**Slave Island**



[Distant View of Adam's Peak from Fort Colombo Roads.]



## A. Pre-Stamp Mail

## Processing Slave Island Mail

Slave Island is **located right within the city limits of capital city of Colombo, Ceylon**. To build a military garrison, the British government filled in a portion of Lake Beira which surrounded Slave Island. ***Slave Island was no longer an island***. Slave Island became an in city area of government offices, businesses and hotels.



### Government Agent mail:

Governmental offices built on Slave Island land used the Colombo GPO post office.

1842 to Government Agent in Kandy, Ceylon. Heart of the coffee growing, later tea plantation area.

Reverse "S" Post Paid, Handstruck 1842 Cancel



### Slave Island —

#### No longer an island

- ◆ Landfill of lake
- ◆ Expanded roadways
- ◆ Canals and bridges
- ◆ Additional land created for government & recreational use

Lake and surrounding area →  
Colombo, at Slave Island  
RPPC local "Andree" post card.



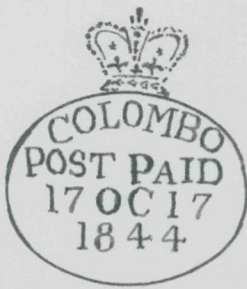


# A. Pre-Stamp Mail

# Foreign Mail

British in Ceylon resisted abolishing slavery for decades. Slaves were living and working on plantations. Shown here is Colombo mail before Slave Island Post.

1844 Coffee Plantation Correspondence



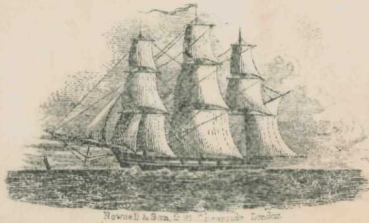
Sent one year before →  
slavery was abolished



Coffee was big business -  
Below: Shipping plantation grown  
coffee from Ceylon to London.  
Rate: 6d Duty Revenue, embossed.

Colombo to London July 24, 1844:  
1/10d with Colombo crowned oval. Rate 1/5d British packet rate and 5d  
for French transit. Backstamped September 11, 1844, 48 days transit.  
Letter contents: Finding cargo space to ship Ceylon plantation coffee.

No 10  
Hura



APB

467, 18 6/1270

Shipped in good Order and well conditioned by Arms  
in and upon the good Ship called the 'Pembroke'  
whereof is Master for this present Voyage H. King  
and now riding at Anchor in the Colombo  
London.

Ceylon Casks } Plantation Coffee  
Ten Barrels } Ceylon

Thunagueria	cks	Prly	
New 1st 1.	1	1	Cts 5. 1. 0.
2.	1	1	3. 2. 3.
3.	9.	3.	96. 0. 11.
4.	4.	2.	10. 0. 25
PB	1	2.	9. 0. 24
1/2.	1.	1.	14. 1. 18.
T	1	1	8. 1. 9.
	11.	10.	144. 0. 6.

being marked and numbered as in the Margin, and are to be del  
and well conditioned at the aforesaid Port of London  
the Act of God, the Queen's Enemies, Fire, Ball and every other Dangers & Accidents of the Seas, Rivers &c  
excepted, save risk of Boats so far as Ships are liable thereto, unto W. H. C.  
or to his Assigns paying Freight for the said Goods, a  
shillings per stone of Cwt 16 net at the  
In Witness whereof the Mas  
Shipp hath affirmed to three Bills of Lading all of this tenor a  
three Bills being accomplished, the other two to stand  
Dated in Colombo 21<sup>st</sup> February 1844. Rele  
Weight & Content unknown



## B. Victorian Slave Island

## Why Keep the Slave Island Name?

Whether or not by design, the name Slave Island adhered to the former island slave quarters, it just stuck. Slave Island came to be just another of several well demarcated districts making up the capital, Colombo.

Early postal needs of this growing community generally could be serviced by the Colombo General Post Office located in the Fort, the district next to Slave Island within the city of Colombo.

**1860: Earliest postal indication of town name of Slave Island known**



**Slave Island →**  
Cover sent 18 years  
prior to Slave Island  
having a post office.

Ex Hackmey

One pence local rate addressed to Slave Island, backstamped May 29, 1860.

## Carving a city from the jungle:

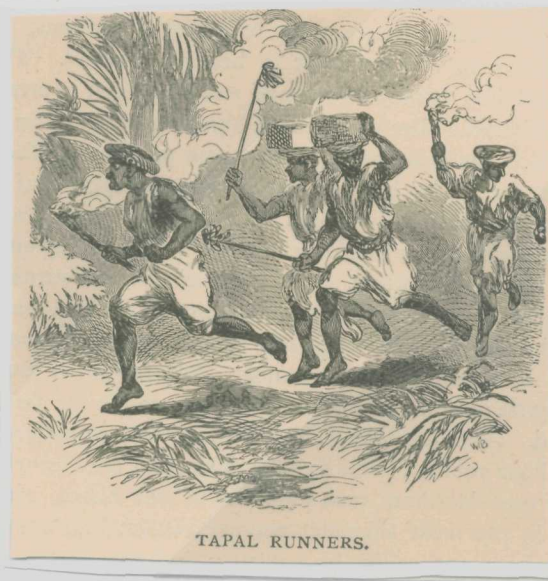
Black & white relief line block print illustration of Colombo, Ceylon as seen in the 1860s.



COLOMBO.



## B. Victorian Slave Island Delivering Mail to Slave Island



← **Tappel Runners:**  
Mail delivery—one mile by foot.  
Early Woodcut illustration.

1864 Evidence of Mail Delivery by Foot

“Friday — →  
Tappel”

Mail Delivery  
Carried by tappel one  
mile to addressee.

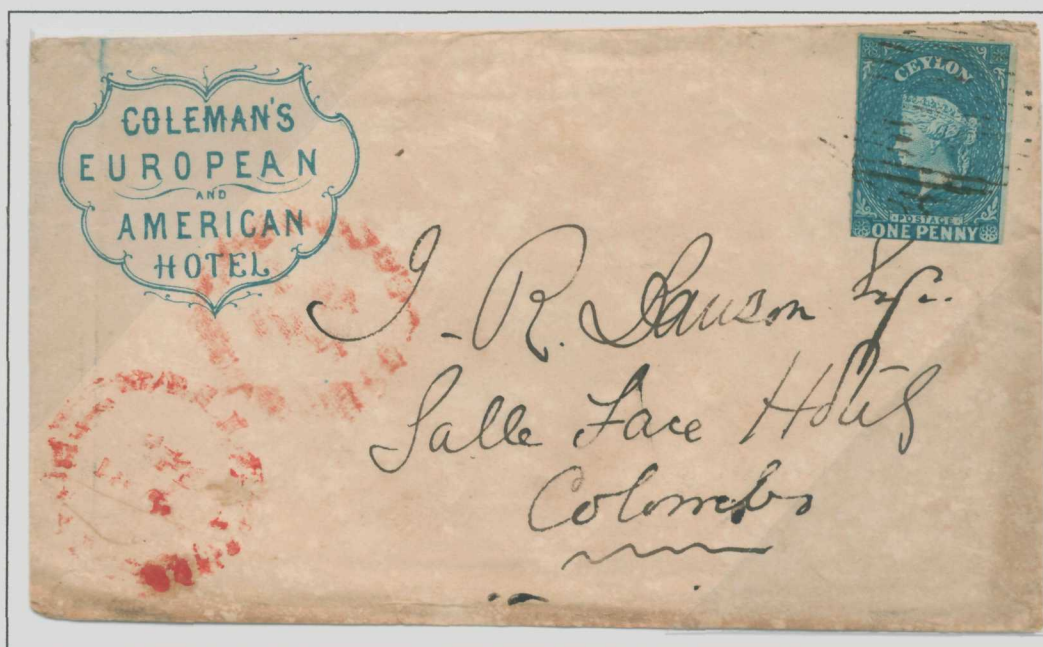
**Slave Island,**  
Colombo →



One pence local rate to Slave Island addressee. Paid stamp Nuwara Eliya  
November 18, 1864. Backstamped received Colombo November 20, 1864.



### 1860s Commercial Correspondence to Slave Island



1860s One pence local rate commercial cover to the Galle Face Hotel, at Slave Island. Early addressing indicates appropriate post office, Colombo.

The Slave Island post office opened more than fifteen years later.

### Engineering Slave Island →

The British enlarged Slave Island, removed the crocodiles from the waters, and improved access with bridges and canals.

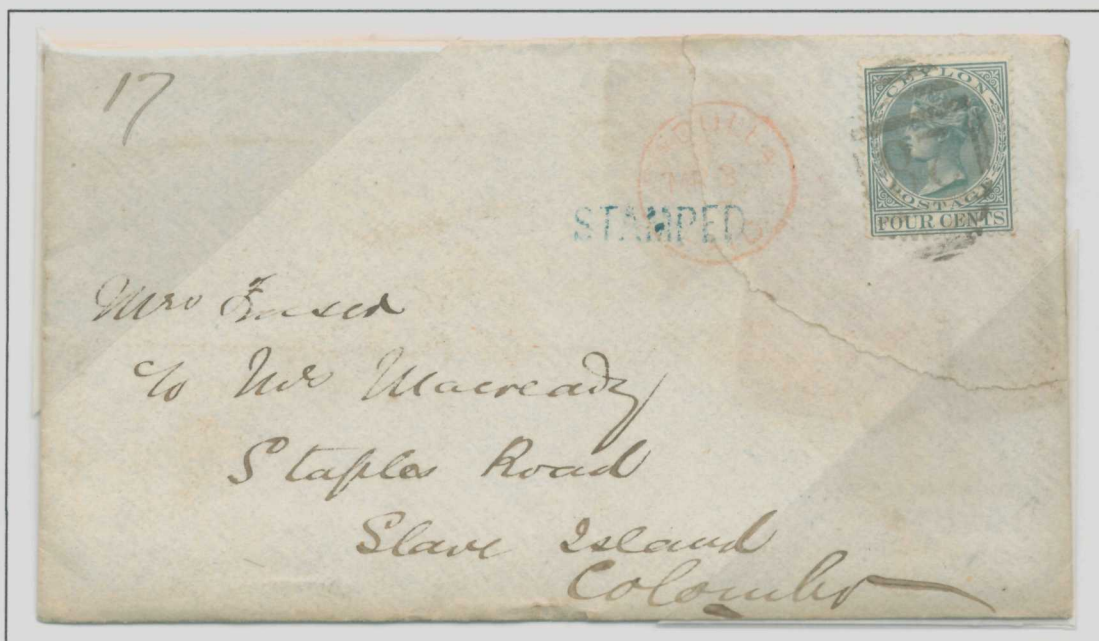
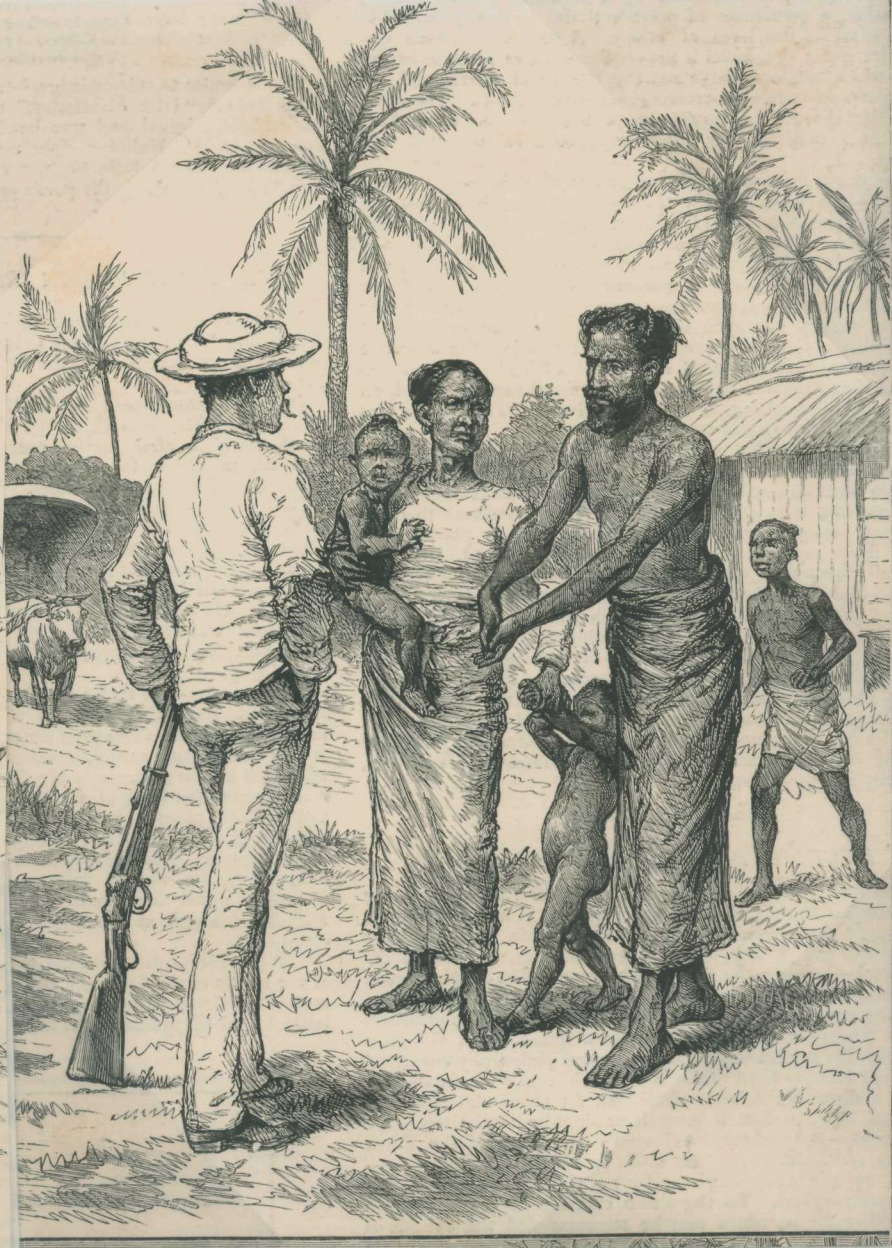


Wellewatte Canal, Colombo. Easy water access to Slave Island. On "Skeen- Photo" lithographed card.



# Victorian Slave Island Pre Slave Island Post

**Clearing the Crocodiles: British Sport.**  
Three part illustrations of crocodile shoot  
with slave child decoy 1888. Crocodiles  
stocked by the Portuguese & Dutch.



“STAMPED”  
hand stamped  
by sender to  
discourage  
stamp removal  
by carrier.

Slave Island,  
Colombo →

Rate: 4 cent 1877 domestic cover with street address and “Slave Island Colombo.”  
From Badulla inverted “28” obliterator, red March 3, 1877 cds. Reverse Colombo  
March 5, 1877. Follows an 1872 currency change, four cents to one pence.



## B. Victorian Slave Island

## Sport in Ceylon at Slave Island



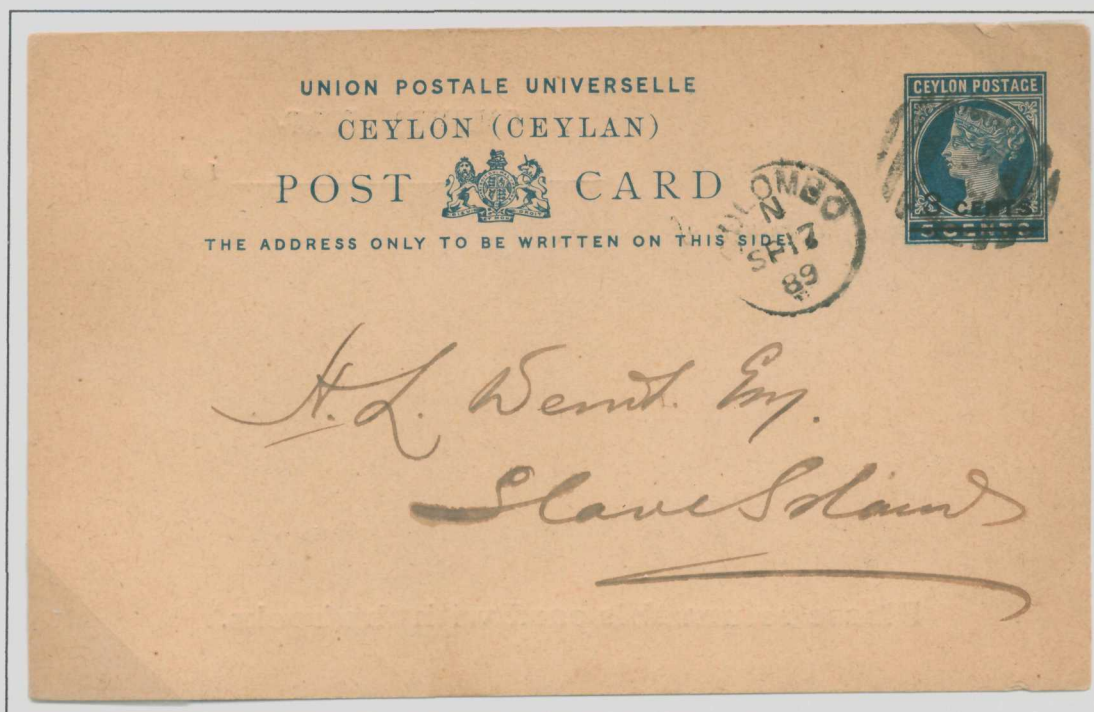
1. The Saurian's Foot Prints : " By Buddha, he must be a Twenty-footer "

2. Hagglng for the Hire of Bait Warranted to Attract

3. The Man-Eater's Quietus

SPORT IN CEYLON—SHOOTING A MAN-EATING CROCODILE

Clearing the crocodiles at the waters surrounding Slave Island: from Sport in Ceylon, London *The Graphic*, 1888.



Revalued "3 Cents"  
Colombo to Slave Island  
September 17, 1889.

*Note: This post card suggests the small size of Slave Island, each has no street level address.*



# B. Victorian Slave Island Slave Island Post Office Opens



**Type I:**  
April 11, 1880  
to September 2, 1891  
20 mm

**Earliest Recorded  
Use on card →**  
April 11, 1880



In 1880, Slave Island full service post office opened. "SLAVEISLAND" as one word distinguish this first postmark.



Slave Island full service post office processing Colombo Commercial mail.  
The business community driving mail volume.

LETTER TO BE WRITTEN ON THIS SIDE

No. 136  
To The Manager  
Colombo Commercial Co

10<sup>th</sup> April 1880

DEAR SIR,

I beg to advise you that carts with  
from *Your Stores*  
bearing the following numbers have  
passed *Natuapura*  
Yours faithfully,  
*P. Ray*

Cart Nos.	Katcheri.	Date.
195		
196	Natuapura	10 <sup>th</sup> April/80
197		
226		
227		

227 # 227-242

Reverse

2 cent to Slave Island,  
with Ratnapura sending,  
Colombo transit, and  
receiving Slave Island  
cancels.



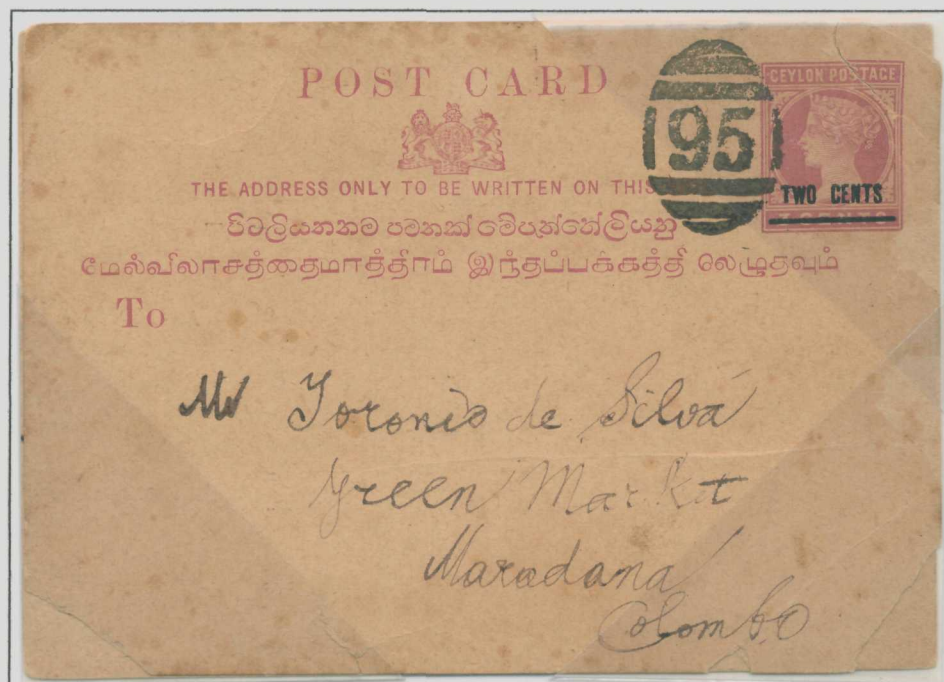
## B. Victorian Slave Island

## Local Mail

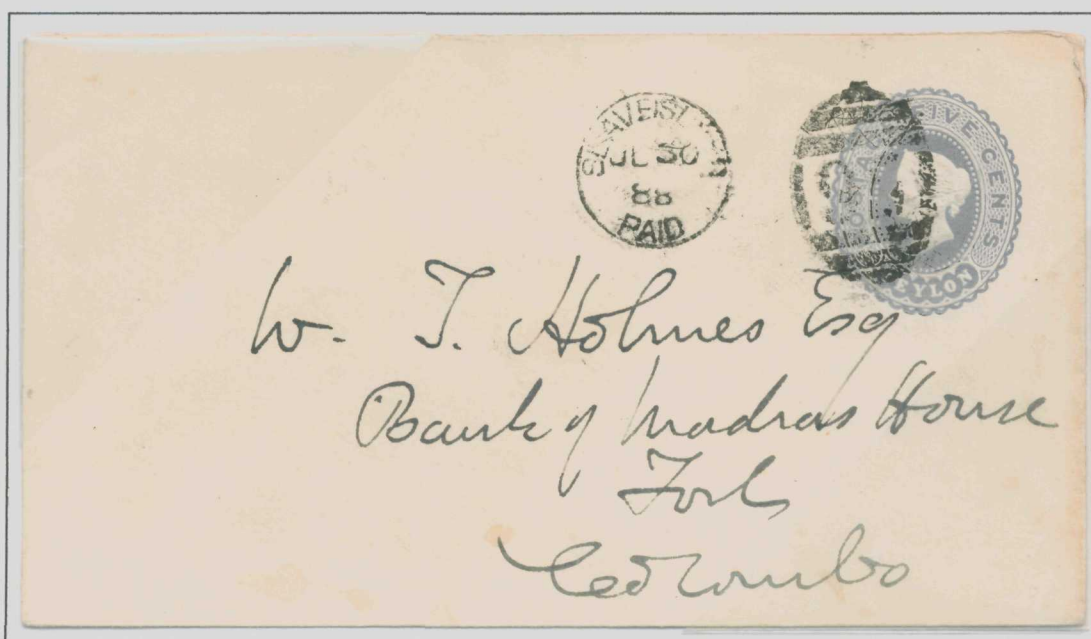
During the 1880s the Slave Island mail stream was led by the local business community. Early local mail generally received same day service, and businesses benefited from this convenient and inexpensive means of communication.



The "95" bar obliterator "killer" was used from 1884 until 1893 to cancel. The "95" was used **in addition** to the "SLAVEISLAND" paid datestamp, as an accountability indicator.



Revalued "TWO CENTS"  
Slave Island bar "95"  
obliterator strike  
September 17, 1889.



5 cent domestic envelope sent locally to Fort, Colombo with separately applied "95" killer cancel on the postage and datestamp July 30, 1888. Received same day.



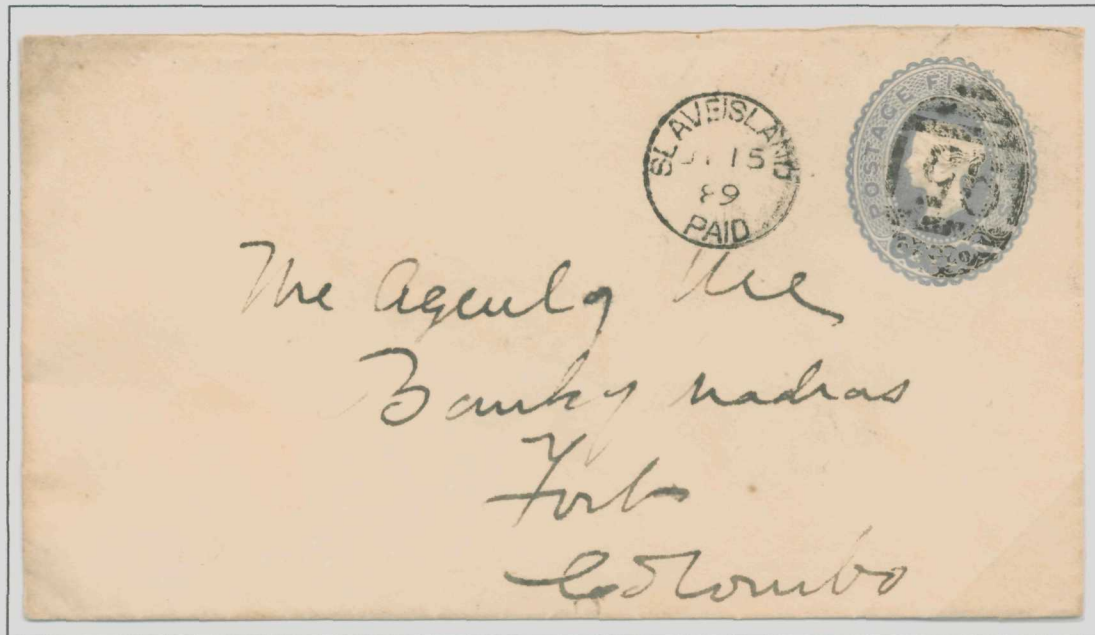
## B. Victorian Slave Island

## Local Mail

The “95” bar obliterator “killer” cancel appear haphazardly applied, while the separately struck “SLAVEISLAND” is neatly applied and oriented correctly.

The Reason: The “SLAVEISLAND” was an accountability strike, carrying the location and date stamp, the “95” killer was just obliterating the postage paid.

### Inverted Strike



5 cent domestic envelope sent locally to the Bank of Madras with an inverted “95” killer cancel and datestamp July 15, 1889. Received same day.

### Strike Sideways



“The Price is Three Cents including the Card” overprinted 2 ½ cent domestic revalued postcard sent locally to Colombo, August 20, 1885. Received same day.



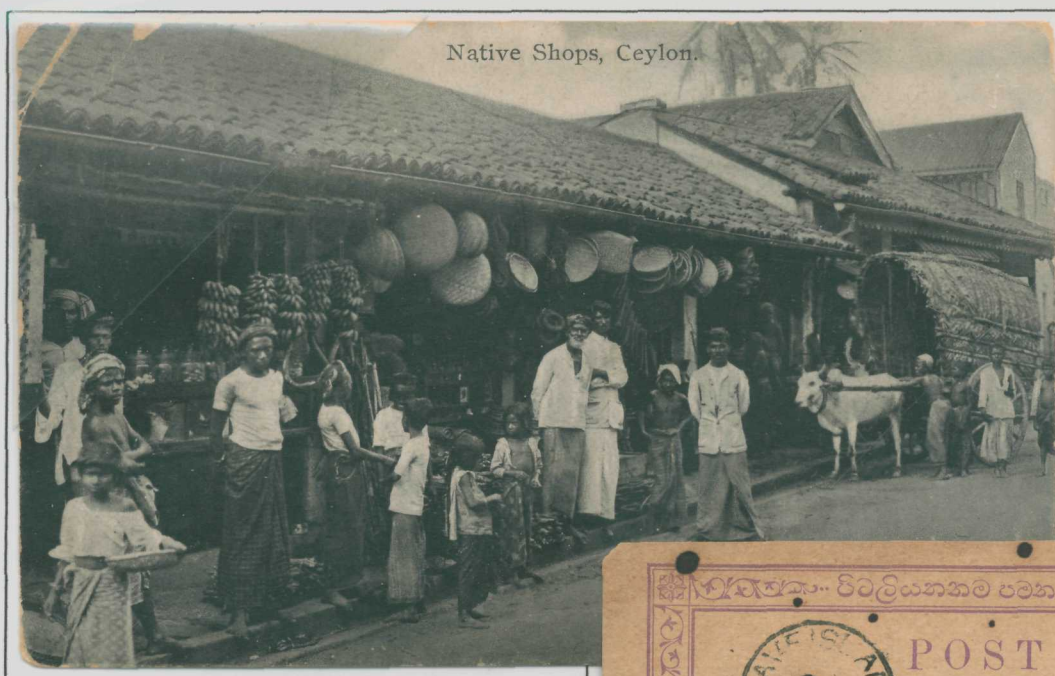
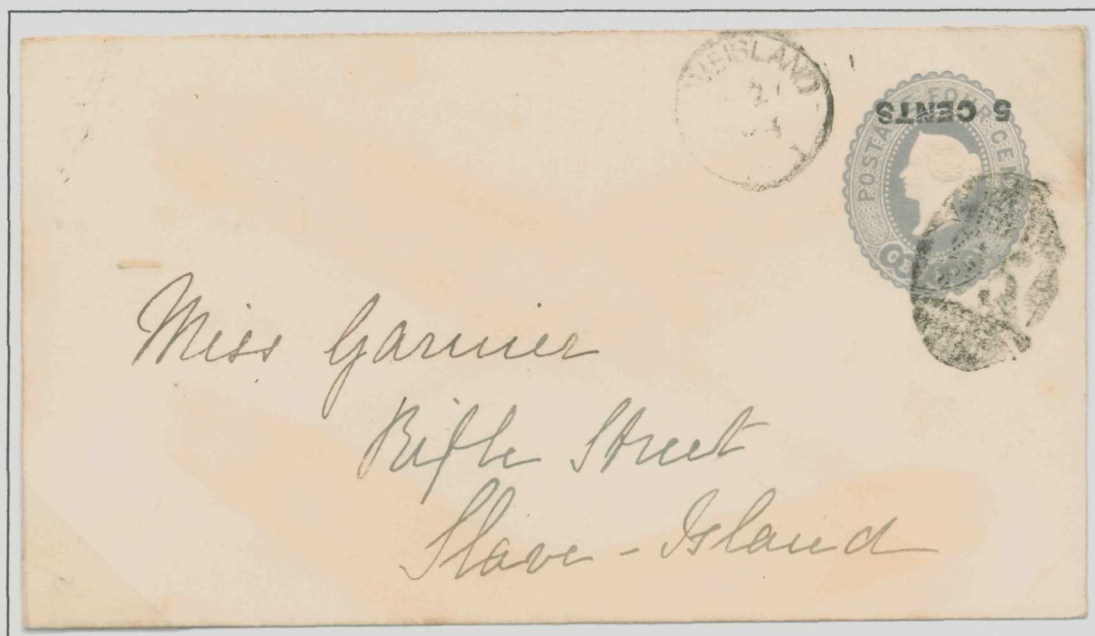
## B. Victorian Slave Island

## Local Mail

Slave Island post office processed **Inward** mail from local (within Colombo) residents and businesses, generally providing same day service.

### Slave Island to Slave Island

**Inverted** 5 cent →  
revalued envelope  
May 27, 1888 to a  
Slave Island resident.



← Typical of local  
merchants in Ceylon

Plâtè lithograph card  
printed in Germany.

2 ½ cent revalued postcard. May 4, 1885  
Colombo A killer cancel with Slave Island  
receiving cds.

Colombo Commercial Company Ltd  
established in the 1876, remained in  
business over 100 years.

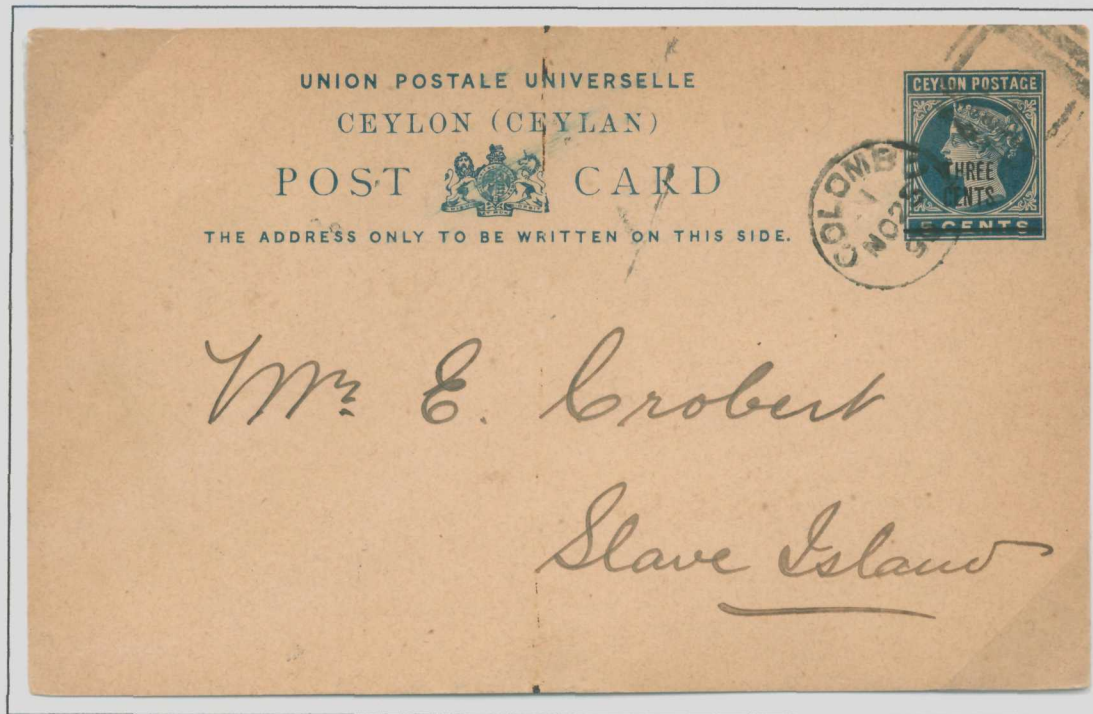




## B. Victorian Slave Island

## Local Colombo Processing

Slave Island mail **without** Slave Island post office processing or receiving markings, this mail was processed and delivered from Colombo GPO without passing through the Slave Island post office.



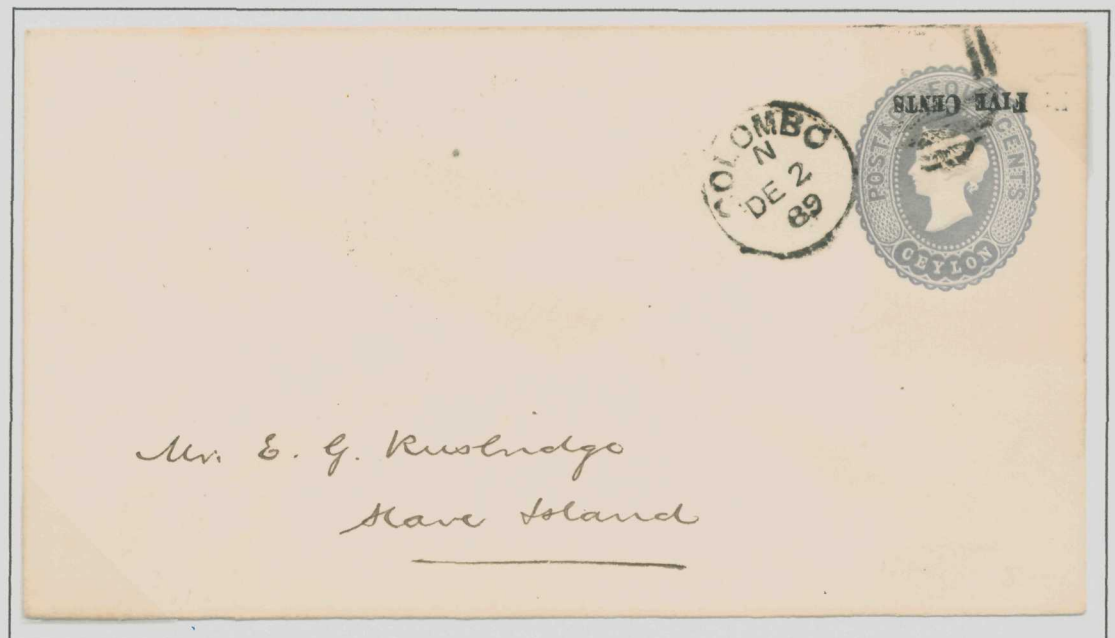
Revalued "THREE CENTS" on 5 Cent.

Colombo to Slave Island  
November 25, 1890.

### Inverted Overprint

"FIVE CENTS" on four cent for revaluation.

Colombo to Slave Island  
December 2, 1889.



With Slave Island population at less than 2,000 in the 1880s, this mail was sent without street addressing.



## B. Victorian Slave Island

## Domestic Mail

Domestic mail is mail sent within the island of Ceylon, versus local mail set within the capital of Colombo. **Inward** mail with "SlaveIsland" datestamp used as a receiving mark. Early tracking of delivery time of this domestic mail shows next day service.

### COLOMBO COMMERCIAL Coy., Ltd.

#### ESTATE SUPPLIES

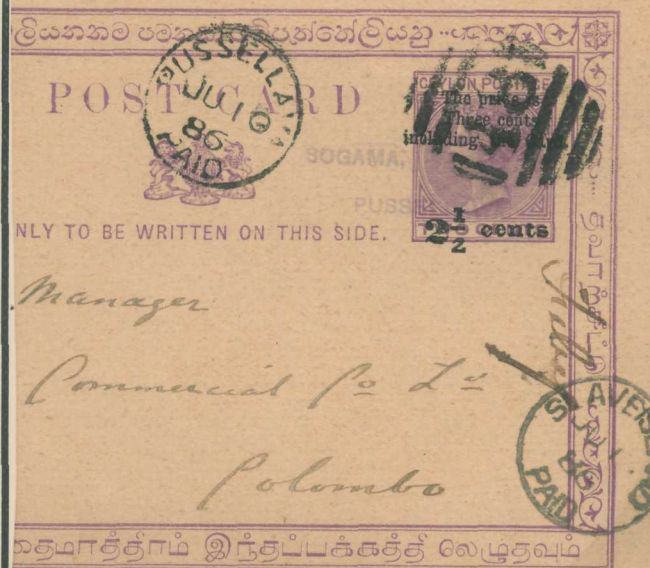
*Packing Materials  
and all other  
Estate Requisites*

*"Reeled" Tea Lead*

*Agents for:—*

**Eastern Rolling Mills, Ltd.**

**Ceylon Head Office & Mills: Slave Island, Colombo.**



2 ½ cent revalued postcard. July 11, 1886 Inward to Slave Island  
**Colombo Commercial Co. Order for Packing Supplies: Tea Chests.**

A rate change

September 1, 1885:

- ♦ Post cards 2 ½ cents
- ♦ Letters 5 cents

Colombo Library →  
Located on Slave Island



5 cent revalued domestic envelope from Veyangoda with "99" killer August 6, 1887.  
Type I Slave Island Paid on reverse, next day delivery



## B. Victorian Slave Island

## Domestic Mail



3 cent domestic with Type I cancel and faint "95" March 10, 1887. Received next day.

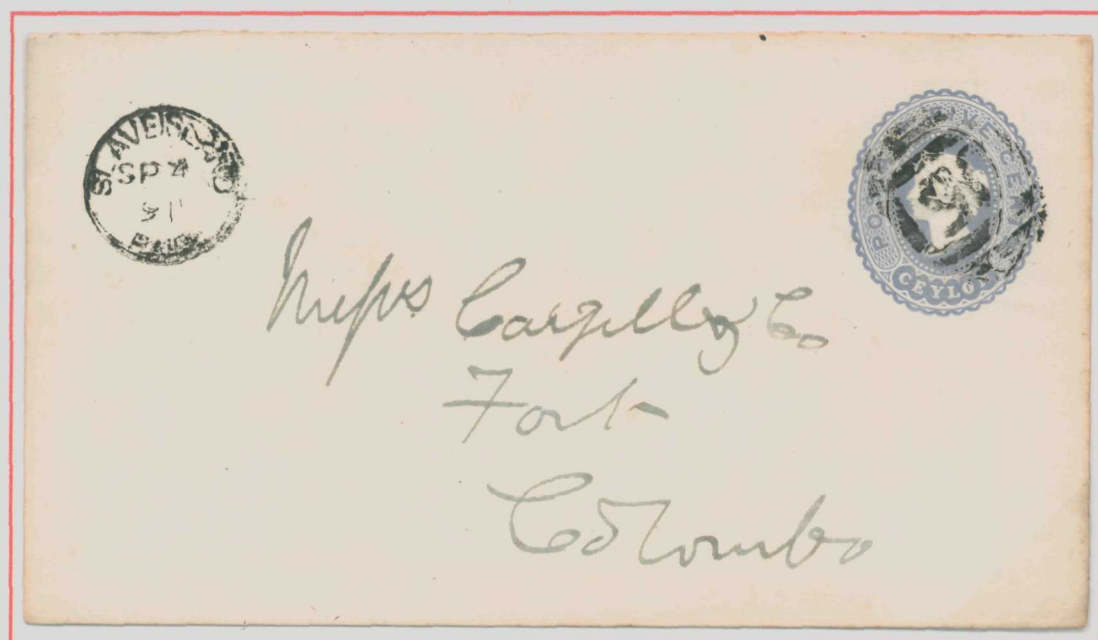


5 cent domestic with Type I cancel, September 2, 1891.

Sent to Hambantota, located in the tea district. Received September 4, 1891, two days.

Latest Recorded Use→  
September 4, 1891

Extends latest  
published recording



5 cent domestic envelope sent locally to nearby **Fort, Colombo** with separately applied "95" killer cancel and datestamp September 4, 1891, received same day.



## B. Victorian Slave Island

## Domestic Mail

"SLAVEISLAND" datestamp provided tracking for domestic mail. The island of Ceylon is approximately the size of the state of Indiana. By the 1890s, rail lines carried delivering within one to two days island wide.



3 cent domestic postcard. July 2, 1891 with two day delivery to distant Puttalam.

Notice of dispatch of a customer order for patterns.

5 cent domestic mourning cover received next day in Kandy, December 15, 1889 →

Kandy is the historic capital from Sinhalese early native rule.



← Typical of roadways used by mail coach for mail delivery in Ceylon.

W.A. Plâté lithograph card UPU undivided back.

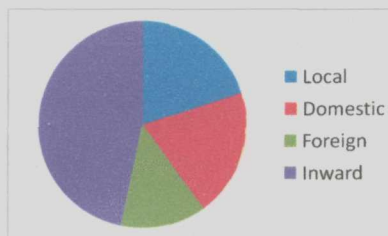


# B. Victorian Slave Island

# Foreign Mail

During the 1880s the Slave Island area grew with local business activity serving the capital of Colombo's local needs. This **Slave Island mail census** of the cancels on early mail identifies the changing mail stream patterns from this post office over time. Local mail, serving the Colombo area, is distinguished from domestic mail as the service level for local is same day. Domestic mail received next day to two day service.

## Mail Census Type I Cancels



10c foreign to **Egypt**, → redirected, November 14, 1887. Slave Island to Cairo in 14 days.



R.Coddington AND Co's

# CEYLON

# ROASTED COFFEE.

Packed in One Pound P

A Beautiful Picture Ca  
POUND PAC



← "95" obliterator on over-printed 1 Rs 12c high value used on foreign mailings.

↓ Colorized post card view Colombo harbor, view from Slave Island.



↑ Typical advertising card of early Ceylon foreign commercial mail.



# B. Victorian Slave Island

# Local Commercial Mail

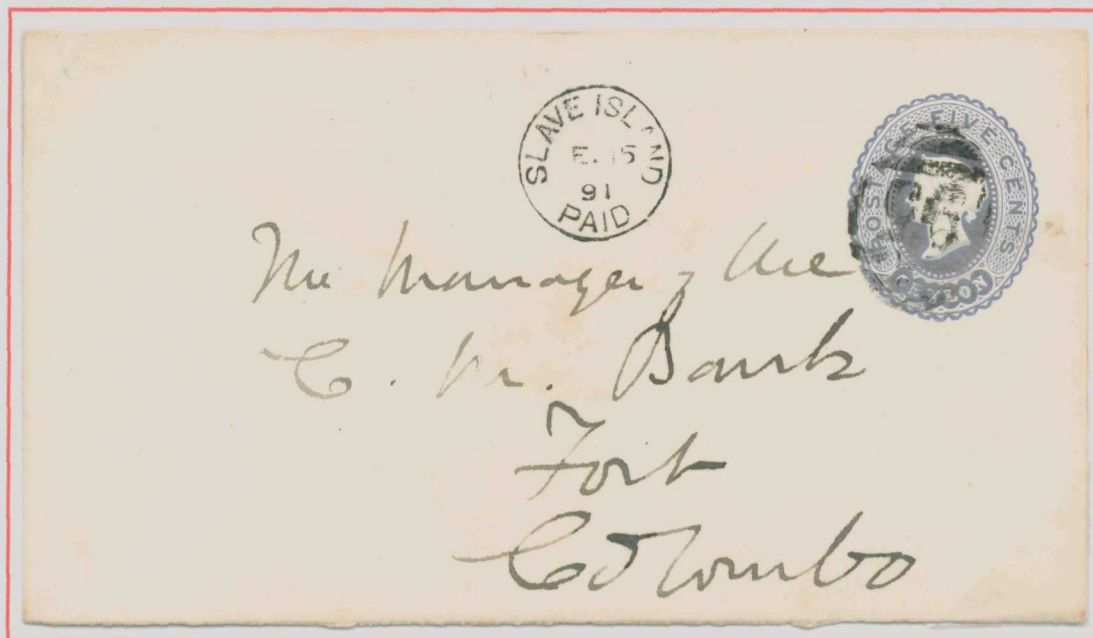
The Type II postmark has a **separation of SLAVE and ISLAND into two words**. Curiously the Type I postmark was used with **SLAVEISLAND** as one word for 11 years without correction.



**Type II:**  
September 15, 1891  
to June 9, 1893  
20 mm

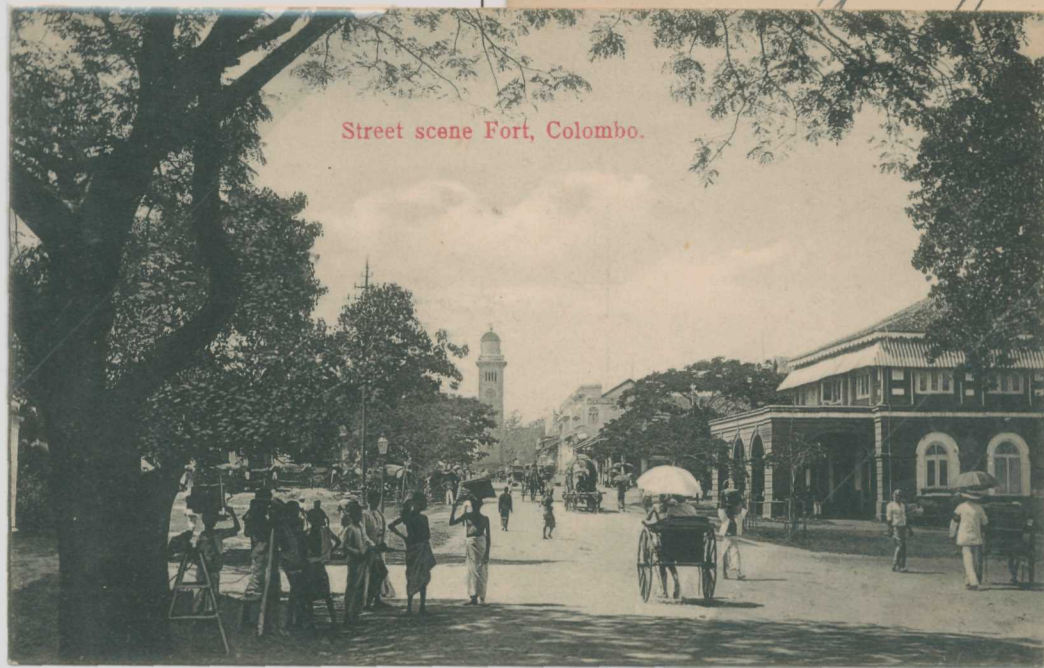
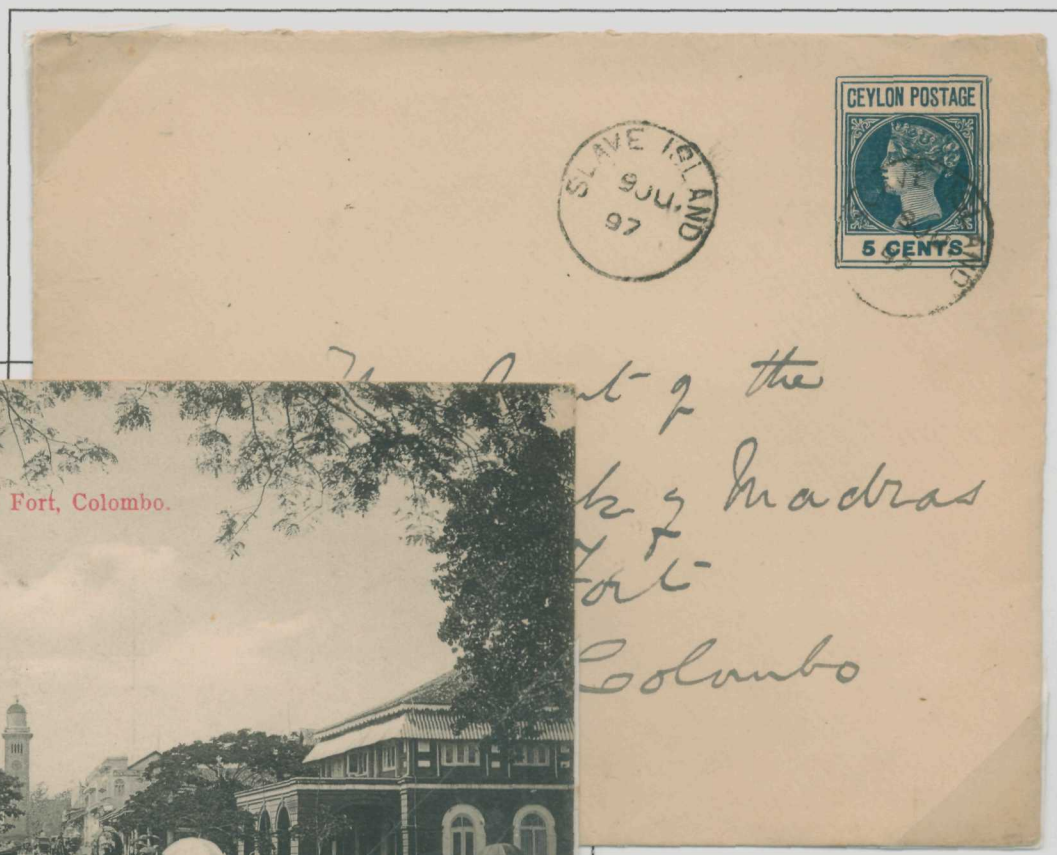
**Earliest  
Recorded Use →  
September 15, 1891**

**Predates earlier**



5c definitive envelope sent locally to Fort, Colombo with an inverted "95" killer cancel and datestamp September 15, 1891, received same day. Colombo receiving SP 15 91 on reverse.

5 cent 1895 issued domestic → envelope with Type III as cancel. Sent June 9, 1897 to the Bank of Madras in the **Fort, Colombo**.



Street scene Fort, Colombo.

← Fort, Colombo Ceylon  
Colombo Apothecaries  
lithograph card UPU split back.



## B. Victorian Slave Island

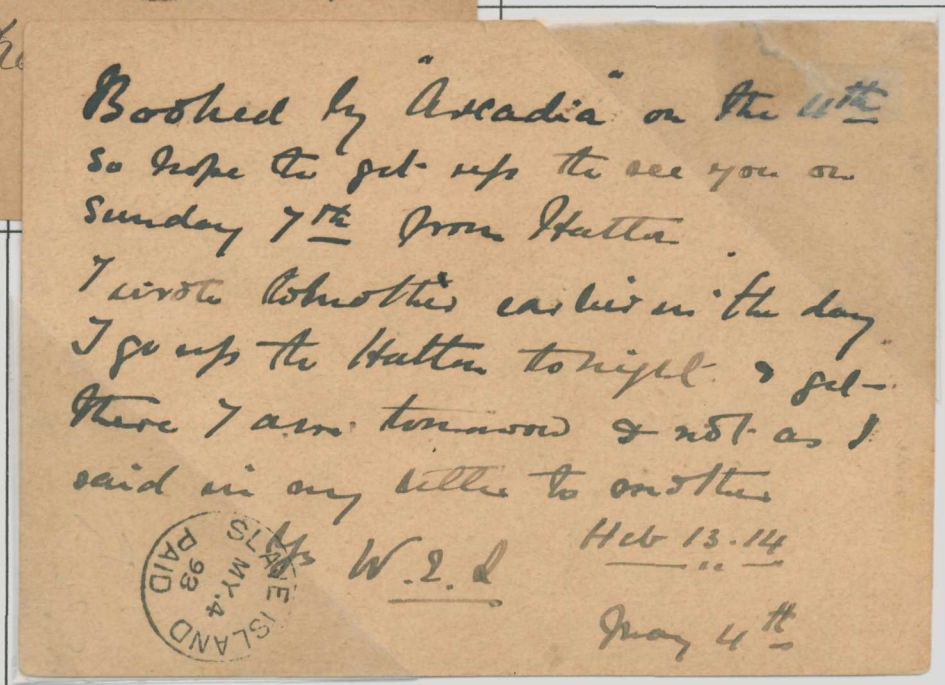
## Domestic Mail

The killer **numeral obliterators (95)** were phased out in the mid 1890s island wide. This reduced the labor of a two strike to cancel and datestamp mail.

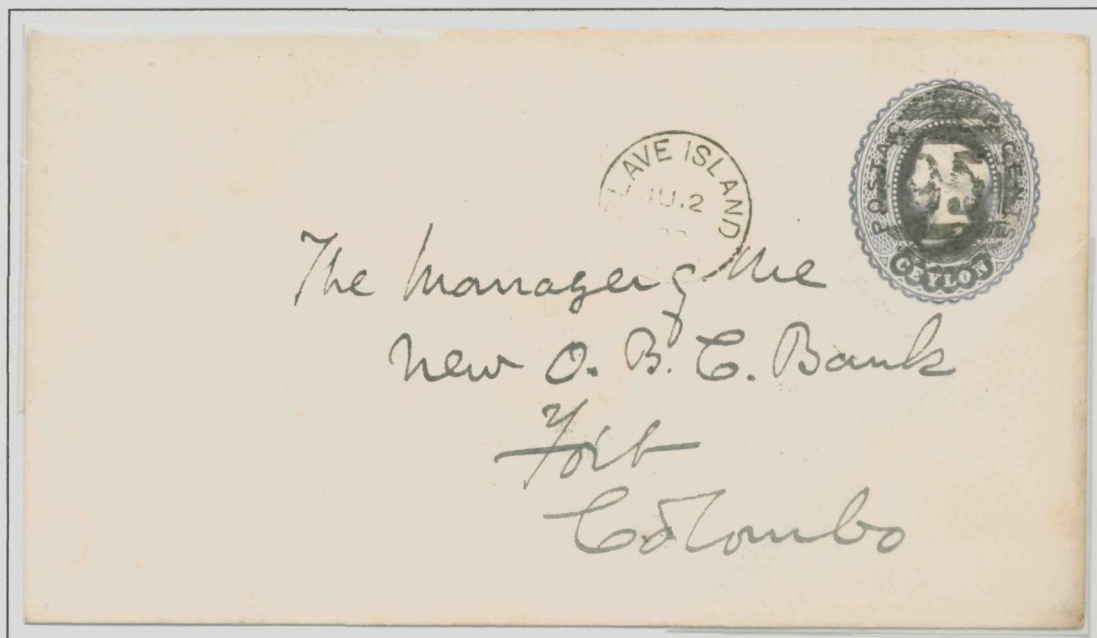


← Revalued "TWO CENTS" card, May 3, 1893 cancel and transits without a "95" strike.

Slave Island cancels → front and reverse without the "95" strike May 4, 1893.



Five cent envelope with → "95" oblistructor. June 2, 1892, one year earlier.



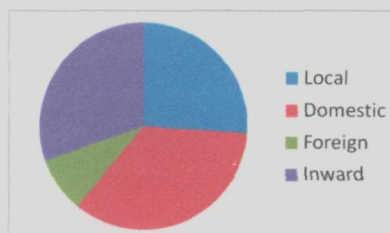


## B. Victorian Slave Island

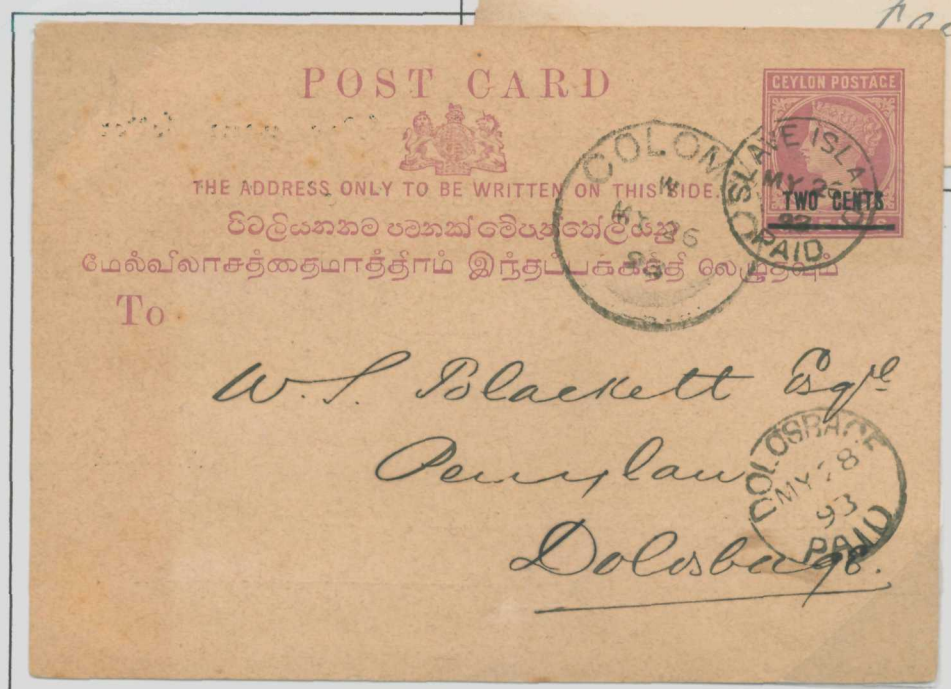
## Domestic Mail

The local and increasingly island wide mail stream during the use of the Type II cancels indicates Slave Island's reach beyond Colombo proper. Domestic mail is here 35% of the mail.

### Mail Census Type I & II Cancels



5 cent front definitive envelope →  
Type II cancel May 10, 1893.



← Slave Island Type II cancels and transits May 26, 1893 on two cent revalued card.

In 1886 correspondence between Ceylon and India served by British India Steamer rated as domestic.

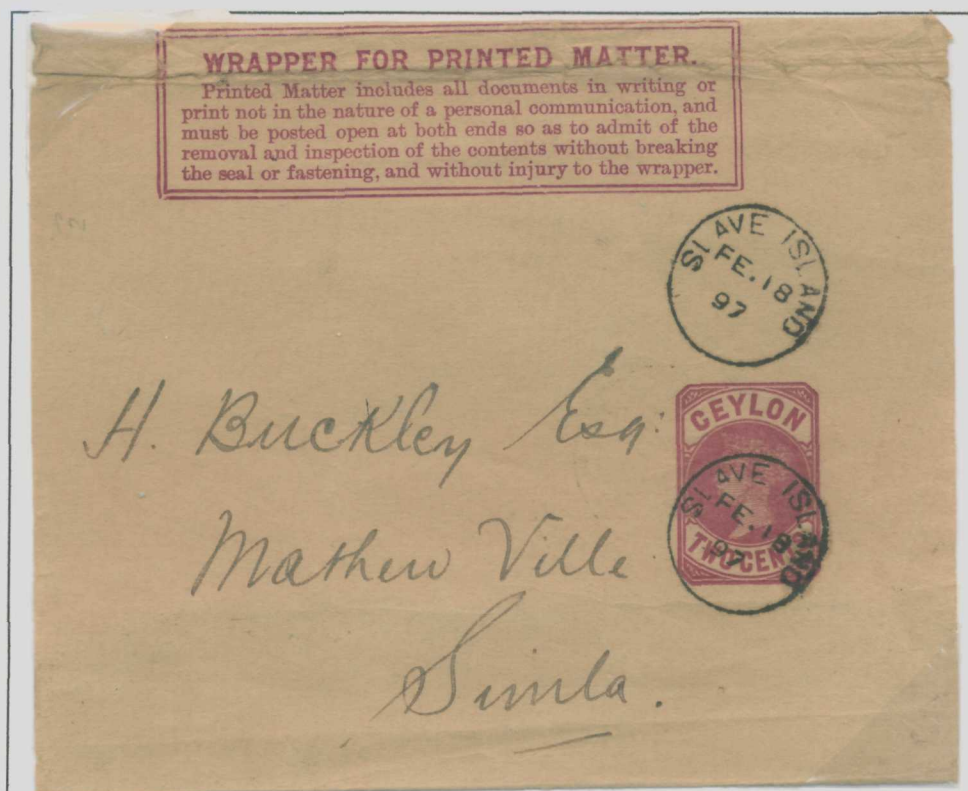
3 cent domestic postcard →  
with Type II cancel August 13, 1892. Domestic rate extended to India. Five day delivery.







5 cent domestic lettercard of 1894 with Type III on December 2, 1895. Receiving mark on reverse in Matawala next day.



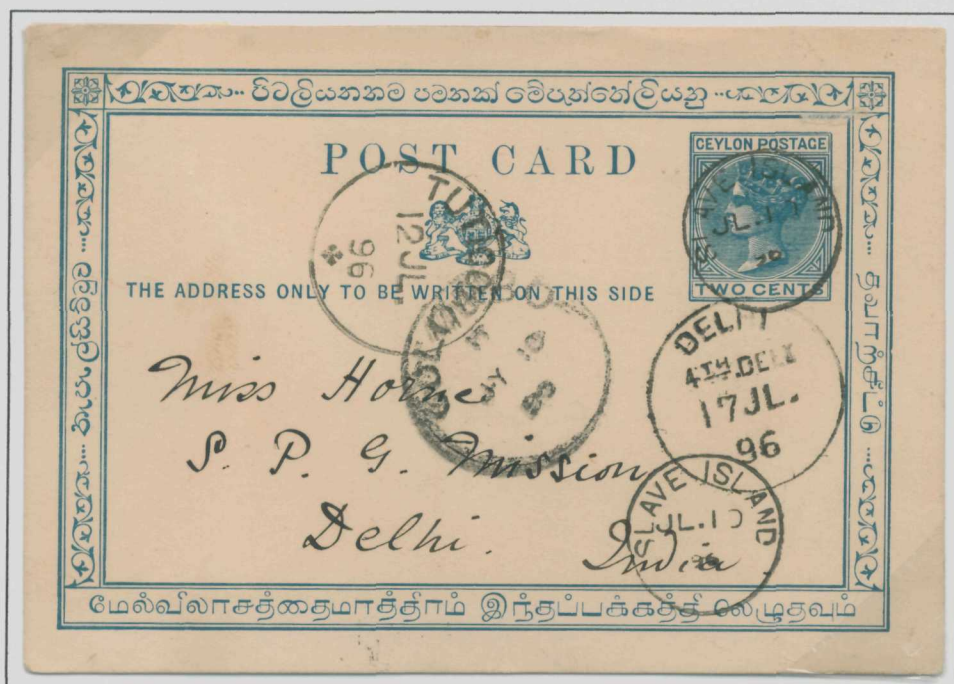
2 cent 1895 domestic wrapper with two Type III cancels February 18, 1897.



## B. Victorian Slave Island

## Foreign Mail to India

Mail to India moved at the Ceylon domestic rate. **More mail was being sent to and from India and Ceylon** because of expanded travel, trade and Indian migrant laborers working on tea plantations, and merchants selling in Ceylon.



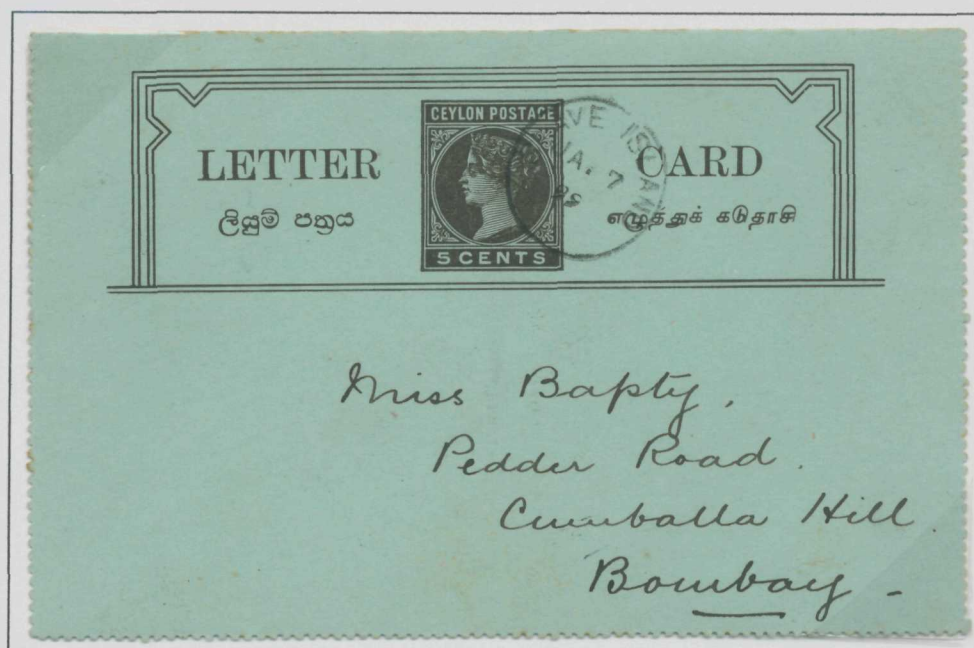
2 cent domestic postcard rate extended to mail to Delhi, India. Slave cancel and transit Type III on July 10, 1896.



Postal cancel used also on Ceylon Telegraph stamps.

Telegraph stamps bisected in use. Rate: 20 cents per word.

**Provides early evidence of Telegraph operations at the Slave Island post office.**



5 cent 1894 issued domestic letter card with Type III as cancel. Sent January 7, 1899 to Bombay.



## B. Victorian Slave Island

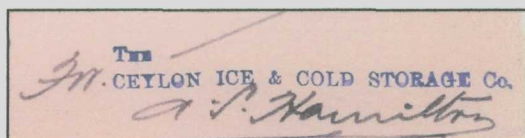
## Domestic Commercial Mail

Slave Island, Colombo

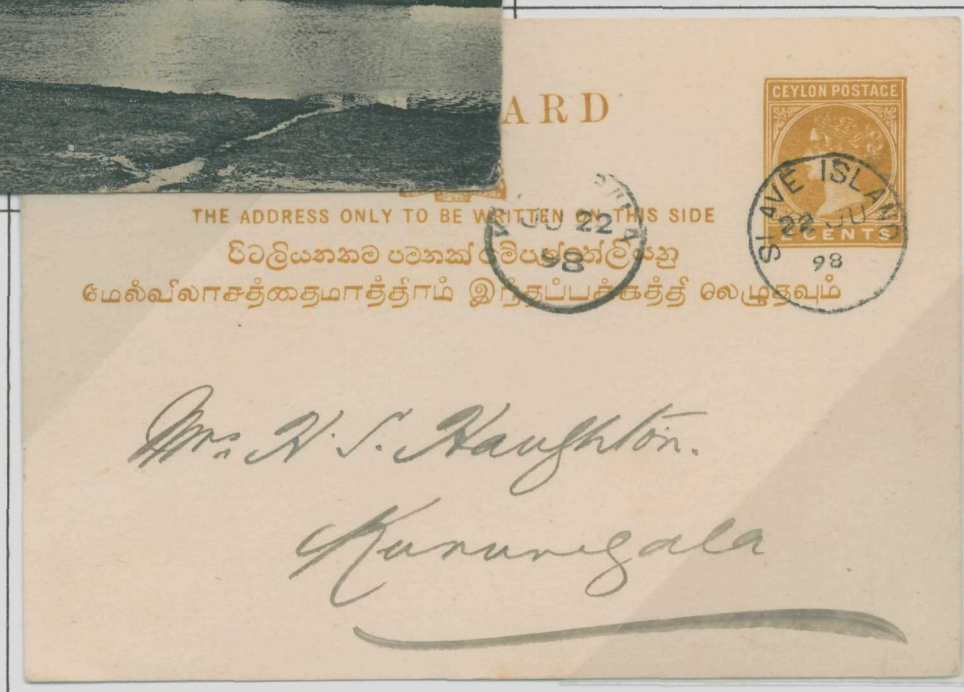


← Traveller's Mart, Slave Island on German Uduman's split back postcard. Printed in Saxony.

2 cent July 22, 1898 →  
card to Kurengala.  
Ceylon Ice & Cold  
Storage, Slave Island.



Reverse



2 cent October 8, 1897 →  
To Kandy, **Redirected**  
Ceylon Ice & Cold Storage  
Meat delivery, sent on  
**night mail train.**





# B. Victorian Slave Island

# Official & Commercial Mail

Type III January 11, 1898 →  
Official mail, OHMS card and  
also handstamped FREE.

Most OHMS cards cancelled by  
Colombo GPO, not Slave Island.

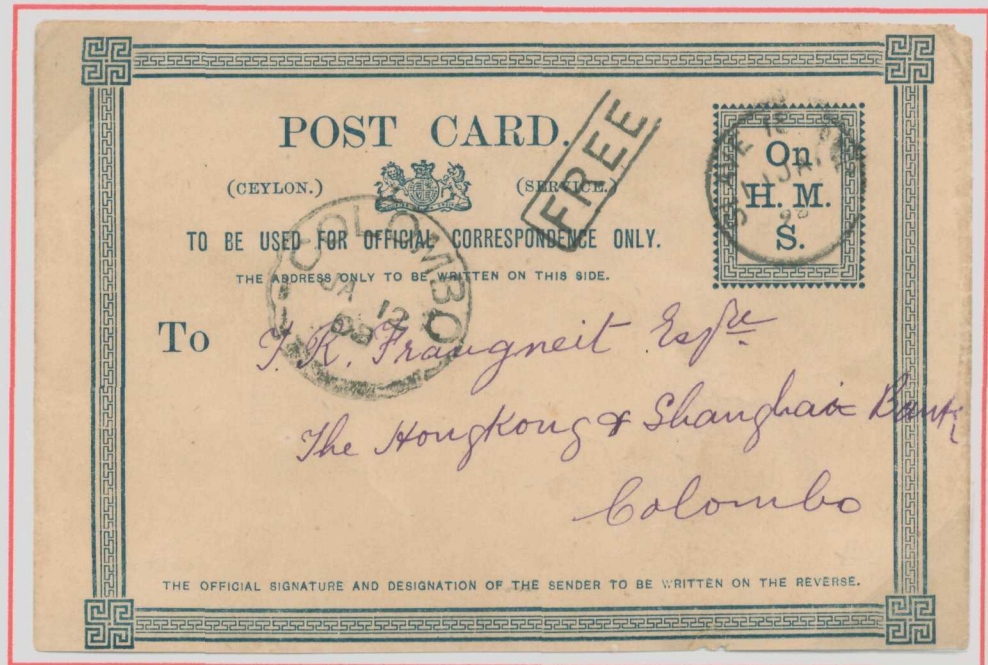
On Reverse:

**"You are requested to return  
your Ceylon Volunteer  
uniform without delay."**

This regards Ceylon Planters  
Rifle Corp, a volunteer unit.

2 cent February 7, 1899 →  
Domestic to Gammadua.

1899 YMCA "Meeting... at  
the Slave Island Rooms"



## Colombo Young Men's Christian Association.

A SPECIAL MEETING of this Association will be held on Friday, February 17th, 1899, 6 p.m., at the Slave Island Rooms, to consider for final action certain amendments to the Constitution which have been approved by the Board of Directors, and were proposed in writing at the regular meeting of the Association held on February 3rd. A printed slip containing the proposed amendments can be had on application to the Librarian.

An Auditor for the current year will also be elected.

Your presence is desired.

LOUIS HIEB,  
Secretary.



← 2 cent January 9, 1898

Cancel **date slug reversed**:  
"9 Ja."

Evidence of multiple cancelling  
devices.



# REMOVAL TO NEW PREMISES GREAT CLEARANCE SALE BEFORE REMOVAL

*We have secured the large premises in York st. lately occupied by the Ceylon Examiner Press and will move in directly alterations and repairs are completed.*

**Everything must be sold before Moving  
ASTONISHING BARGAINS.**

**WRENN, BENNETT & Co., Slave Island Colombo**

← Retailer Business Growth

Reverse Slave Island Type III  
on two cent postcard.

2 cent June 18, 1897  
Colombo Ice Company →  
Stationery in standard color:  
yellow olive.

*Slave Island business of  
dairy, grocery, ice delivery.*

*Reverse: Fish delivery.*

POST CARD  
THE ADDRESS ONLY TO BE WRITTEN ON THIS SIDE  
විද්‍යානුකූල පහසුකම් ලබාදෙන ලදී  
මෙම ලිපිනයෙන් ලබාදෙන ලදී

J. R. Manners Esq.  
Rogahawatta.  
Kotagala.

2 cent postmark as cancel  
and transit July 15, 1896.

Large format Colombo C  
timestamp transit. cancel.

**Stationery color variety:**  
brown olive.

POST CARD  
THE ADDRESS ONLY TO BE WRITTEN ON THIS SIDE  
විද්‍යානුකූල පහසුකම් ලබාදෙන ලදී  
මෙම ලිපිනයෙන් ලබාදෙන ලදී

Mr. D. D. Jayarake.  
Wadugoda.  
Sariyagala.

Commercial business correspondence at the turn of the century on Slave Island. The two cent postcard rate allowed provided local same day service and was the key business communication tool.



## B. Victorian Slave Island

## Local Commercial Mail

The Type III cancel differs from Type II, the "Paid" has been removed.



**Type III:**  
May 11, 1893  
to April 13, 1903  
20 mm



5 cent domestic envelope of 1887 cancelled with Type III on August 12, 1895.

*To Charles Mackwood & Co. one of the largest plantation owners & financiers on the island.*



Two cent card sent September 18, 1895 with Type III cancel.

*Request for a magazine subscription.*



## B. Victorian Slave Island

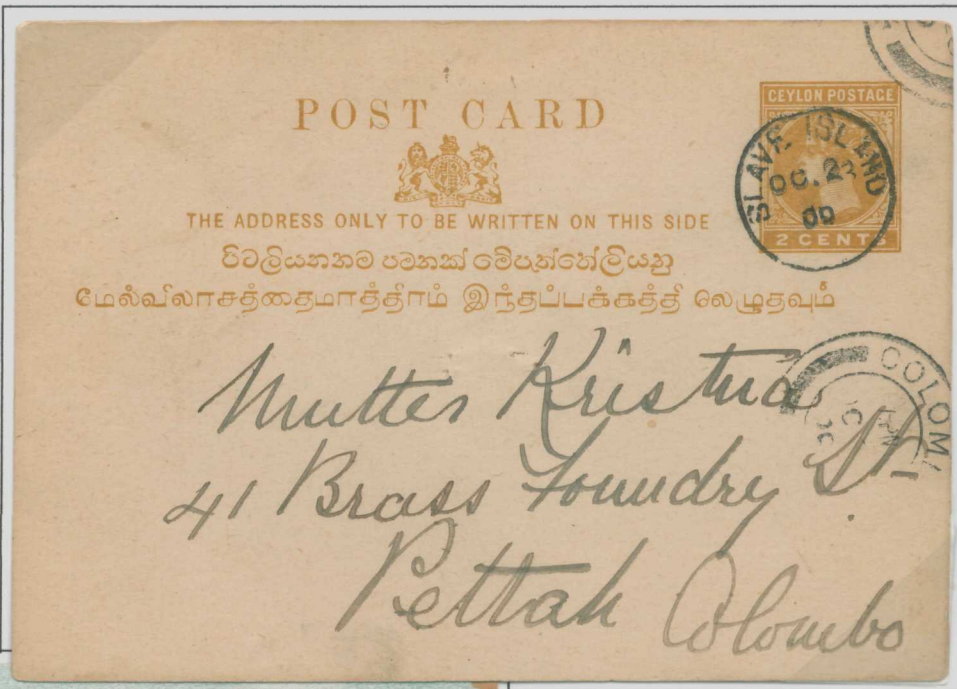
## Local Colombo Processing

Cards featuring Slave Island Type III cancels with Colombo GPO double ring cancel as transit marking.

Cancels show **how the mail processed**: Mail for Colombo area post offices processed through the GPO hub rather than office to office direct.

2c postcard Slave Island Type III → October 28, 1900 cancel and

Addressed to **Pettah, Colombo**, which is the local market.



← Pettah, Colombo Street Scene

Colombo Apothecaries from colorized photo, UPU split back.

"2 cent" January 23, 1902

Marked "Local" in upper left, addressed to "The Tent"

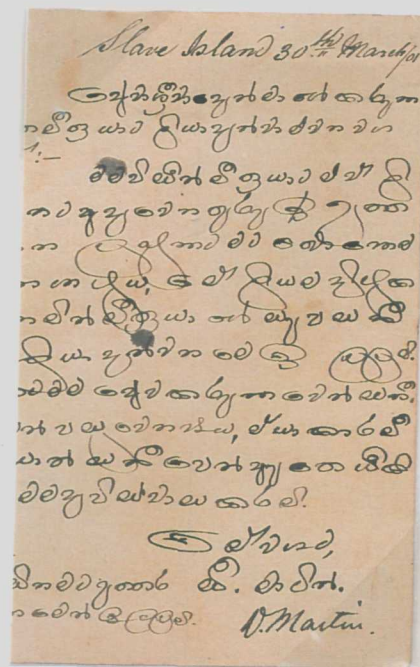




# B. Victorian Slave Island Domestic Boer War Camp Mail

In Ceylon, Boer War prisoners were housed a number of camps from 1901 to 1904, the largest camp at **Diyatalawa**, located in central Ceylon.

Censored Ceylon Boer War Camp from Slave Island



On Reverse



2 cent domestic card with Type III cancel. Passed censor at camp. Written in Sinhalese, addressed to "James Appu" c/o "Charles Appuhany." Ceylonese words for son and father, where father can also be supervisor.



The camp at **Diyatalawa** housed Boer War POWs. Diyatalawa camp opened after the POW camp established in St. Helena filled. Shown on left perforated divided back card from booklet by John & Company, printed in Germany.



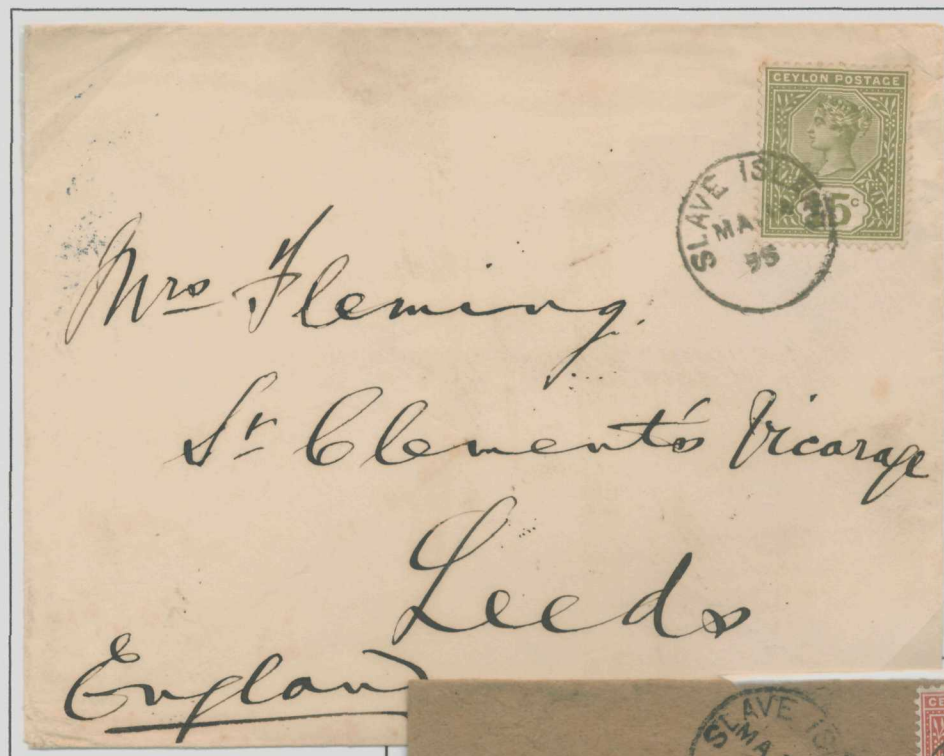
## B. Victorian Slave Island

## Foreign Mail

By the late 1890s more foreign mail is found going from Slave Island abroad. In addition to government and business offices, more shops and recreation were available in Slave Island. Ceylon's tea industry brought investment dollars and improved ports for passing ships made the island more assessable.



Slave Island cancel on  
Nevis stamp. Receiving  
mark or cancel from  
Ship mail cancel at port.



↑ 15 cent foreign Type III  
May 14, 1895 to **England**.

3 cent foreign rate wrapper  
to **England** March 23, 1897.→



15 cent foreign rate with Type III post-  
mark July 4, 1895 to **Leeds, England**.

Received July 22, 1895, 18 days delivery.

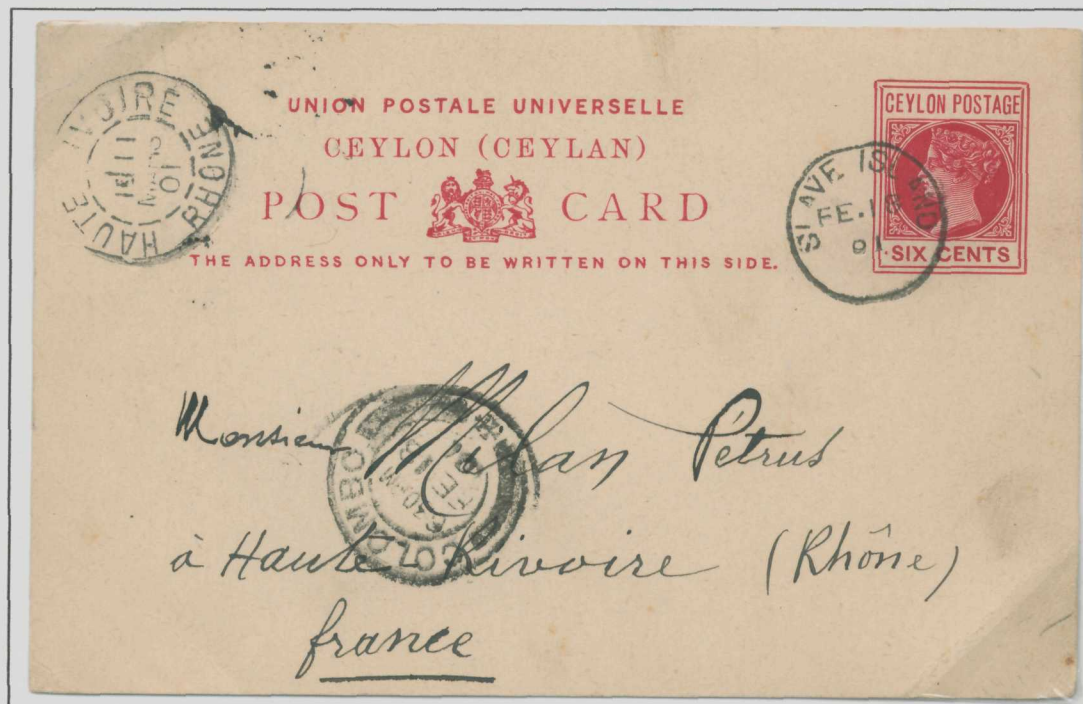
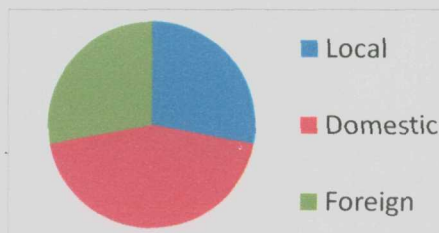


## B. Victorian Slave Island

## Foreign Mail

While the Edwardian era began after the death of Queen Victorian in 1901, in Ceylon, Edwardian era stamps, postal stationery did not change over to the new format until existing stocks were depleted. Slave Island's Type III cancel, too, remained in use long after British and even Colombo, Ceylon's cancels were updated.

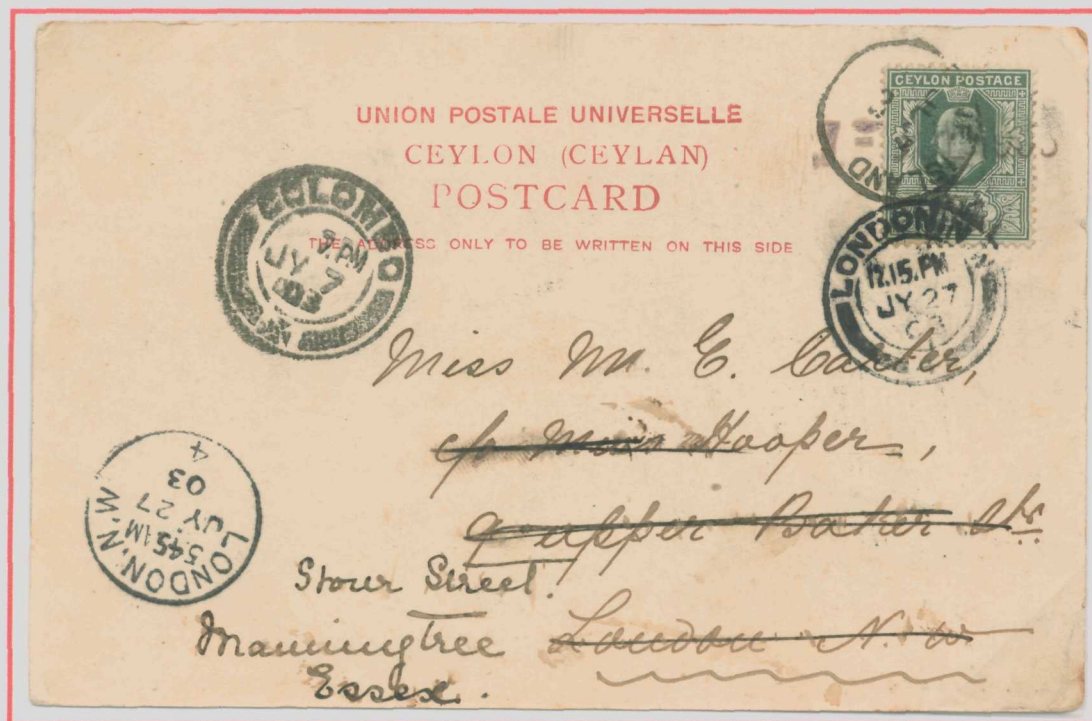
### Mail Census Type III Cancel



6 cent foreign 1901 postcard rate to France. Slave cancel Type III on February 18, 1901

Latest Recorded  
Use →

Extends Known  
Usage by Three  
Months



Slave Island Type III Victorian era cancel on Edwardian card, July 7, 1903 on 3c UPU undivided back postcard. Tourist postcard to **London**. **Redirected** to Essex.



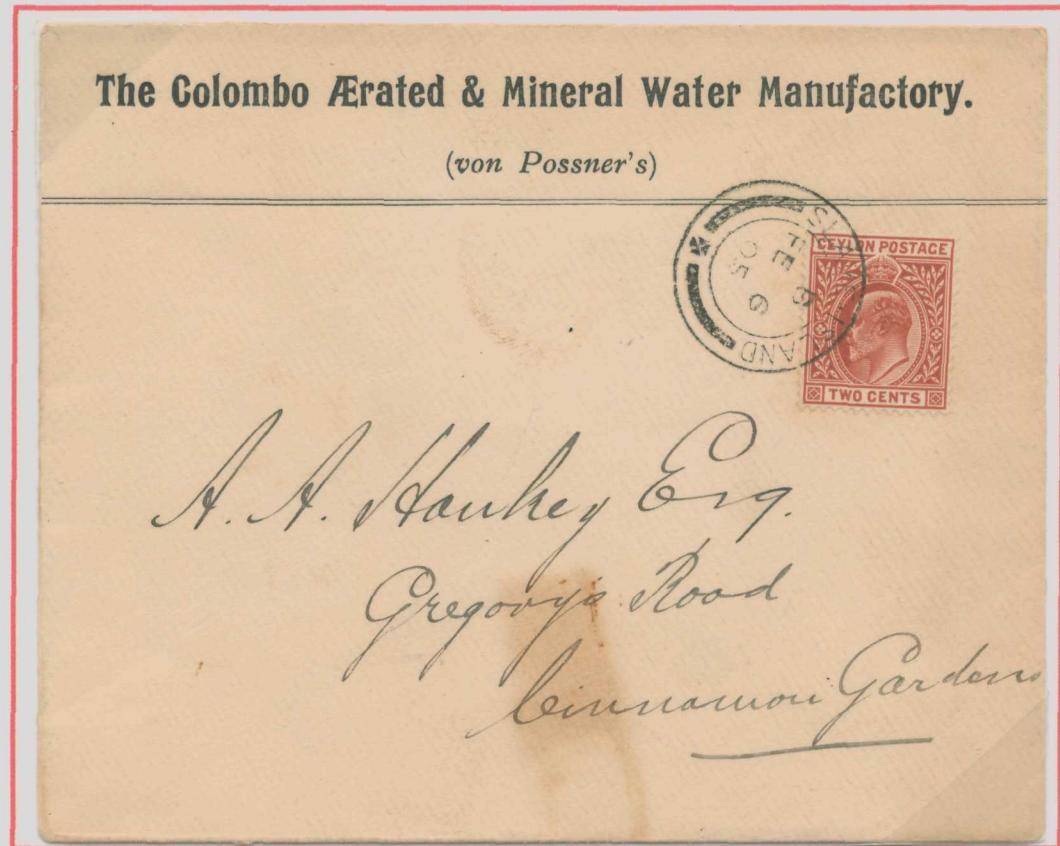
## C. Edwardian Slave Island

## Local Commercial Mail

Commonwealth double circle cancels with the Maltese Cross came into use in Ceylon in late 1902, as the Edwardian Era began.



**Type I:**  
November 2, 1902  
to April 4, 1910



2 cent Type I local delivery to Colombo Cinnamon Gardens February 6, 1905.

Seldom seen commercial covers reveal commercial businesses on Slave Island after the turn of the century. Sender "von Possner's" was *Arthur von Possner* who developed Colombo Aerated & Mineral Water Manufactory on a freehold site adjoining the expanded *Colombo Ice Company* on Slave Island.



**Early Usage:** December 10, 1902. Cancelled within a month of new cancel's use. Rate for is 6x weight foreign & registration fee, cancel on Victorian era stamps.

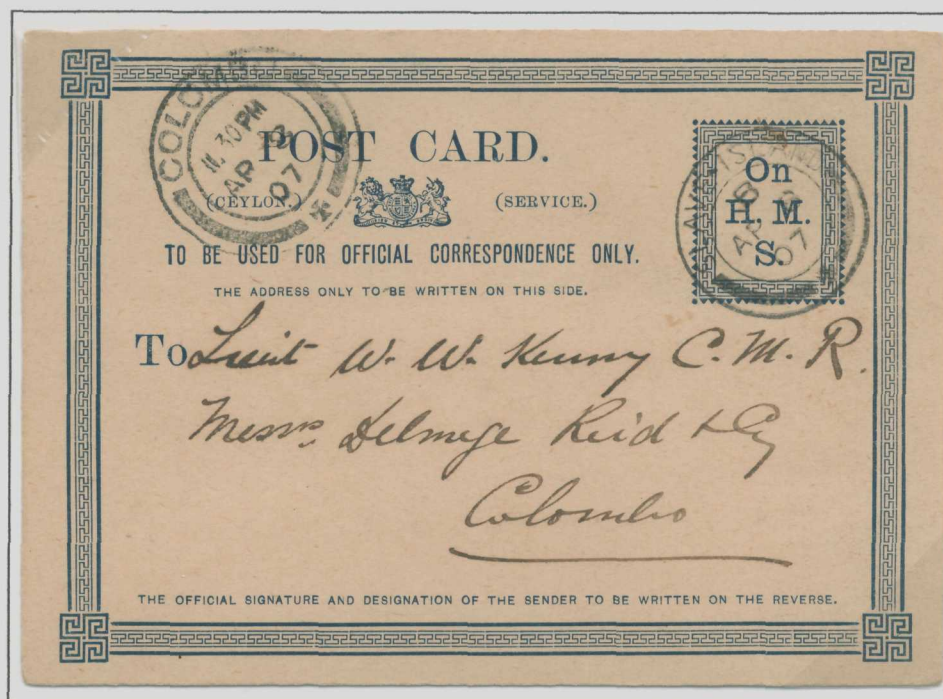


# C. Edwardian Slave Island

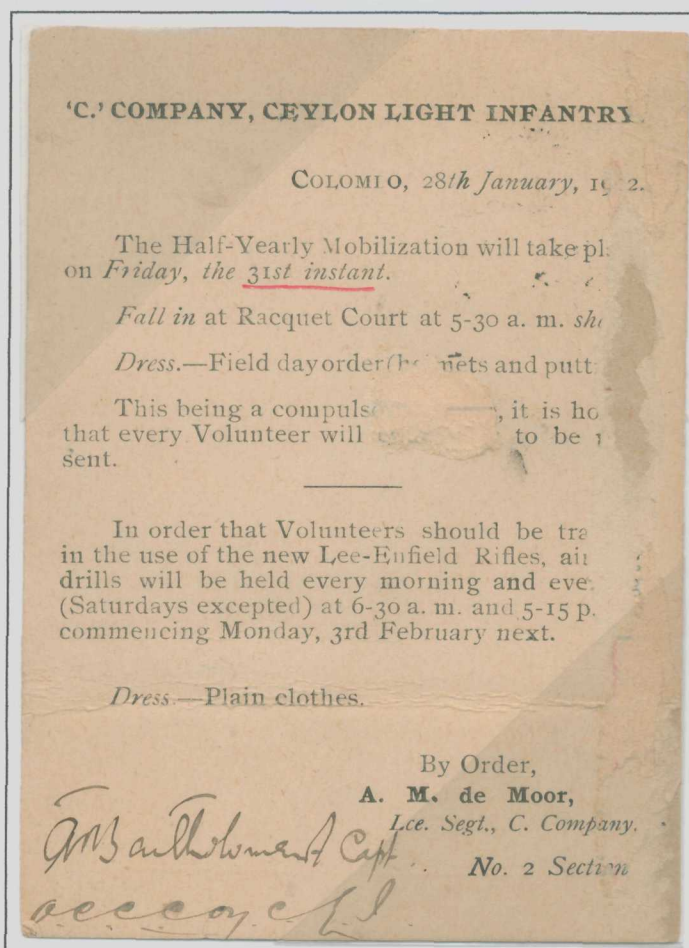
Local

The size of Slave Island was expanded by landfill of Beira Lake. This provided space for a garrison for Ceylon Military Reserve use. These cards provide evidence of military drill operations of the Ceylon Planters Rifle Corps, active in peace and in wartime.

*"If the C.M.R. are not using the range, I would greatly appreciate if the C.P.R.C. could have use of it."*  
— Captain C.P.R.C.



Free Mail OHMS with Type I cancel, April 8, 1907, official card.



*"C" Company, Ceylon Light Infantry*  
*Half-Yearly Mobilization*

Free Mail OHMS January 29, 1902 addressed to **Slave Island** volunteer.

Card marked **"Not Known"**  
Front shown at 70%.





# C. Edwardian Slave Island

# Local Mail

Telegraph service evidenced by Slave Island cancels, same as applied to postal items. Rate 20 cents per word.  
Telegraph stamp use abolished in Ceylon by August 1, 1910.



May 18, 1909



December 2, 1906 tied with  
telegraph form remains on back.



May 15, 1909

Telegraph stamps typically bisected in use.  
Less frequently found cancelled in full.

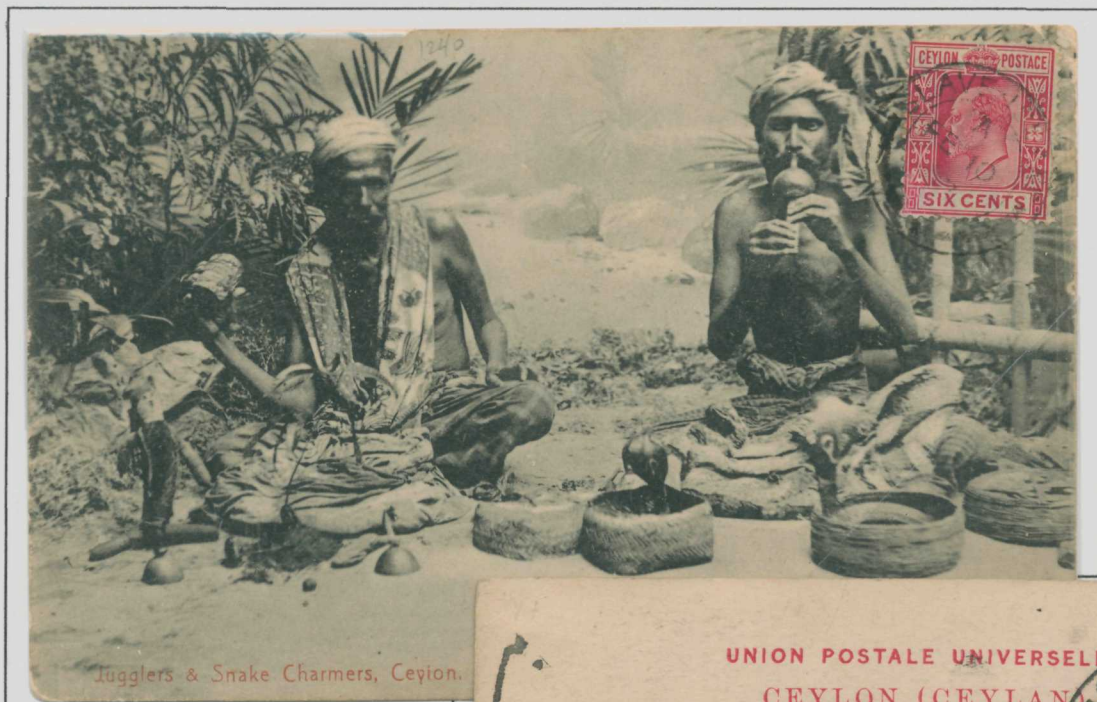


2 cent local type I cancel February 21, 1905, commercial order same day  
delivery to Colombo.



# C. Edwardian Slave Island

# Foreign Mail



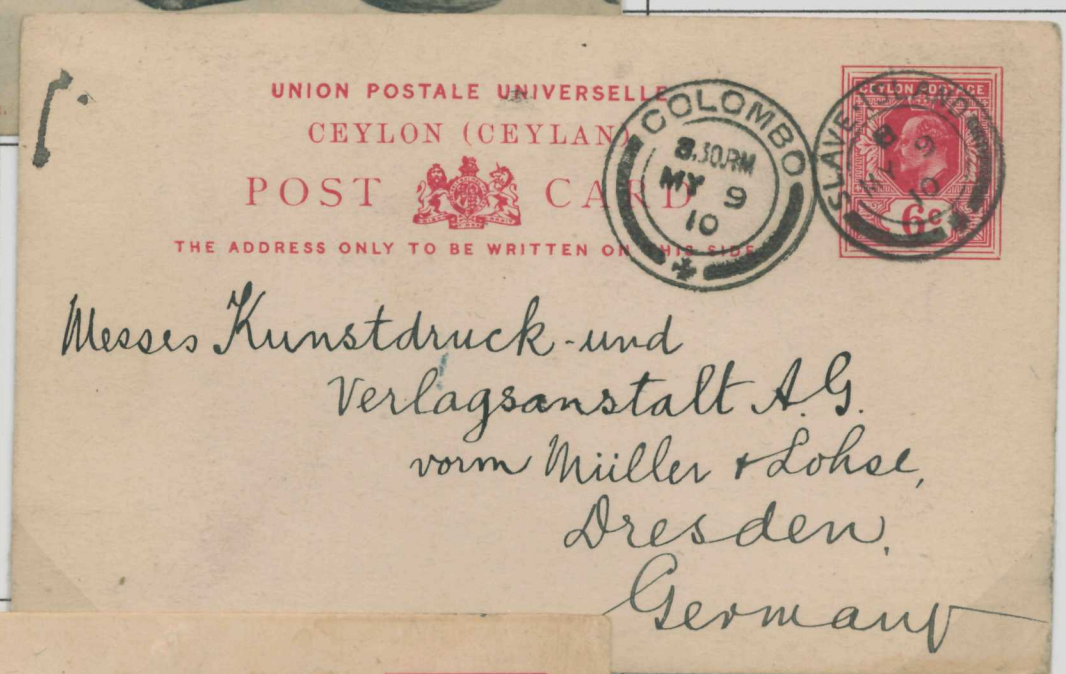
*"Jugglers & Snake Charmers"*

6 cent Type I cancel to  
**England**, February 10, 1907  
on Plâté UPU card.

Jugglers & Snake Charmers, Ceylon.

Contrasting 25 mm →  
Slave Island cancel  
with adjacent 30 mm  
Colombo.

"6c" in numerals to  
**Germany** May 9, 1910.



UNION POSTALE VERSELLE  
CEYLON (CEYLAN)  
POST CARD  
THE ADDRESS ONLY TO BE WRITTEN ON THIS SIDE  
Herren

P e t r i   &   B u i s s o n

Germany

S t u t t g a r t .

"Six Cent" foreign to  
**Germany**. May 26, 1906  
on Plâté UPU card.



## C. Edwardian Slave Island

## Foreign to India



← Overfranked 6 cent paying foreign post card rate. Mail to India allowed domestic 2 cent rate extended for **India only**.

Card sent by a tourist, with Type I cancel July 29, 1907.

↑ Colorized RPPC undivided back by Spencer & Company, India. Slave Island receiving marked on reverse next day.

5 cent letter rate with Type I October 26, 1906 → Mission mail.



**"Tea Estate Plucking"**  
Colombo Apothecaries  
colorized UPU split  
back card.



Type I Colombo, February 06, 1910 on colorized post card.  
Showing Indian Tamil laborers come who come to Ceylon to pick tea.



# C. Edwardian Slave Island

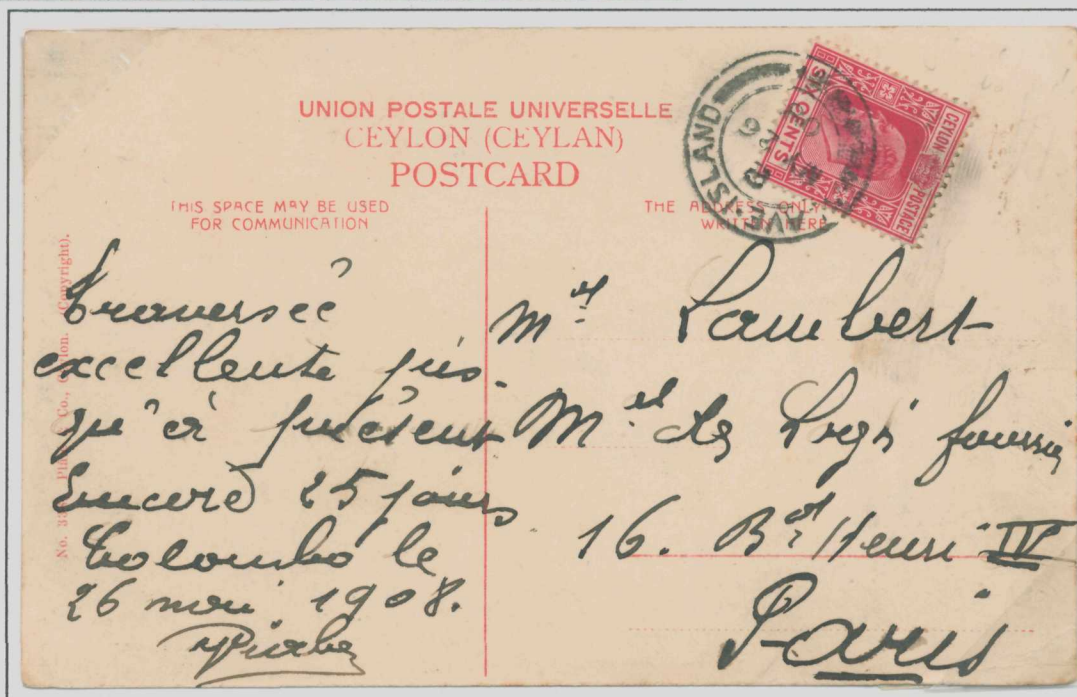
# Foreign Mail

6 cent foreign via Hong Kong to Tokyo, **Japan**. Type I cancel March 6, 1909, arrival Tokyo April 2, 1909.

Limited mail found Ceylon to Japan.



Reverse:  
"Street Scene Slave Island"



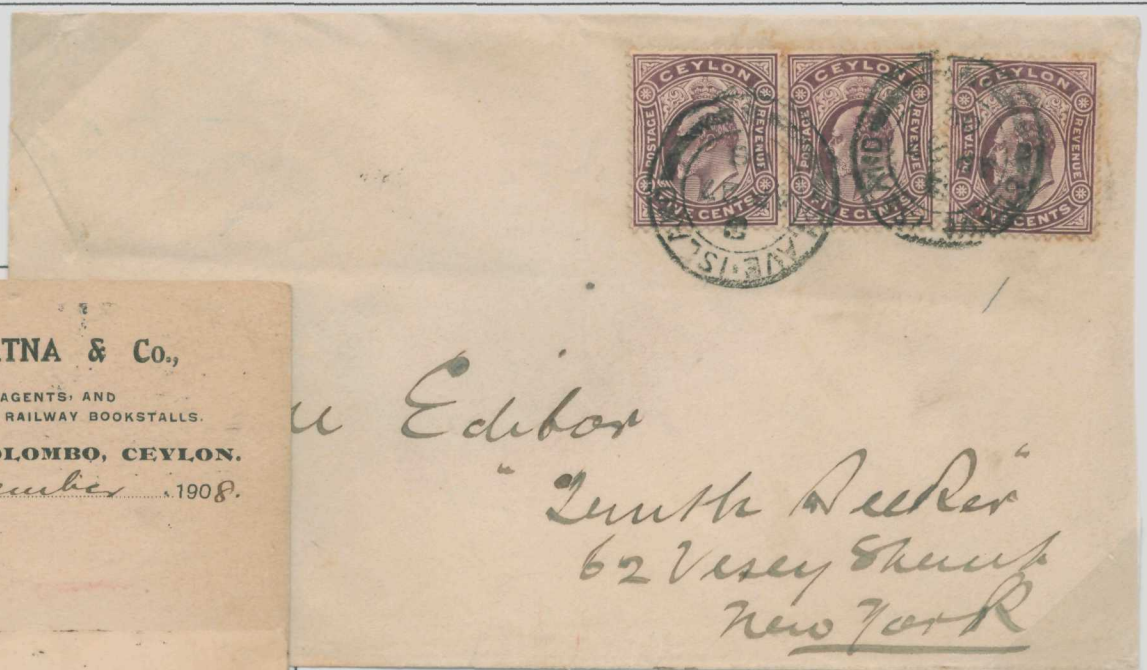
6 cent foreign to **France**, May 26, 1906 on Plàtè & Co. UPU split back card.



# C. Edwardian Slave Island

# Foreign to United States

15 cent foreign letter to  
New York with Type I  
cancel April 27, 1908.→



From **WIJAYARATNA & Co.,**  
BOOKSELLERS, NEWS AGENTS, AND  
PROPRIETORS OF THE HOTEL AND RAILWAY BOOKSTALLS.  
*Slave Island*  
**MARADANA, COLOMBO, CEYLON.**  
*24 December 1908.*

Dear Sir,

Please favour us  
with a free copy or two of  
"Guide to Autology"  
advertised in "Modern  
Miracles," to be shown to  
our customers.

Yours faithfully  
**WIJAYARATNA & Co.**  
*WBA*

## Business Growth:

Store address marked from Maradana neighborhood  
of Colombo to Slave Island. Wijayaratra & Co has  
multiple locations -

Bookseller New Agents  
Hotel and Railway Bookstalls

← 6 cent UPU card to  
**Chicago**, redirected to  
Highland Park, IL  
December 24, 1908.

15 cent foreign letter with three Type I  
strikes, sent June 1, 1904. Mourning  
cover to **Chicago**. Handstamped with  
paid marking when forwarded to  
**Creston, IA.**





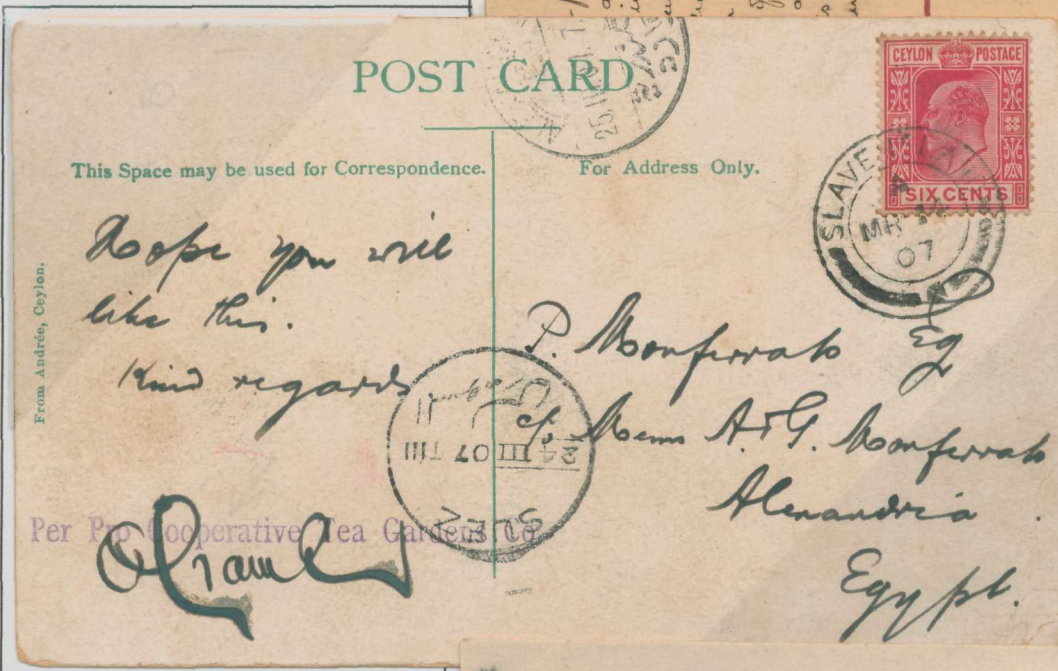
# C. Edwardian Slave Island

# Foreign Tourist Mail

Tourists enjoy Ceylon's harbor towns, but increasingly also take trips "up country" to the cool mountain tea plantations. These cards mailed from reflect travels through and within the island.

6 cent foreign to **Canada** →  
November 5, 1904 on Plâté &  
Co. split back UPU card.

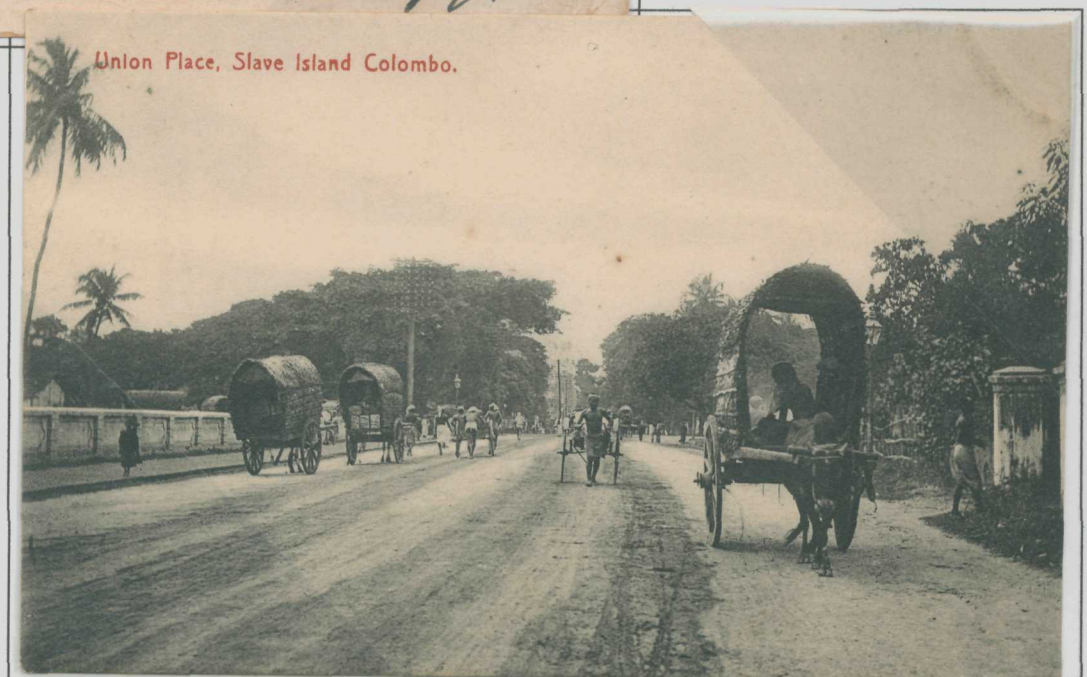
Reverse: female tea pickers.



6 cent to Alexandria,  
Egypt March 14, 1907.

Handstamped:  
"Pro Cooperative Tea  
Garden"

"Union Place,  
Slave Island Colombo"  
by Plâté & Co. Ceylon.  
Lithographed UPU divided  
back postcard. →





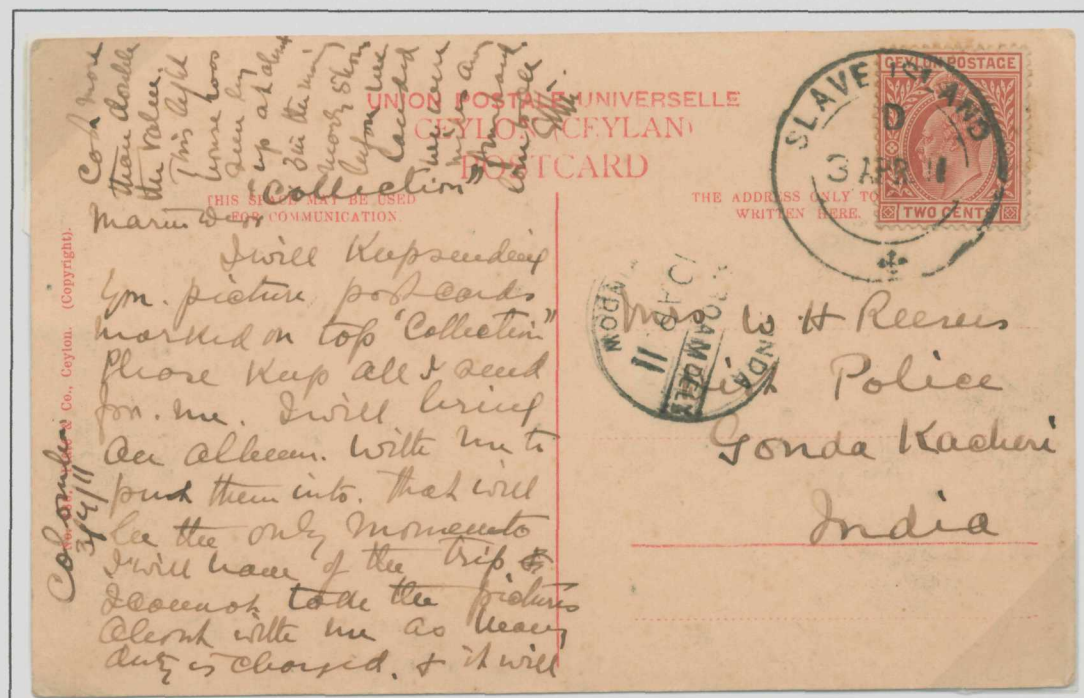
# C. Edwardian Slave Island

# Foreign Mail

The Type II features two horizontal lines above and below the date, and the replacement thick bar obliterator of Type I, and a restyled Maltese cross. Known as a "cog wheel", this postmark was used until the end of World War I.

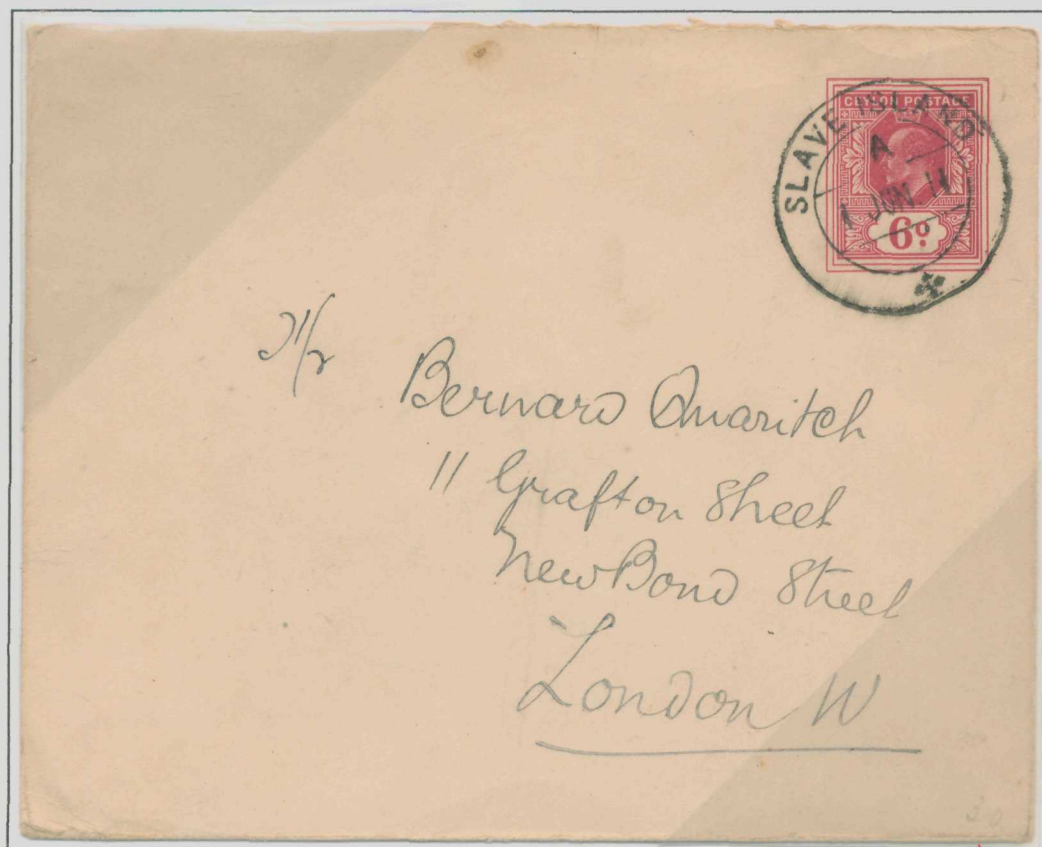


**Type II:**  
December 1, 1910  
to October 17, 1919  
30 mm



2 cent domestic extended rate to **India**, April 3, 1911, receiving marked April 11, 1911.

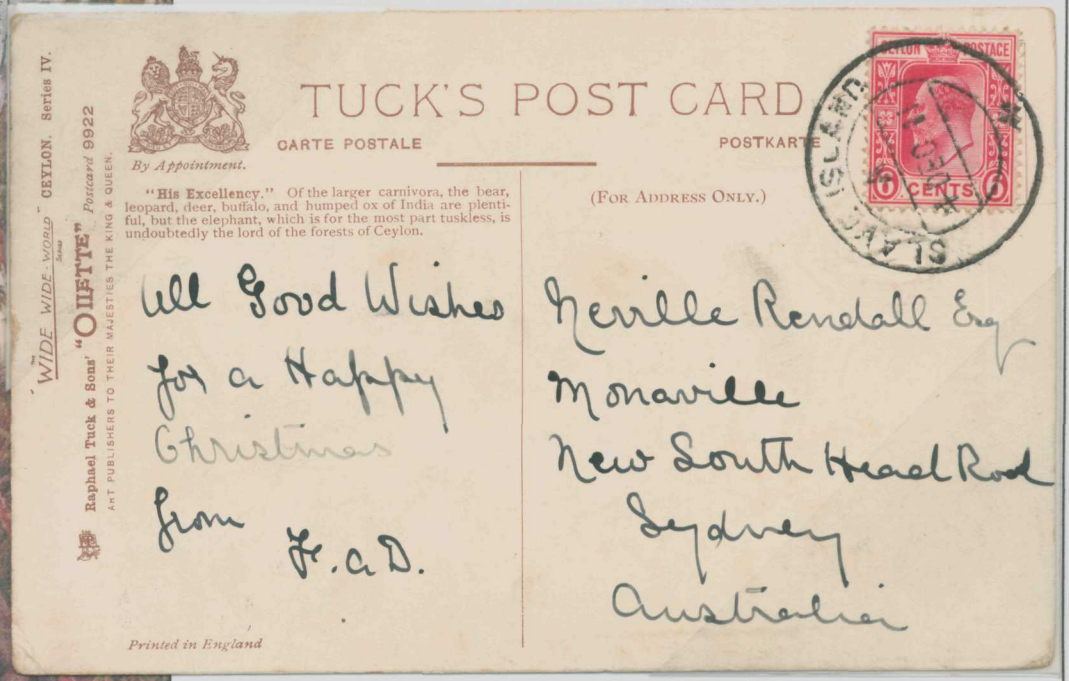
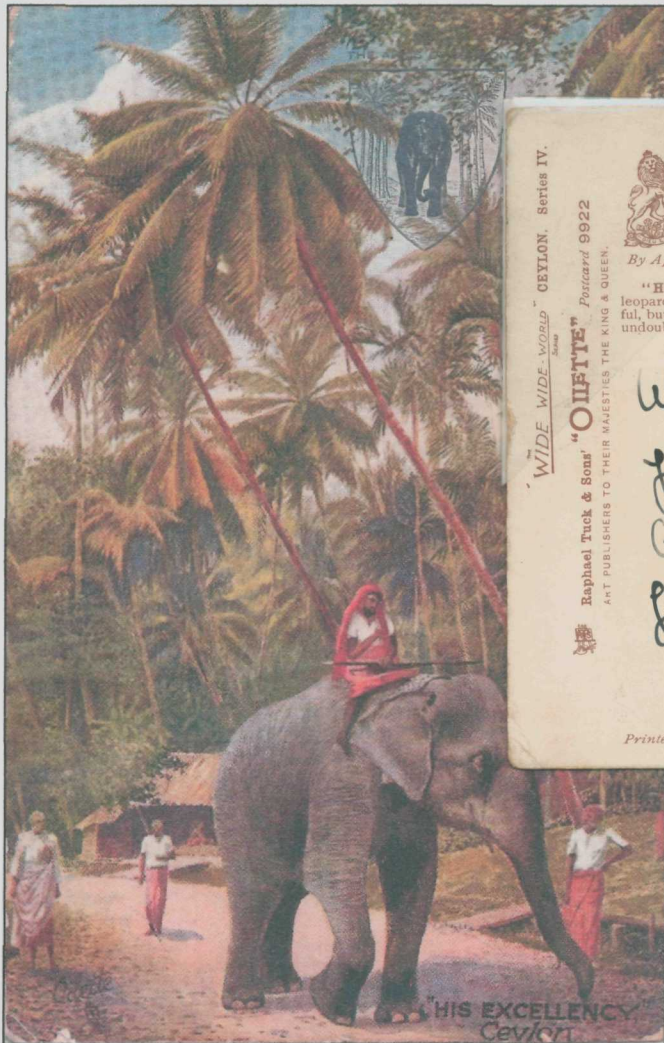
6 cent foreign  
stationery to  
**England**,  
June 1, 1911.





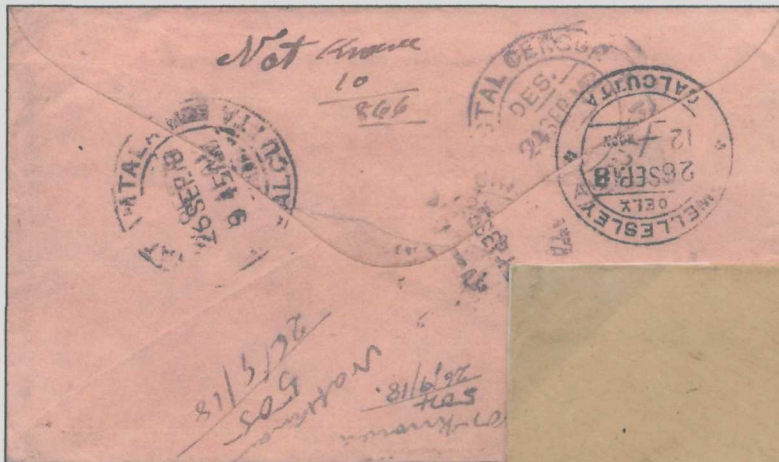
## C. Edwardian Slave Island

## Foreign Mail



6 cent foreign Type II sent December 4, 1911 to Sydney, **Australia** with Christmas greeting.

Tourist traditional Ceylon image from Tucks "Oilette" art publishing.



Reverse: Postal Censor markings  
September 24, 1918.

Marked addressee "Not Known"  
three delivery attempts.

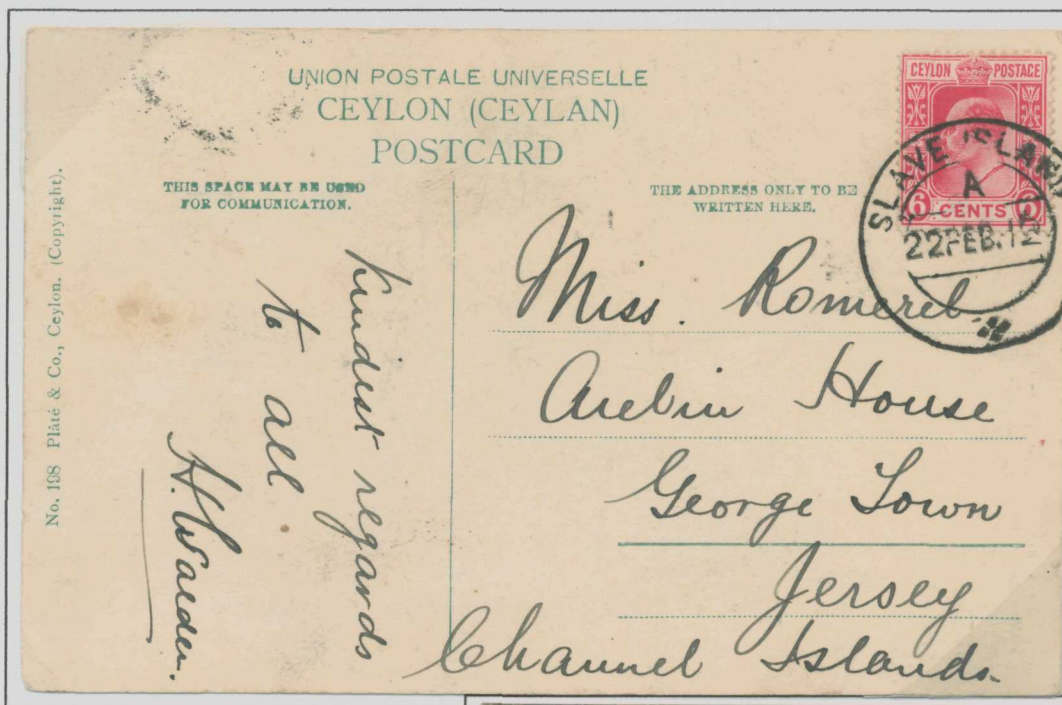
5 cent extension rate to Calcutta,  
**India.** September 19, 1918. →





# C. Edwardian Slave Island

# Foreign Tourist Mail



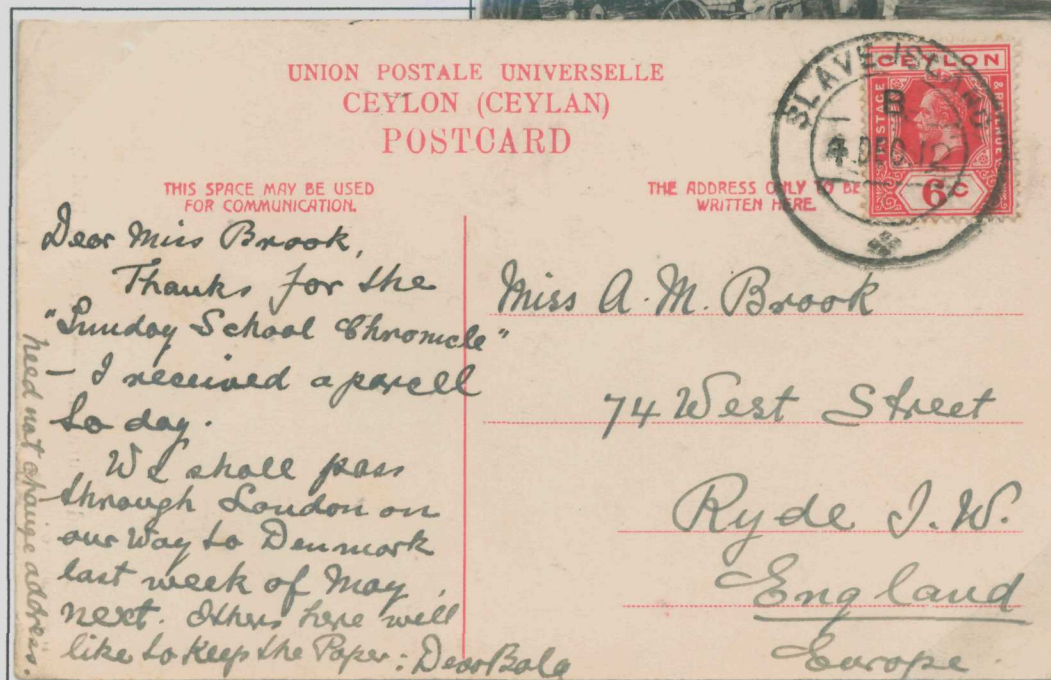
Used Ceylon Railway Ticket  
Routes through Slave Island

6 cent foreign to Jersey, **Channel Islands**. Type II cancel February 22, 1912.

**"Street Scene, Slave Island"**  
Plâté divided back lithograph card, printed in England. →



6 cent foreign to **England**,  
Type II December 4, 1912.

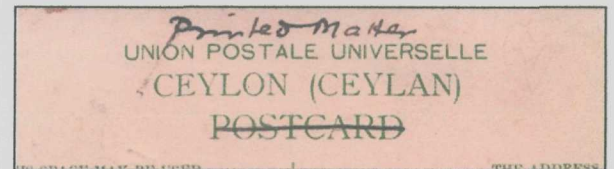


Images on the post cards of tourist mail provides views of Ceylon at points in time. Here poor Tamil children and images from a Buddhist ruins, all a short train ride from Slave Island, are provided on the reverse.



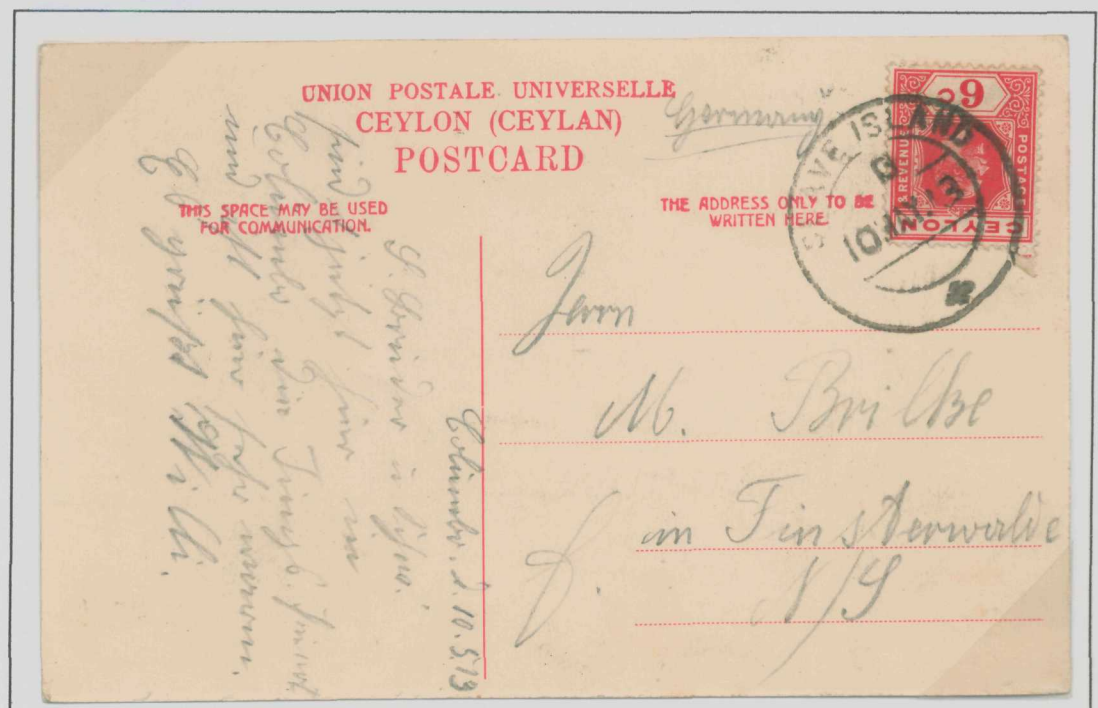


Correctly franked with 3 cent Printed Matter rate January 15, 1913. Appears underpaying foreign 6 cent rate to **Belgium**. Sent with only message handstamp, "Michael J. De Jong, Colombo, Ceylon"



On reverse, "Post Card" crossed out and "Printed Matter" written in by hand. This done to save 3 cents postage.

6 cent foreign to **Germany**  
Type II on George V card  
May 13, 1913.

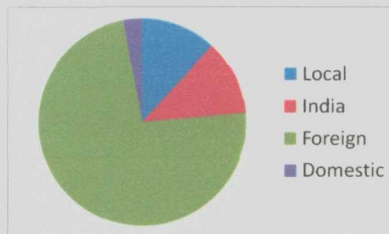




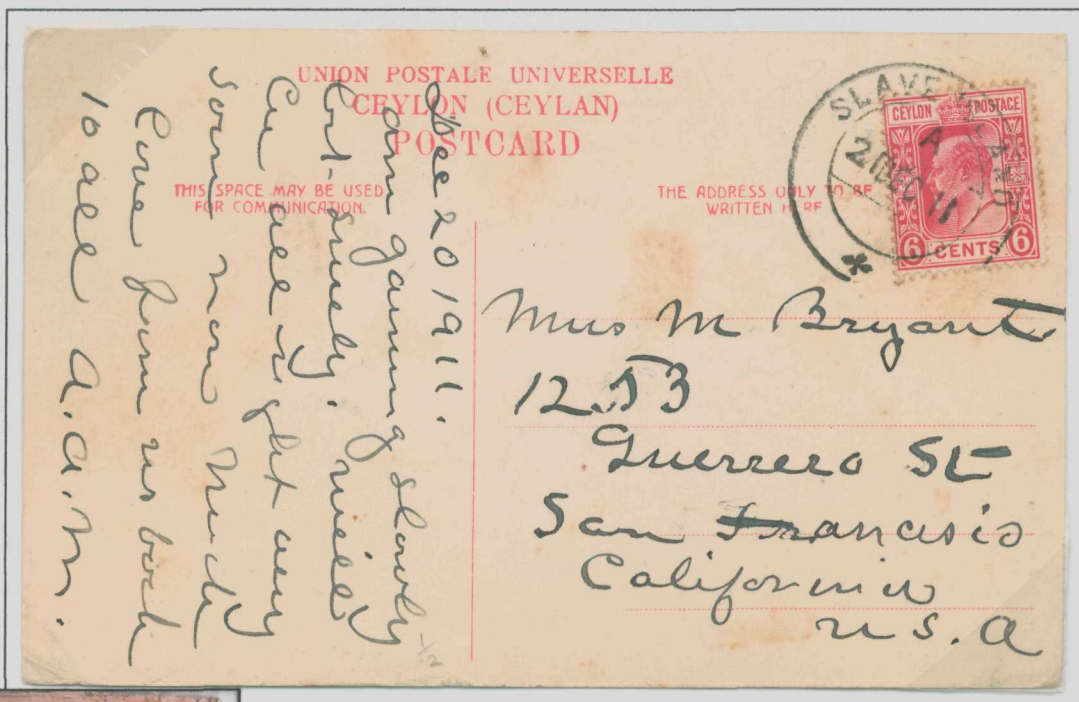
# C. Edwardian Slave Island

# Foreign Mail

## Census Edwardian Type I & II



6 cent foreign to San Francisco,  
California Type II cancel  
December 2, 1911. →



Overweight envelope to Cambridge, Illinois with 15c  
foreign letter rate on front. On reverse multi-franked  
9 cent set as seal for second ounce.

Five Slave Island Type II cancels.





# D. King George V Slave Island

# Wartime Mail

A new cancel type began during the era of King George V, this format reduced in size from the Edwardian types, and returned to the single ring format. The cancel is first seen on wartime mail, overprinted for war tax purposes.



## Type I:

January 10, 1919  
to August 30, 1928  
25 mm

War Stamps with Type I  
cancel: Slave Island April 14,  
1920 to California. →



← **Earliest Recorded Use**  
**January 10, 1919**

Cancelled predates earlier recording  
by over two months.



Ceylon War Tax stamps were issued in 1918, these shown with Slave Island Type I cancels, the blocks also  
**precede the prior earliest known usage of the cancel** of March 19, 1919.



3 cent local to Colombo, Fort. December 3, 1920. Rate lowered from the 4  
cent war rate to 3 cents in 1920.



February 13,  
1919 →



February 16, 1919



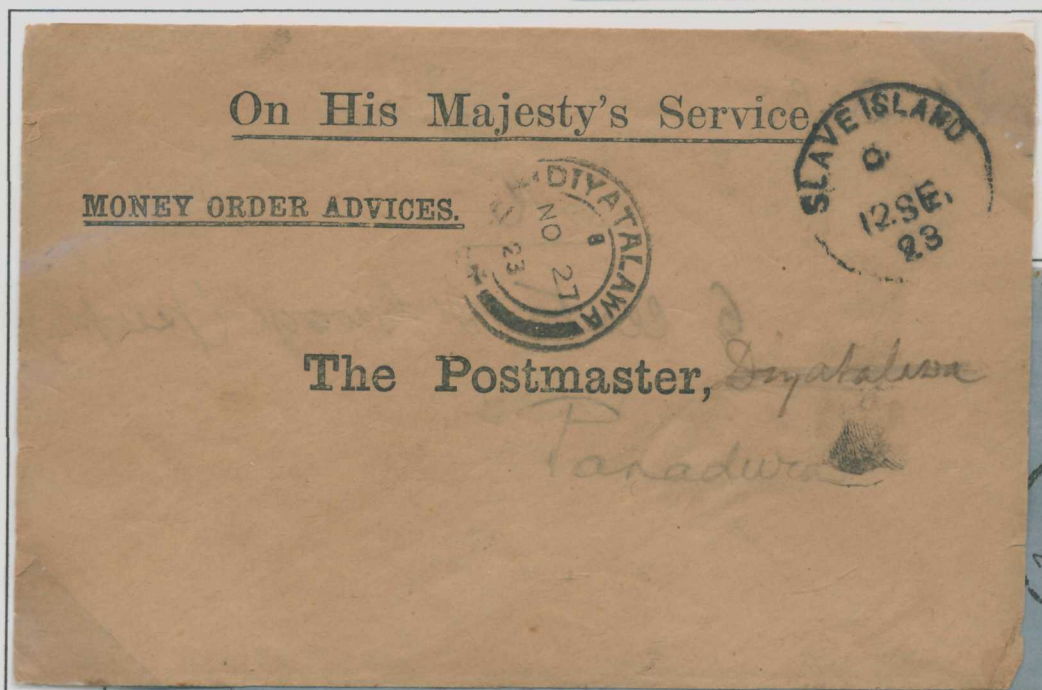
# D. King George V Slave Island

# Domestic Mail

6 cent definitive Government  
Printing Office envelope with Type  
VI cancel September 23, 1921.

To "Wagga", receiving marking  
reverse "Waga" next day, 30 miles.

**OHMS Money Order transmittal**  
from Slave Island to Diyatalawa,  
redirected with Type I cancel  
September 12, 1923. ↓



↓ **Perfin "C.A.V.E."** from Cave  
Publishing Company in Colombo.



12 cent double domestic letter rate for overweight envelope with Type I postmark April 19, 1922.



# D. King George V Slave Island

# Domestic Mail

Parcel tag Slave Island.  
Nine Type I cancels,  
September 19, 1923.

Rated 1 Rupee 5 cents, rated  
for under 20 pounds.

Parcel tags from Slave  
Island seldom seen.

## COLOMBO COMMERCIAL Co., Ltd.

ENGINEERS

Factories built or  
equipped with  
machinery.

Water-Power Plant  
Schemes undertaken  
Installations for  
Factories.

Warehouses, Cooly Lines, Rope  
Wire Shoots.

Carpentry, Doors, Windows  
tions, etc.

Agents for  
**THORNYCROFT AND DAY-ELDER**

Head Office and Engineering Works:

**SLAVE ISLAND, COLOMBO.**

BRANCH WORKSHOPS AND ENGINEERS  
STATIONED IN THE PLANTING DISTRICTS.



From COLOMBO COMMERCIAL Co., LIMITED.

*The Supat  
Ormidale Estate  
559 Norwood*

↑ Reverse (at 80%)

Slave Island business  
Colombo Commercial to  
Tea Plantation, Ormidale in  
Norwood, central Ceylon.



# D. King George V Slave Island

# Foreign Tourist Mail

A revision in the postal rate in 1921 introduced Empire Mail as a new category, with the post card rate at **ten cents**.

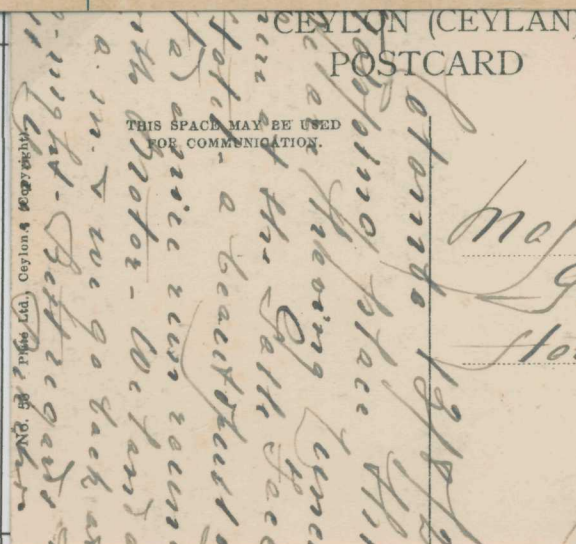


12 cents with two Type I cancels, **overpaying** the 10 cent rate, December 20, 1921 to **England**.

A tourist would be much more likely to overpay a rate and not know rate changes.

**"Lunch here at the Galle Face Hotel"**

- location close to the Slave Island post office.



↑ The correct 10 cent Empire rate on Type I August 13, 1923.

Typical tourist card of local shopping scene on textured Plâté Card.

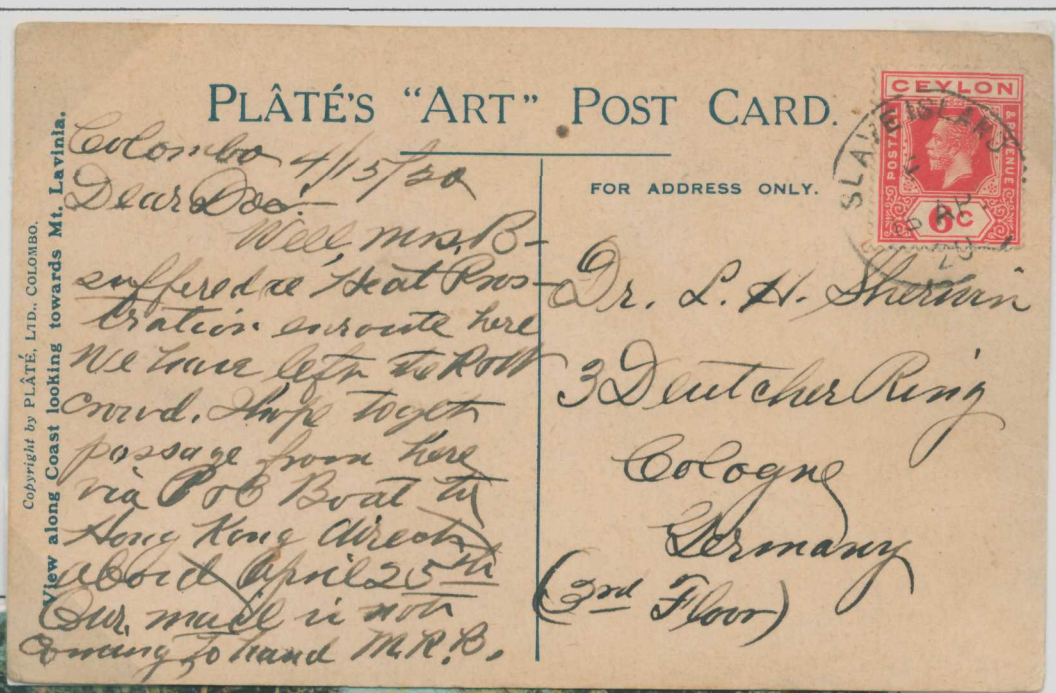


# D. King George V Slave Island

# Foreign Tourist Mail

Cards using the 6 cent rate. This rate ended when the 1921 Empire rate of 12 cents went into effect.

6 cent Type I on April 5, 1920 to Cologne, **Germany**



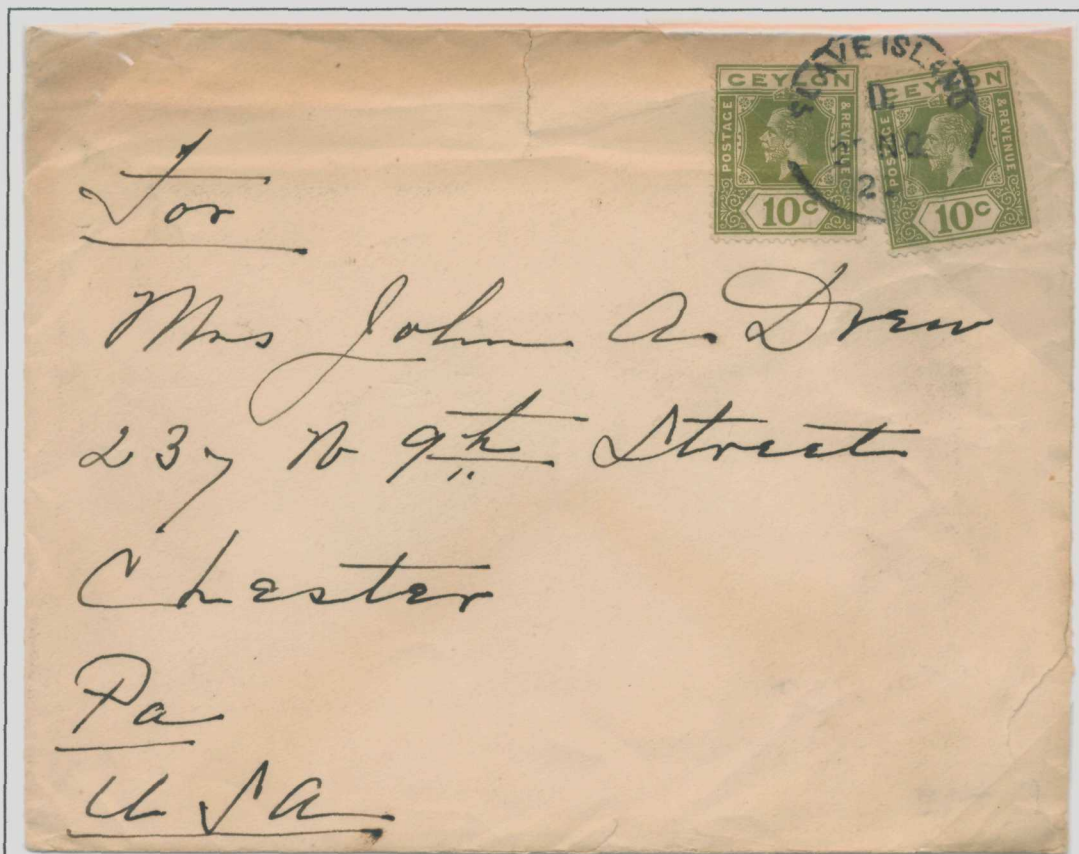
↑ Colorized Slave Island image Colombo Apothecaries colorized UPU card, a tourist favorite.

← 6 cent Type I January 8, 1921 to Stockholm, Sweden



# D. King George V Slave Island

# Foreign Tourist Mail



← 20 cent Type I cancel  
November 27, 1921 to  
Chester, PA.

Rate change: 1921 rate  
change to the Empire  
Rate.



On Reverse: Stationery from the Galle Face Hotel.

Art Deco style luggage tag from the famous  
Galle Face Hotel, still in operation today. →



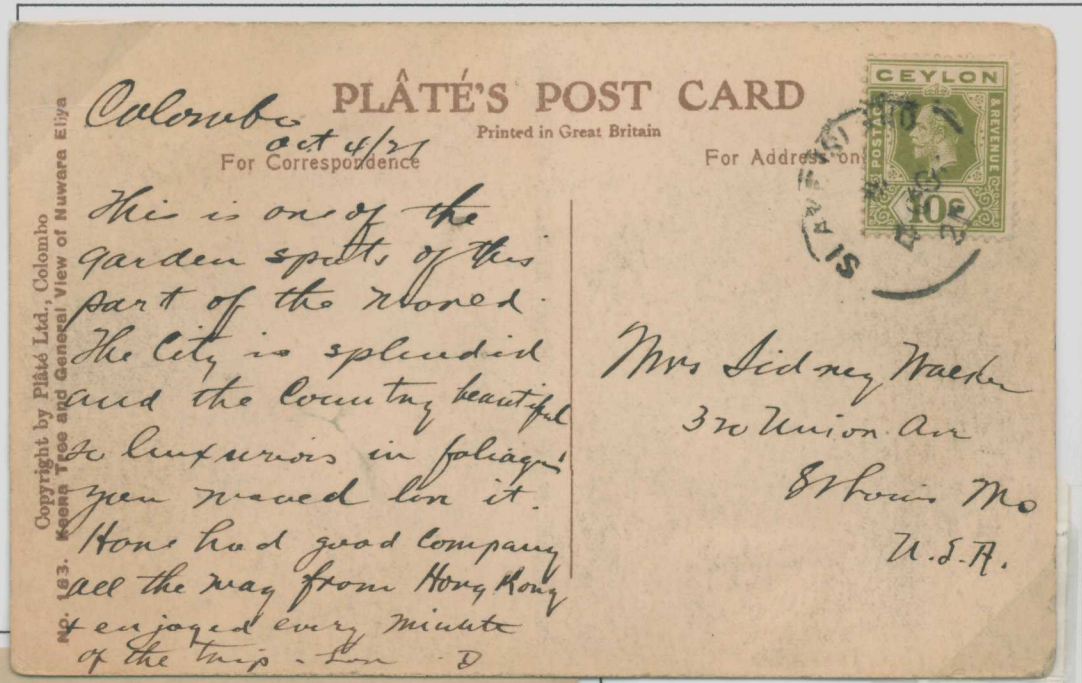


# D. King George V Slave Island

# Foreign Tourist Mail

*"The city is splendid and the country is beautiful so luxurious in foliage"*

10 cents **underpaying** the new → Empire rate. Type I cancel, October 4, 1921 to St. Louis, Mo.



12 cent with Type I cancel, July 20, 1922 to Vineyard Haven, MA.

← *"You would love the hats and baskets, made of lovely gay colored straw!"*

- on Plâtè Card, "Native Shops"

12 cent with two Type I → cancels, August 16, 1922 to Berkley, CA.

*"It's your old friend—on the other side of the world again"*





# D. King George V Slave Island

# Foreign Tourist Mail



← On Reverse two 6c cent with Type I on March 22, 1923 to **Surry, England.**

*Plate split back Post Card, printed in Great Britain.*

20 cent rate Two Type I cancels on → February 23, 1923 to **Cambridge, MA.**



Envelope Reverse



*Galle Face Hotel split back postcard engraved and printed in Colombo, Ceylon by H.W. Cave & Company.*



# D. King George V Slave Island

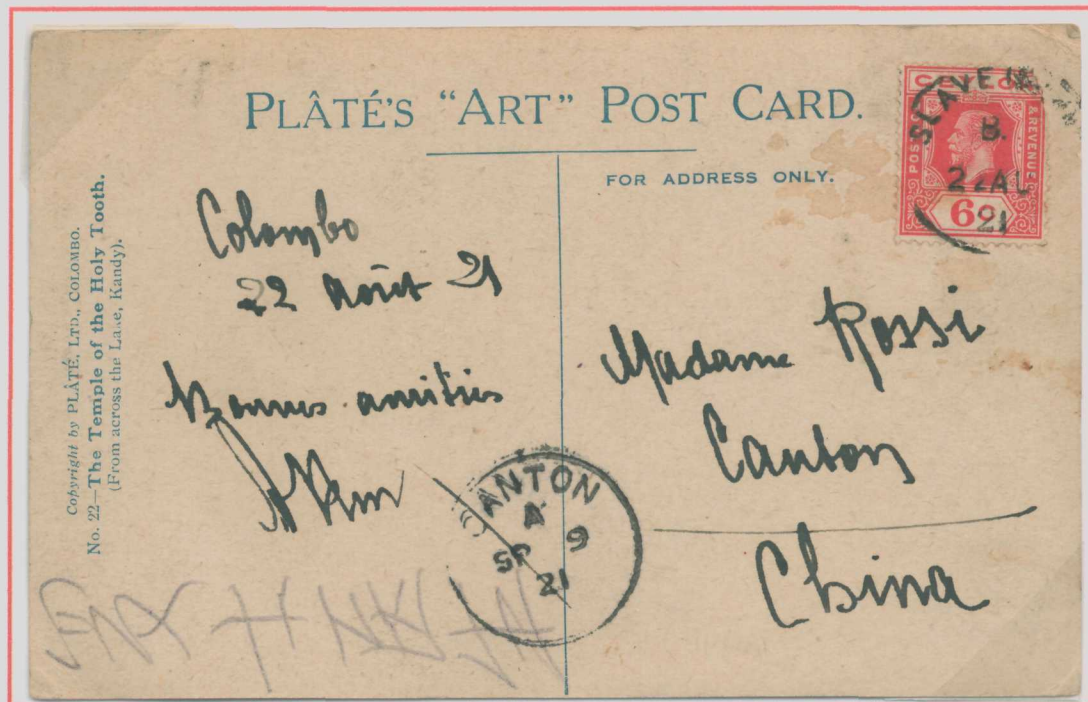
# Foreign Mail

Until late in 1921 the rates to foreign destinations were 6 cent for postcards and 15 cents for letters. These were cancelled with the Type I postmarks.

6 cent foreign post card  
August 22, 1921 to  
Canton, China.

Late usage of rate.

Tourist mail to China  
seldom seen.



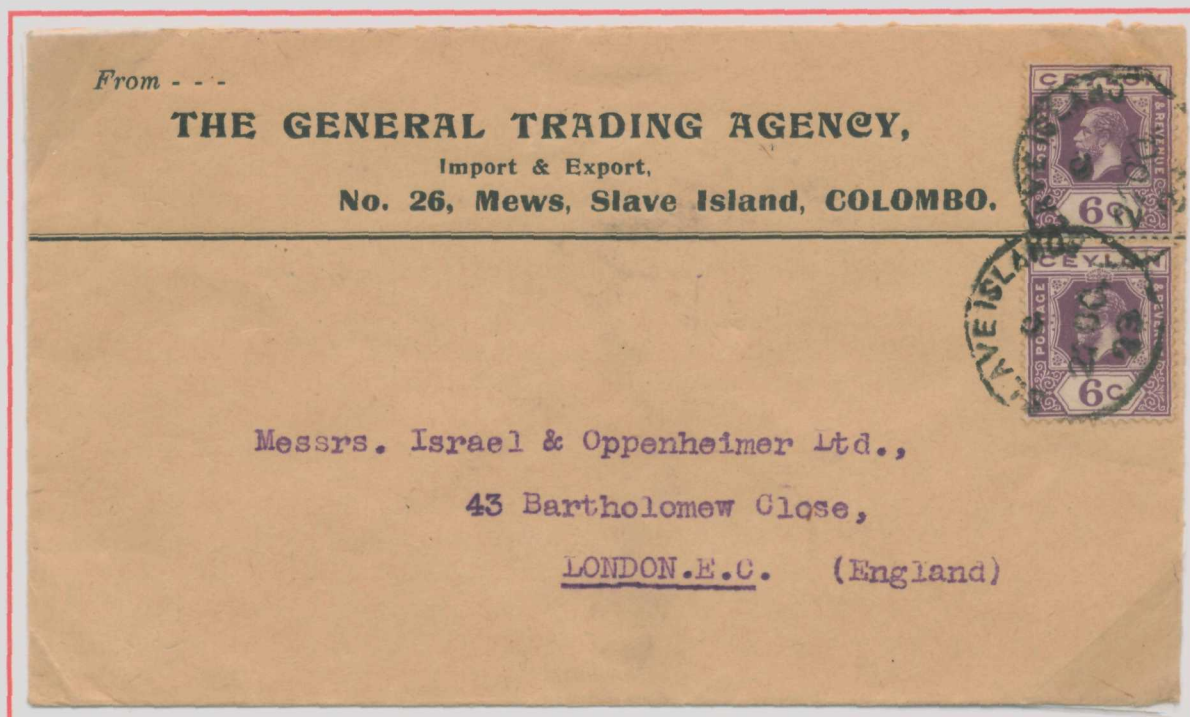
15 cent foreign rate with Type I postmark June 28, 1921 to Philadelphia, PA.



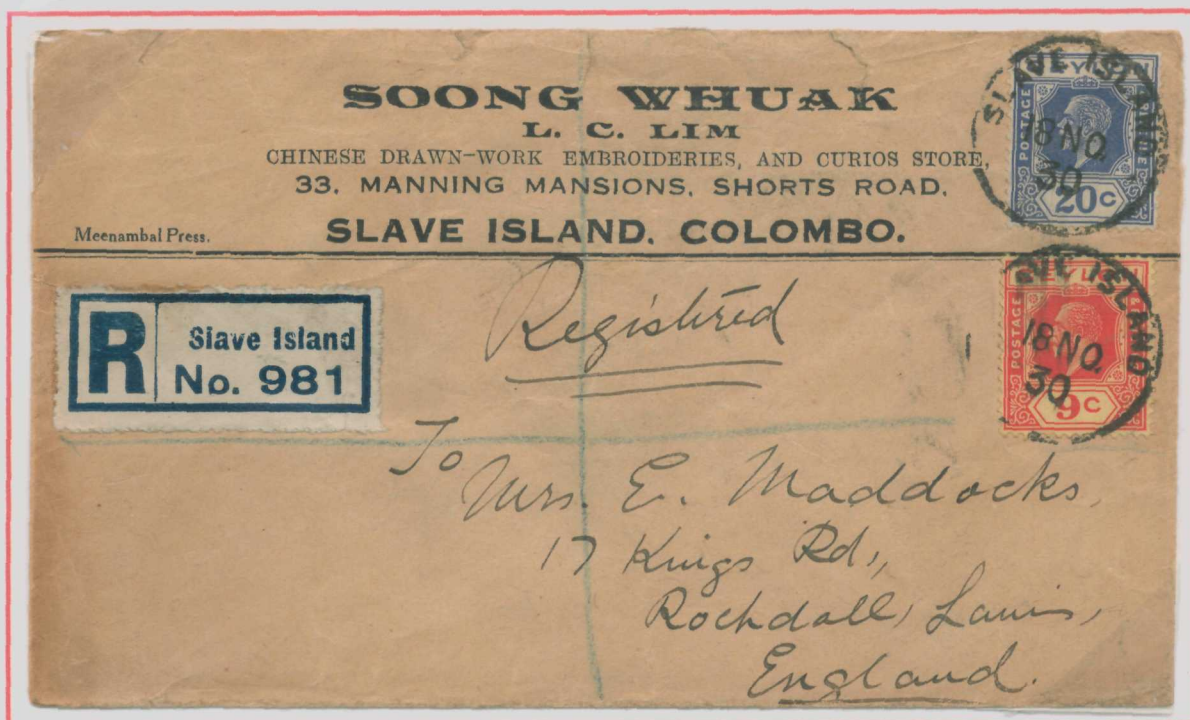
## D. King George V Slave Island

## Foreign Commercial

Seldom seen commercial covers from Ceylon, these two commercial covers sent overseas provide further evidence of Slave Island's growth.



12 cent Empire Rate with two Type I postmark October 27, 1923 to London, England.



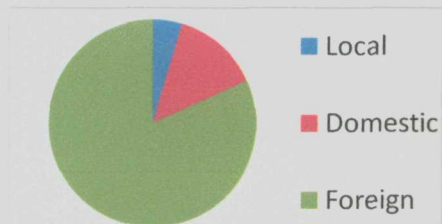
12 cent Empire Rate with Registration, Type I postmark November 18, 1930 to England.



# D. King George V Slave Island

# Foreign Tourist Mail

## Mail Census Type I Cancel

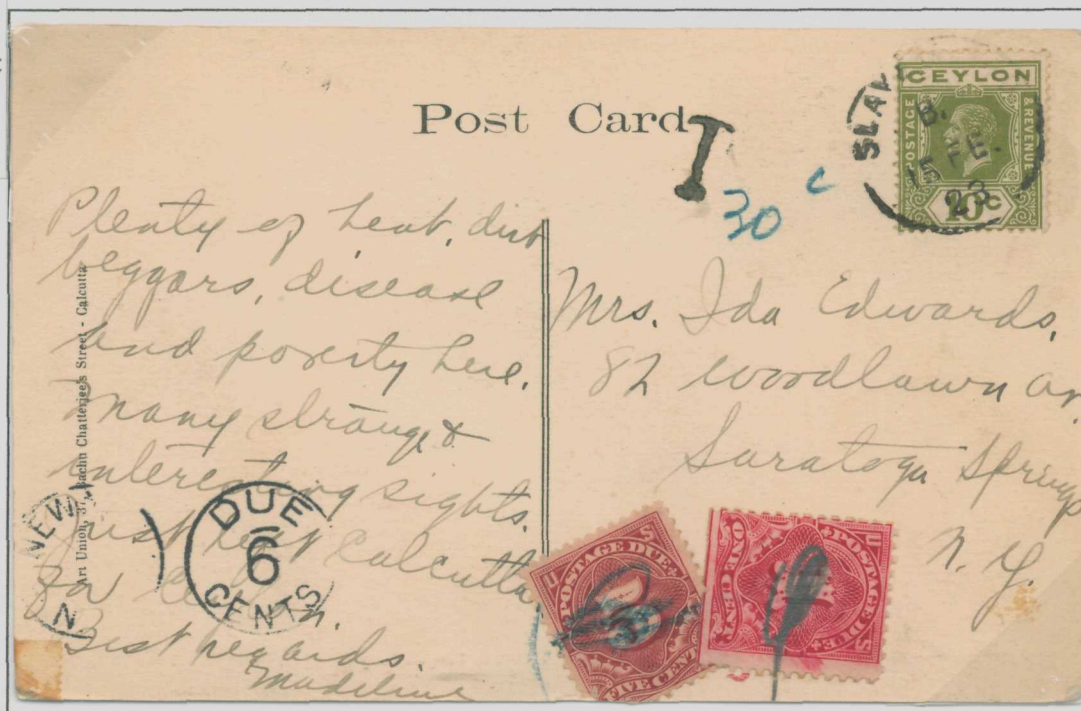


Mail shifts away from largely domestic in early years.

This tourist not so impressed:

*"Plenty of heat, dust, beggars, disease and poverty here."*

**Why so much tourist mail?** Ceylon's tea industry and growing prosperity brought increased awareness of the island. Ceylon's had become a popular cruise and vacation holiday stop. Local residential areas turned to commercial.



10 cents paid. Marked "30c" for 30 centimes due and assessed "Due 6 cents" on US conversion. Sent February 15, 1923 to Saratoga Springs, NY.



20 cent Empire Rate Type I postmark January 16, 1922 to New York, NY.



Envelope Reverse  
Posted in Slave Island on  
a stop from a cruise line.



# E. King George VI Slave Island

## Foreign

A new cancellation came into use at the time of the Silver Jubilee. King George V died within a year of the Jubilee issues. The new cancel increases the font size of "Slave Island" and date stamp characters, which are centered on the marking.



**Type I:**  
March 13, 1934  
to April 3, 1947  
25 mm



↑ Slave Island Commercial  
November 20, 1940  
Rate: 6 cents to India.

↑ 40 cents to Germany  
August 5, 1935. Rate: 15  
cent letter, and 25 cent  
Registration. Forwarded.



Franking with set of Coronation issues for King George VI. Coronation commemorative cover sent to philatelist R. Proud, England with three Type VII strikes. Rate: 9 cents to Britain, 25 cents Registration. Few philatelic covers cancelled in Slave Island found.



# E. King George VI Slave Island Foreign Wartime Mail

The Type I cancel, first introduced in 1934, was used on the KGVI stamps until the late 1940s. George VI stamps were issued replacing the earlier King's portrait.

## "Service to Prisoners of War"

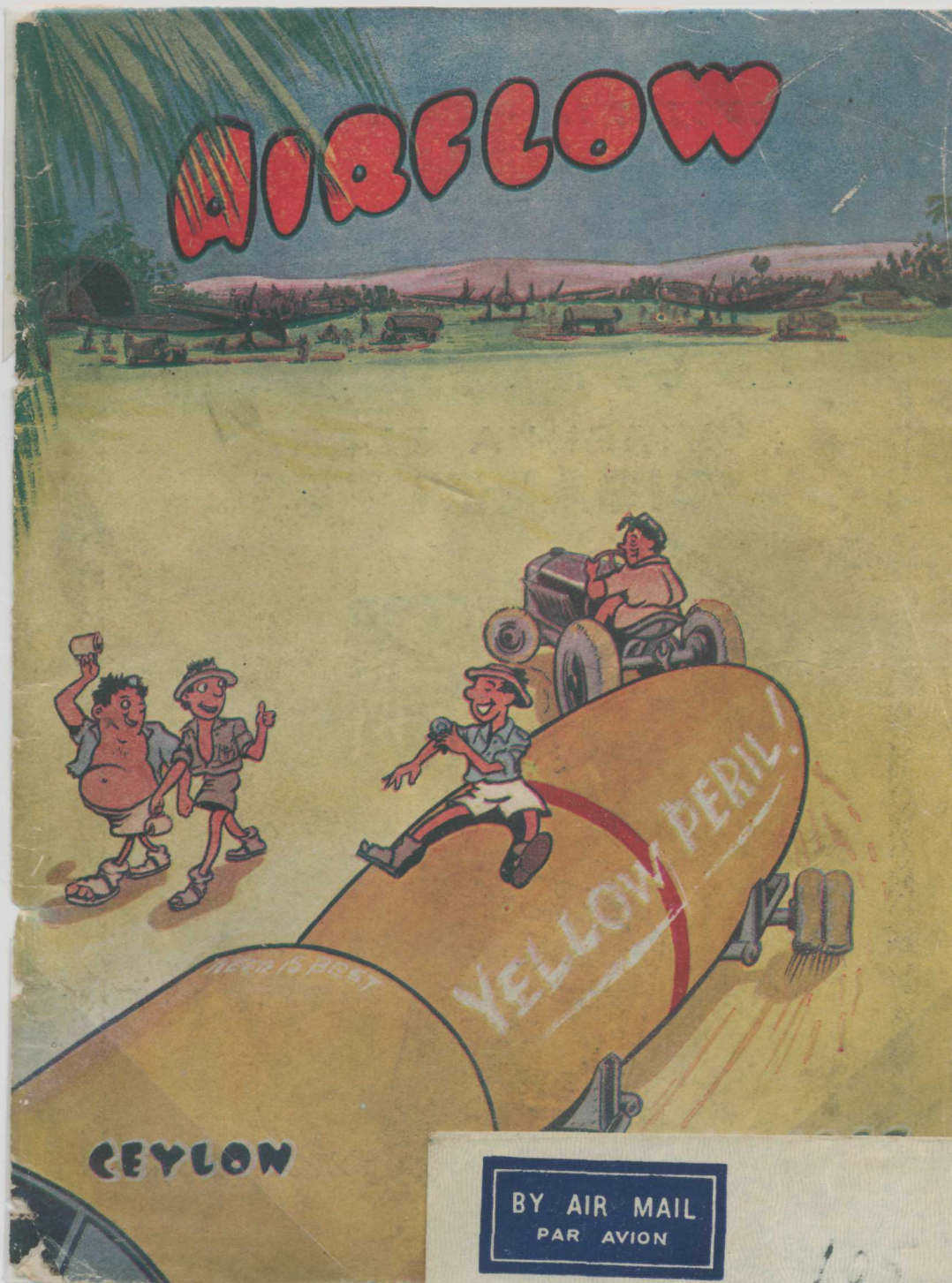
International Red Cross Committee Geneva  
Delegation in Ceylon letter to London Delegation



1 Rupee empire rate for air mail. Type I postmarked November 3, 1945 to London, **England**.  
Limited Red Cross Service to Prisoners of War mail known from Ceylon.



# E. King George VI Slave Island Foreign Wartime Mail



British RAF operated from bases in Colombo (including Slave Island) and Trincomalee, Ceylon.

The "Base P.O. Ceylon" cancel was used by forces mail instead of civilian processing through the **Slave Island** or Colombo G.P.O.

← Available from the base Post Office:

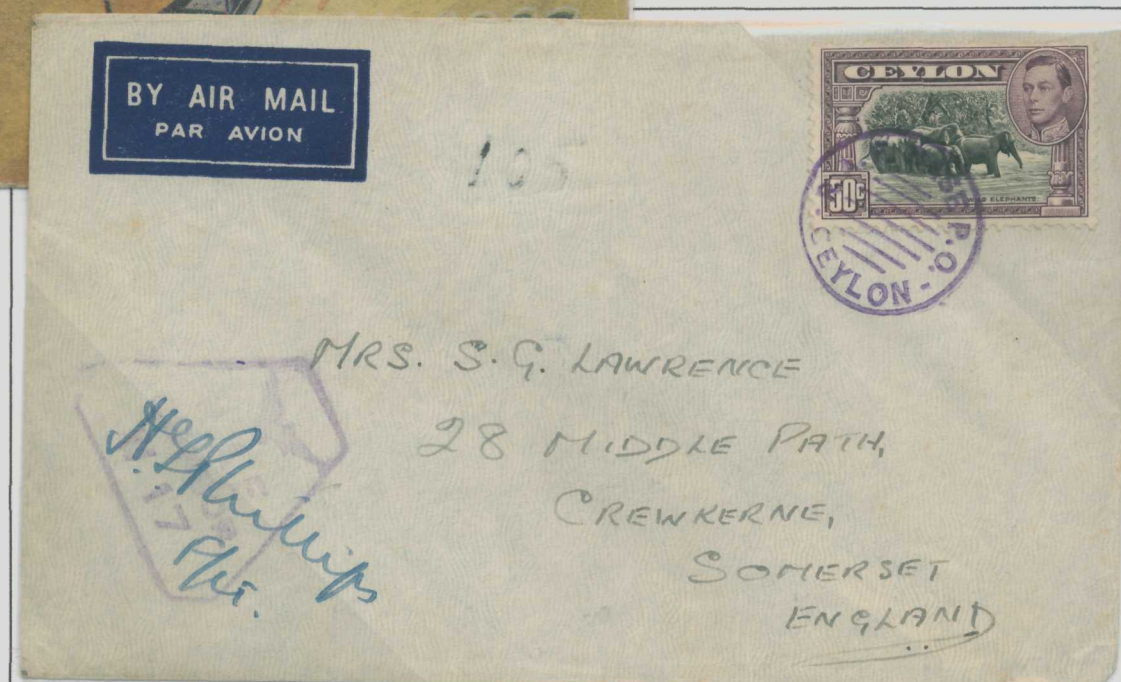
**Airflow.** The RAF magazine of Ceylon published monthly starting in 1939.

Inside: "Published by Servicemen for Servicemen."

50 cent military rate Airmail  
RAF censor cover to England.

Letter processed & cancelled  
at "Base P.O. Ceylon"

Military installations  
operating on Slave Island.





# E. King George VI Slave Island Foreign Wartime Mail

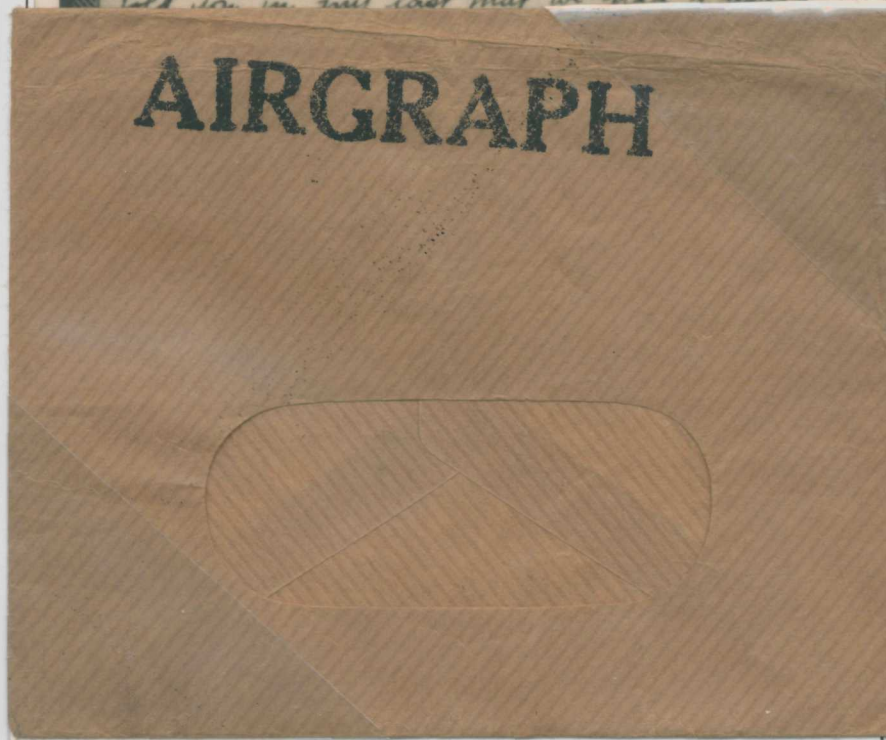
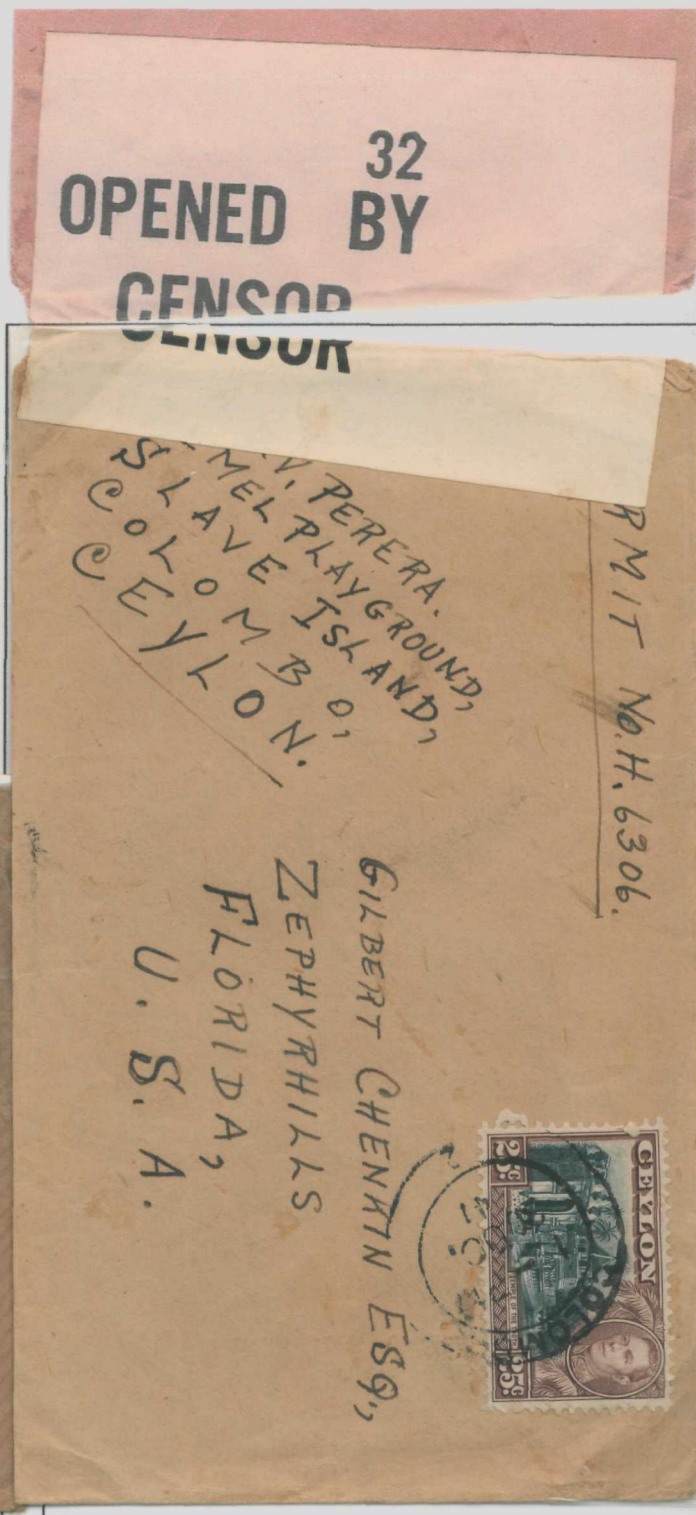
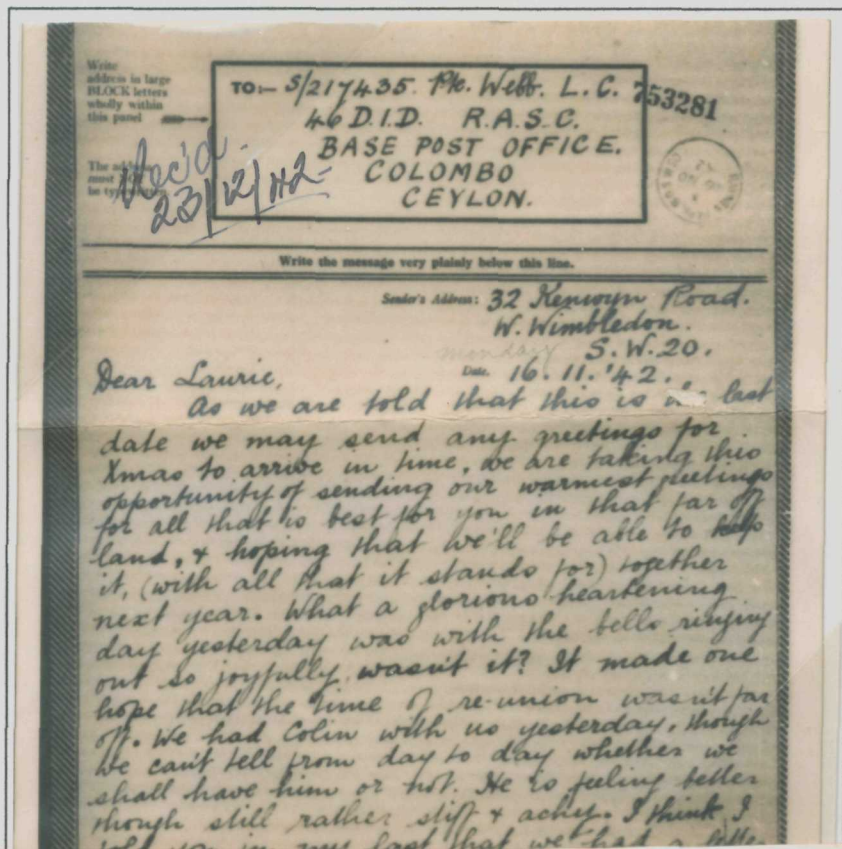
During World War II, wartime military bases operated on Slave Island and in Colombo, fighting back Japanese attacks beginning in April, 1942.

↓ British WWII Microfilmed Correspondence: Airgraph To Royal Army Service Corp, November 16, 1942. Marked received December 23, 1942.

↓ 25cent to **Florida, USA** October 30, 1941

**Slave Island** return address War censored and postmarked at GPO.

Full size scan of censor label on reverse.





# E. King George VI Slave Island

# Foreign Wartime Mail

Why so much foreign mail? Ceylon enjoyed prosperity with tea exports, and had generated extensive foreign trade. During the war years, the composition of foreign mail changed. Increased military mail, and a decrease in tourist cards.

35 cent Registered to **India** → Sent December 20, 1944.  
Opened by Examiner in India. Indian cog wheel cancel.

Two Slave Island Type VII cancels. Cover shown opened.

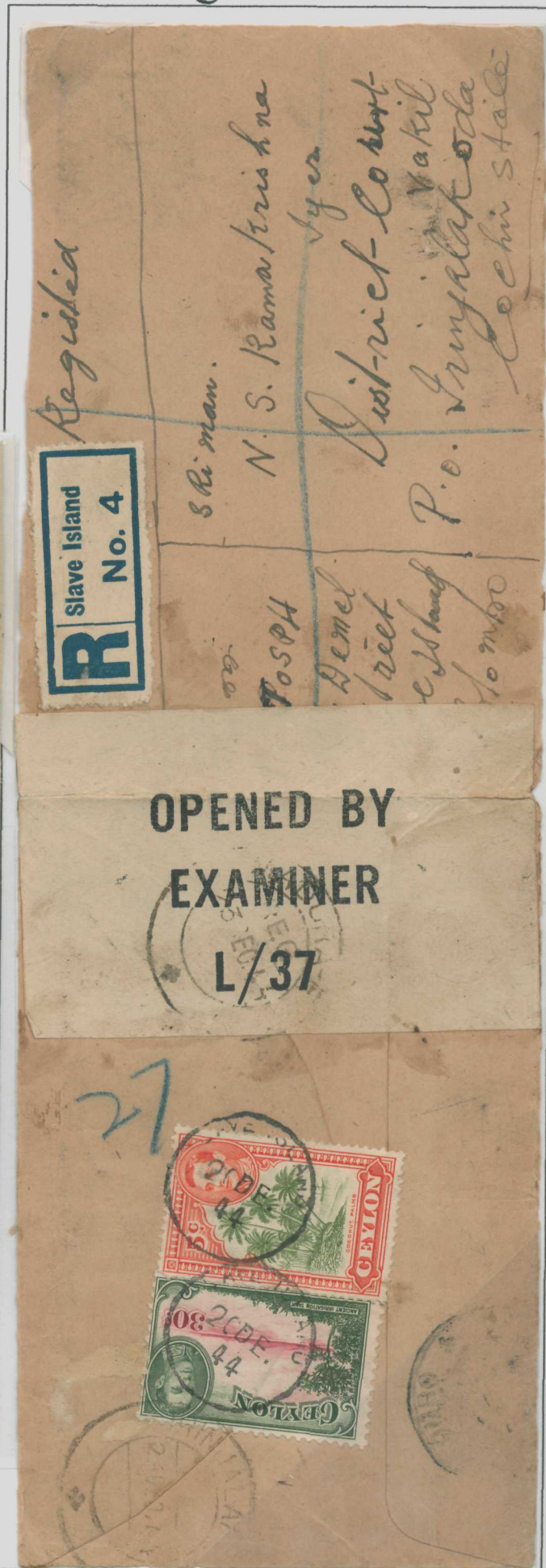
## Colombo Map with Slave Island

Here is the map of Colombo which we were unable to publish last month.

It is reproduced by permission of the Ceylon Survey Department and the block was kindly loaned by the Automobile Association of Ceylon.



From **Airflow**. The RAF magazine of Ceylon illustrated this map of Colombo for servicemen. Slave Island and Slave Island Post Office shown.





# E. King George VI Slave Island

# Foreign Commercial

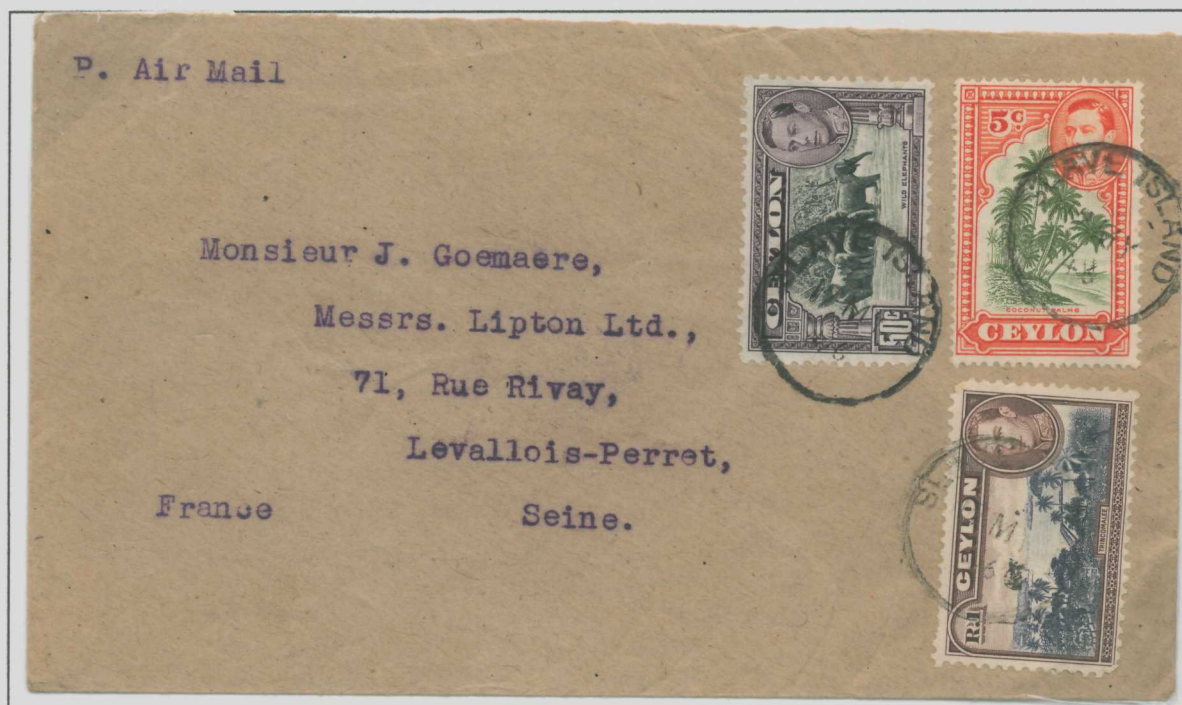
New Type II Slave Island cancel with "Slave Island" text set closer and on the cancel ring, 25 mm size.

## Policy Change – Mail Handling

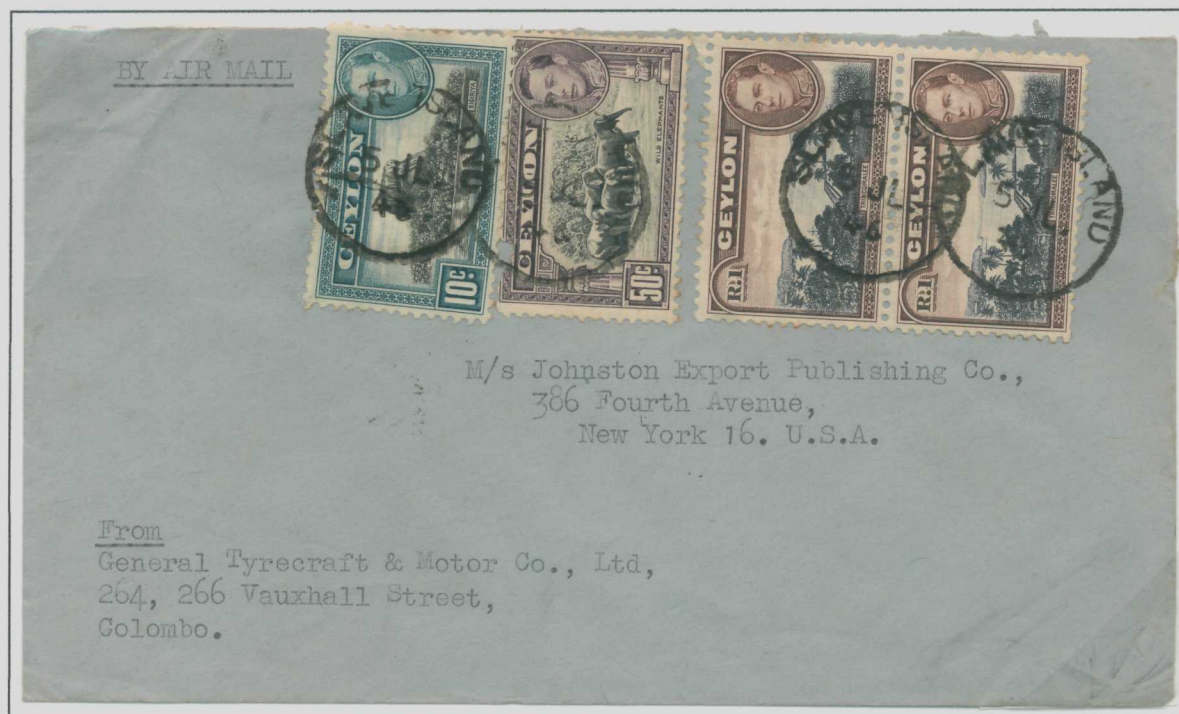
Mail dropped off at the Slave Island post office would be taken to the parent Colombo GPO for processing and cancelling. **Only mail handled over at the postal counter would continue to receive the Slave Island cancel.**



**Type II:**  
April 19, 1944  
November 24, 1958  
25 mm



1 Rp 55 cent Airmail letter to **France** May 19, 1946. Commercial to Lipton (tea) Ltd, special service, cancelled at counter with three Type II cancels.

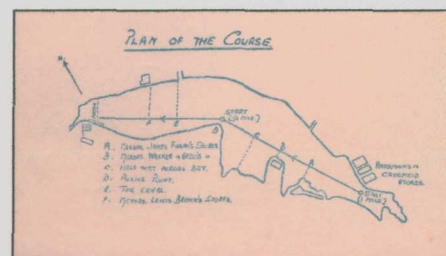
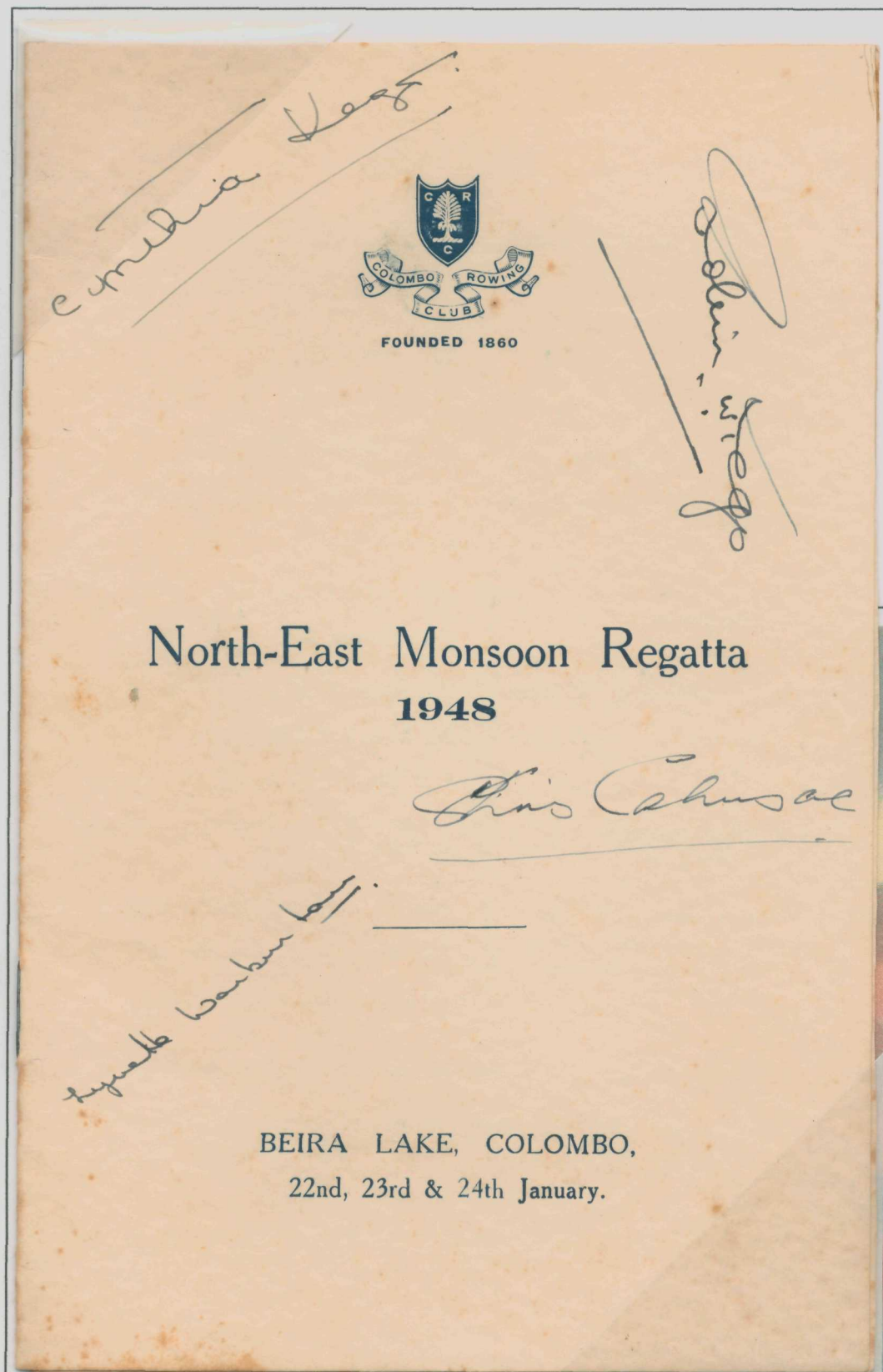


2 Rp 60 cent Airmail letter to **New York** July 5, 1946.



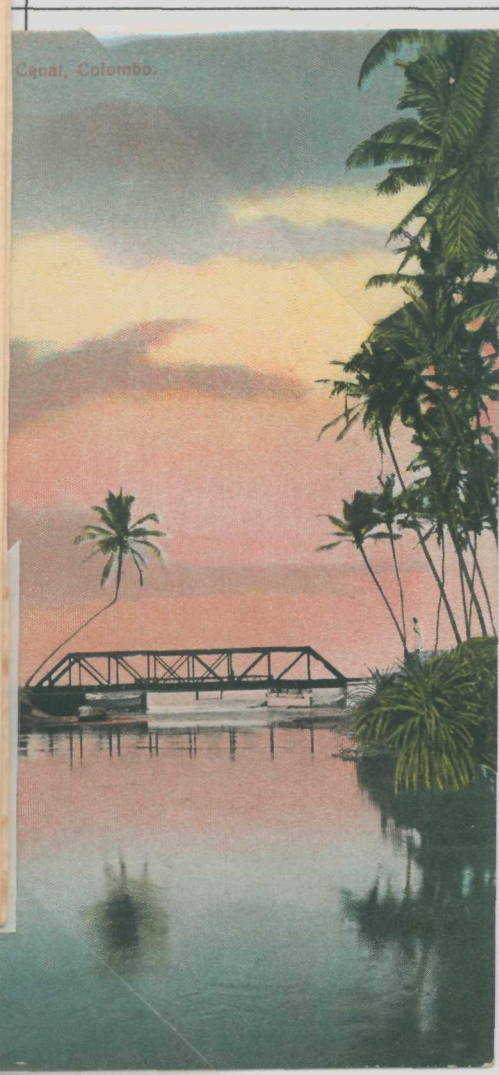
## E. King George VI Slave Island Slave Island: Recreation

**Slave Island** was initially an island surrounded by Beira Lake, Colombo. Stocked with *crocodiles in the slaving* past, the Beira Lake was cleared and used as a city recreation spot.



Inside:  
Plan of the Course, Beira Lake,  
**Slave Island.**

← Full program, Monsoon Regatta



Colombo Apothecaries divided back UPU color lithographed card. Dehiwela Canal, bridge to **Slave Island**.→



# E. King George VI Slave Island

# Foreign to India

35 cent Registered foreign letter to **India** with Type II cancel October 25, 1948.

Sender's Address:  
"4/11 Union Place  
Slave Island, Colombo 2"

Same street as hotel below.



## "Carlton" Private Hotel,

UNION PLACE, SLAVE ISLAND, COLOMBO.

Is situated on its own grounds, and is in close proximity to the Cinnamon Gardens, The Museum, Victoria Park, Race Course and other places of interest in Colombo.

Most efficient Management.

**Rooms**—Clean, Cool and Comfortable. Electric Lights and Fans.

**Cuisine**—Excellent. **Attendance**—Perfect.

ADMIRABLY SUITED FOR BOARDERS, VISITORS, &c.

ALL HOME COMFORTS

LAWN TENNIS

TELEPHONE No. 465.

### Carlton Private Hotel:

Address: Union Place,  
Slave Island.

Sender's caption:

"On the other is a poor picture of our hotel. It is a perfect paradise"

"The Carlton Hotel. Slave Island, Colombo"

Private divided back RPPC for hotel guest use.

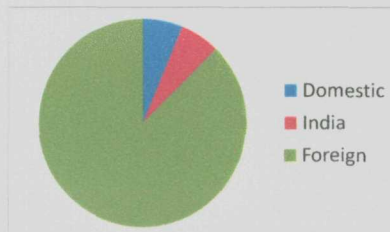




# E. King George VI Slave Island

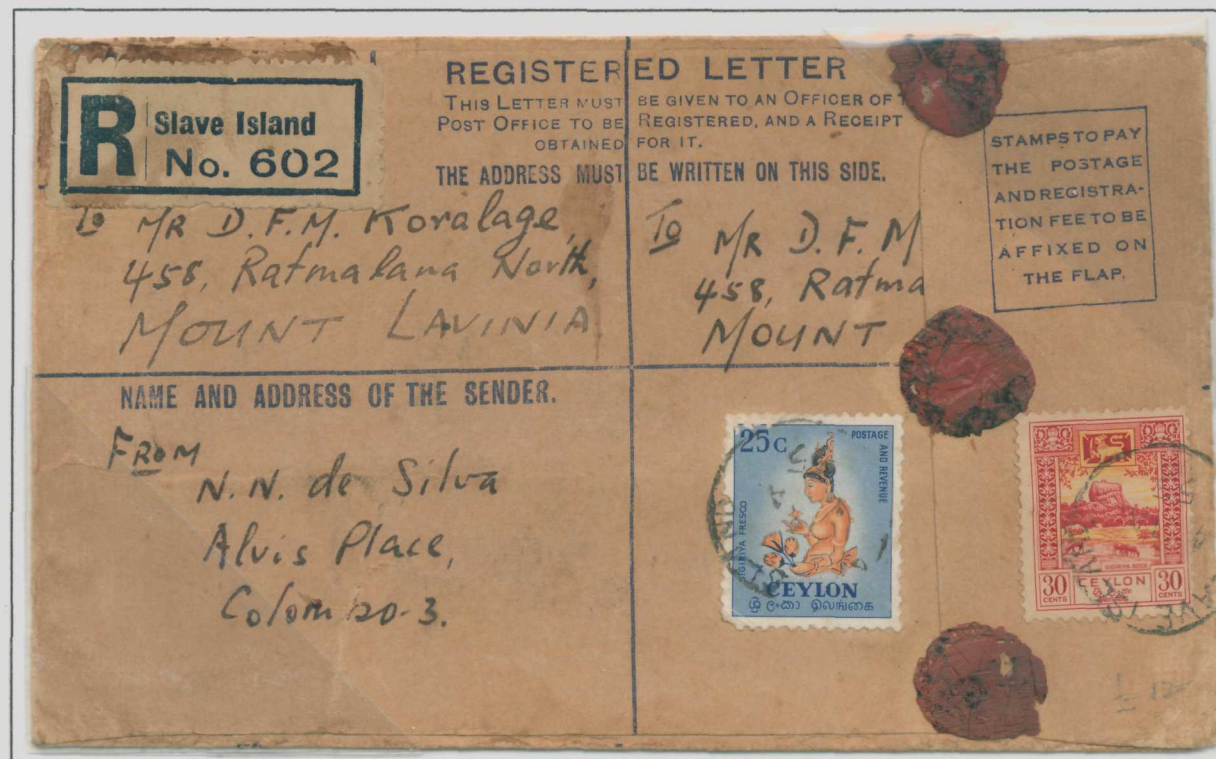
# Foreign Registered

## Mail Census Type I & II Cancels



What happened to the local and domestic mail? The Colombo GPO change in policy is responsible. **Only special services mail** (airmail and registered as shown) presented at the counter **received Slave Island cancels**. All mail left at the Slave Island post for regular processing received a Colombo cancel.

55 cent domestic →  
Registered Type II,  
January 5, 1955.  
Sender return address  
is post "Colombo 3"  
but letter presented at  
Slave Island counter  
for processing.



1 Rs 15 cent foreign  
Registered Airmail to  
**England** by De Soysa  
& Co. Ltd.  
February 28, 1957.



## Type XII. Foreign

## Slave Island Post Office Ends

Shortly after the mailing of this Registered Airmail, the Slave Island post office officially changed to its native Sinhalese name. In 1994, **the name on the post office itself was taken down and replaced.**

The Slave Island post office name was carried for over 114 years. The area today is still called Slave Island after much unsuccessful effort was made to move away from the pejorative name from the past.



**Cancel in Use:**

Dates Range

1991–

July 9, 1993

Bearing a resemblance to earlier Type VI - Type VIII cancels, this Slave Island cancel written in English only. It was rarely used.



↑ 35 Rs Airmail Registered cover to **United States**.  
Postmarked with Type XI cancels on June 7, 1991.

### Latest Known Use →

Slave Island Type XII cancel. Rs 52 Registered Airmail postmarked Slave Island July 9, 1993. Colombo meter franking front and back, Slave Island Registration & cancels.



# Type XI. Foreign

A large format double ring Slave Island cancel, with text in Sinhalese and English.

Limited mail found with Slave Island cancels from the 1970s on:

- ♦ Policy shift had mail processed primarily through the GPO.
- ♦ Tourist interest in visiting Sri Lanka dropped to a trickle during years of civil war.



## Cancel in Use:

Dates Range

1989-1992

35 mm

Rs 10 Airmail postmarked →  
Slave Island January 17, 1989.  
Sent to **United States**.



1 Rs domestic cover to →  
Nugegoda. Type XI and a  
new format cancel on  
February 27, 1992.





# Type XII.

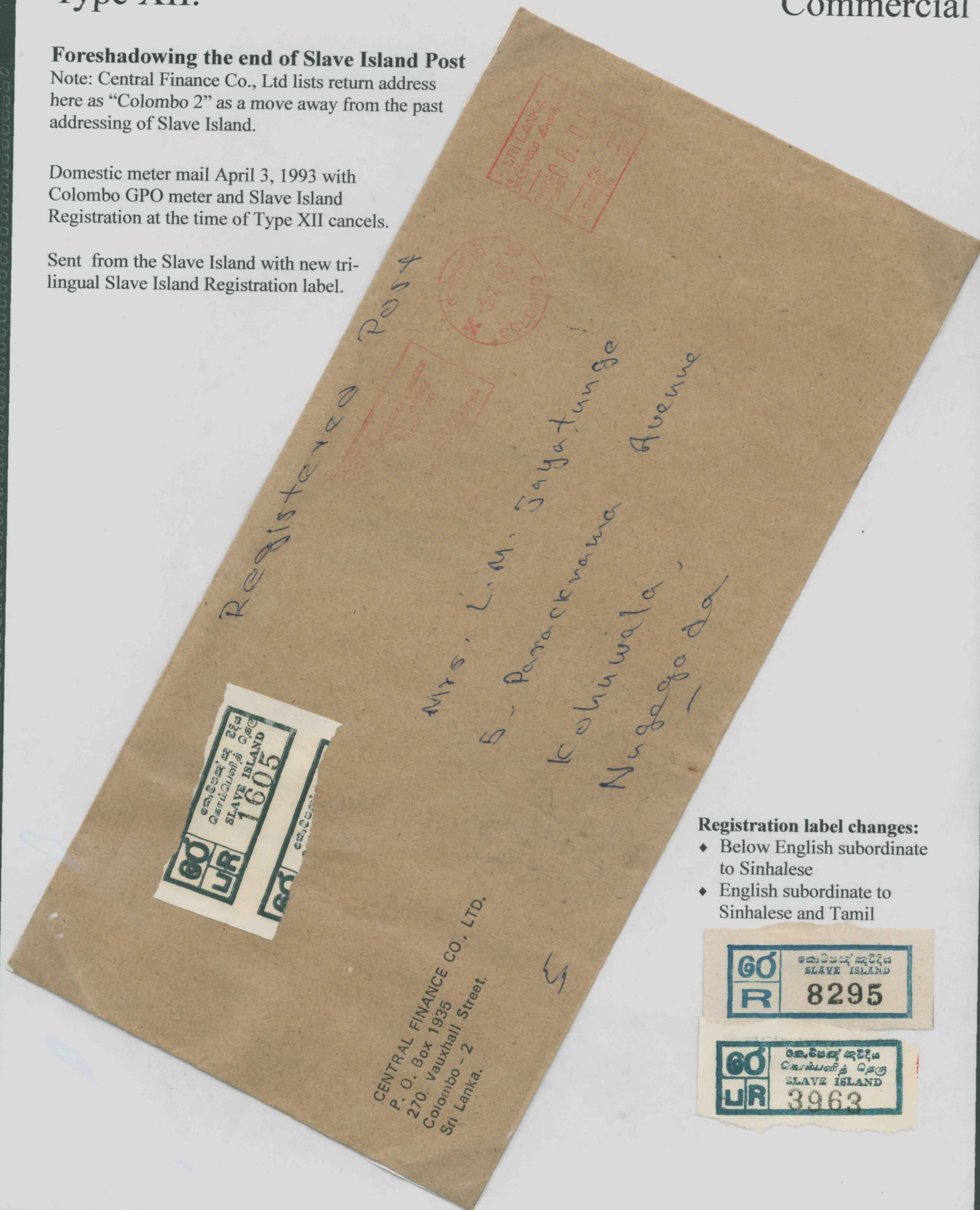
# Commercial

## Foreshadowing the end of Slave Island Post

Note: Central Finance Co., Ltd lists return address here as "Colombo 2" as a move away from the past addressing of Slave Island.

Domestic meter mail April 3, 1993 with Colombo GPO meter and Slave Island Registration at the time of Type XII cancels.

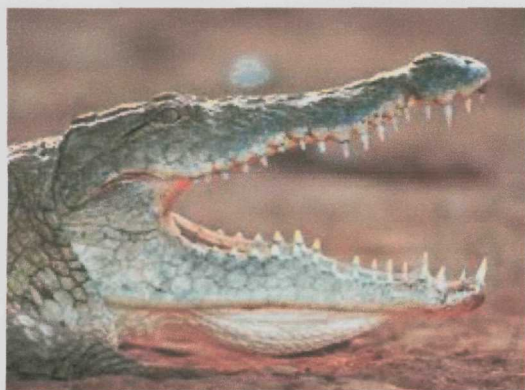
Sent from the Slave Island with new tri-lingual Slave Island Registration label.



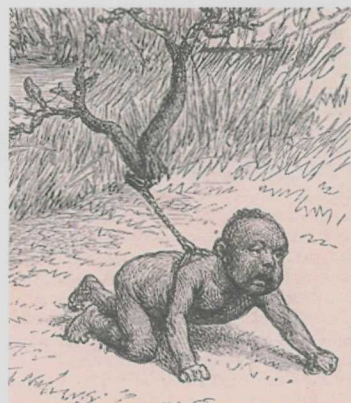
### Registration label changes:

- ♦ Below English subordinate to Sinhalese
- ♦ English subordinate to Sinhalese and Tamil





# SLAVE ISLAND CEYLON SYNOPSIS



## Title and Treatment

The purpose of this exhibit is to use the postmarks from Slave Island, Ceylon to advance the story of the social history of a town whose post office functioned under what we would now deem a pejorative name for over 114 years. The fact that slavery had been abolished by the British well before the establishment of the post office makes it clear that the name was derived from history, not from contemporary practice. The post office simply adopted the area's name of Slave Island.

## Knowledge, Study & Research

Slavery was introduced to Ceylon by the Portuguese during their early rule, it was retained by the Dutch during their administration. The British abolished slavery after their take over in 1796. The exhibit provides an introduction of the history of Slave Island, at a time before the British controlled the island and established the Slave Island post office. From a postal perspective, Slave Island functioned as a sub-post office to the General Post Office in the capital of Ceylon, Colombo. The post office name continued until 1994. Slave Island to the residents and businesses of Colombo has been a name much like Foggy Bottom to residents of the District of Colombia or Navy Pier to the Chicagoan. Aspects of the history of the area, the growth of Colombo & Slave Island are described by the mail and certain display items added. The research presented here details the social history changes on Slave Island, as well as the postal history of the island.

The exhibit provides the first available census of mail types from Slave Island, and describes how and why the mail stream changed over time. This only became possible by assembling the two largest collections of this material together, and taking the opportunity to analyze.

## Presentation

This exhibit is arranged chronologically and defines characteristics of the change in Slave Island as seen through the lens of the mail at the time. The use of monarchal reigns is to establish a common frame of reference for time, reflective of the social and postal history of the era. The use of census of mail volume by type is provided to further categorize and delineate the mail use. Instead of strictly a marcophily exhibit, the exhibit is a social history exhibit of the town ordered by postmarks chronologically as applied on the differing mail types. The mail types are explored, showing the reverse of cards or covers when of social interest. Added post cards and other display items are included where they advance the story and add context to the exhibit. Coverage spans the years of the cancels use, mirroring the mail volume as occurred.

More mail was actually cancelled "Slave Island" in the early years. A change of policy in 1940s required that mail dropped off at the Slave Island post office would be taken to the parent Colombo G.P.O. for Colombo postmarking. Only registered items and mail presented at the counter would continue to receive the Slave Island postmark after 1940. Mail volume further drops off when tourism fell following years of localized terrorism and civil war. This exhibit presents mail in representative volumes found. Census formed from covers in this exhibit, in my collection, and others known.

## Rarity, Condition, Importance

The importance of this exhibit is in its focus on a single post office and its contribution to understanding Ceylon philately in general. Ceylon is often collected as a part of the British Empire or Commonwealth, less often as a primary focus. This narrow look into the mail from one town over time provides a basis for comparative study, looking into the cancel use over time and mail processing decisions as they compare to other post offices across the British Empire.

Acquiring Slave Island material is a problem of availability, the rarity of this exhibit lies in the totality of the items that have been assembled. This exhibit was formed from two combining the two largest collections of this material known and verified by the Ceylon Study Circle of the RPSL. Each collection formed by individuals scouring up the material for over forty years, added to my own multi-year holdings. The condition of items shown is the best of what exists, the finer items from the overall collection. Part of the difficulty in finding material is that covers from Ceylon are limited in general. It is the opinion of one of Sri Lanka's few philatelists that stamp dealers gained more profit selling Ceylon / Sri Lanka stamps as kiloware, destroying most of what would have been of interest to postal historians. Fortunately, a good number of postal cards provide social history content information to give us the glimpses into the past.

## References:

The Postal History of Ceylon Ted Proud. Slave Island Pages 375-376

King George VI Postmarks David Horry. Slave Island Pages 155-156

"Slave Island???" D. G. Vorhis American Philatelist, October 2006, Pages 944-945  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colombo> - Slave Island brief history included.

