

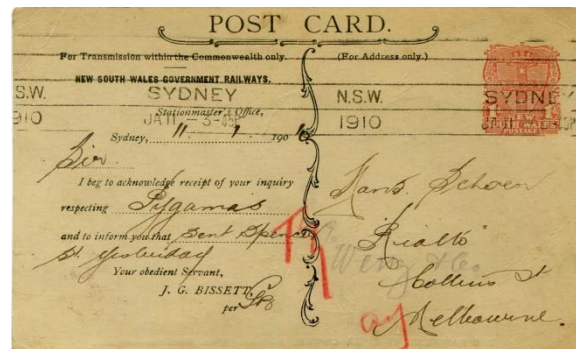
## Handbook Postcards 08 – Government Railways Pictorial Cards

### Introduction

A series of official pictorial postal cards and postcards (PPC's) were used by the New South Wales (NSW) Government Railways Department from 1905 to 1912 to provide acknowledgement of action underway or proof of receipt. They and the View cards are the only official postal cards of NSW to use photographic images.

Similar official picture postcards (PPC's) without an impressed stamp were also issued by NSW Government Railways. These do not fall within the definition of postal stationery but they are included because they form a critical part of the development of the Railways postal cards.

There is no available information on printing numbers of these cards, dates of printings or reasons for design changes over the 8 year period of their use. Indeed, little is known about the cards other than what can be observed on the small number of available cards. They are mentioned in some early catalogues and were recorded in some detail by Carl Stieg (1984,1985).



**Figure 1.** Hawkesbury River Bridge (Aerial) RC19 with Type 2 Central Dividing Line and 11 Jan 1910 Sydney machine postmarking.

### Background to the Cards and their Rarity

An explanation for the origin of the Railways postal cards is that they are part of the larger family of official postal cards created by NSW Government Departments and authorities from the 1890's to provide proof of receipt or advise of action taken. This followed the 1894 decision to abolish, after 1 January 1895, the OS (Official Service) overprints on NSW Post Office (PO) postal cards. As a consequence, over the next 20 years most NSW Departments and authorities relied on any or all of the general issued postal cards without overprint or perfin, general issue postal cards with OS NSW perfins or cards with OS NSW perfined stamps (the perfins are described in the Handbook section entitled 'Official Postal Cards').

NSW Government Railways appear to have followed a similar line of development with the additional use of GR (Government Railways) perfins on cards or stamps. The earliest known use of GR perfins on postage stamps is August 1895. Anderson (2007, p. 79) reports that postal cards with the GR perfin have been found used between 1898 and 1905. However, general issue PO postal cards without perfins were also used by NSW Railways during the years following the 1894 decision to abolish overprints. Postal cards with an OS/GR perfin are forgeries (see Handbook section 'Official Postal Cards') and caution is recommended about other possible GR forgeries.

It is somewhat surprising that the Railway pictorials are very scarce to very rare especially as they have appeal to picture postcard collectors. For several of the types only 1-2 copies have been recorded. Perhaps as few as 20 or less of each individual pictorial view on a Railways Pictorial postal card exist. They only appear infrequently in the market place and comprehensive collections of all the possible scene and dividing line combinations do not appear to have been established unlike collections of the other official use cards or the NSW View cards of the same era.

### **The Classification of the NSW Railways Pictorial Cards**

Classification of the Railway Cards is complex as there are 23 different pictorial views, five different styles of dividing line on the address side, two different positions for the impressed stamp and one series without an impressed stamp (PPC's).

### **The Views**

There are two basic shades and three caption styles of the views:

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| <b>TYPE A</b> | In sepia with several lines of wording below;   |
| <b>TYPE B</b> | In black and white with a single line of wording below (Note: with variations in wording for some of the images); |
| <b>TYPE C</b> | In black and white with two lines of wording below.   |

Bell (2009) listed the views seen on the cards and they are repeated below with the addition of the 'Trout Fishing Snowy River' card, from Abacus Auction 232 of March 2019 and 'Mosman's Bay, Sydney Harbour' from the Gartner Auction 50 of June 2021. Also, some uncertainty about the number of Mt Kosciusko and Nepean River cards has been noted. Given the lack of official documentary evidence of what cards were produced by NSW Railways, it is likely that additional views may be discovered.

#### **TYPE A**

- RC1** General View at Audley, National Park
- RC2** Meryla Falls, near Moss Vale
- RC3** Hawkesbury River Bridge
- RC4** The Weeping Rock at Wentworth Falls

#### **TYPES B and C**

- RC5** Arch Cave, Wentworth Falls
- RC6** Bathing Pool, Mittagong
- RC7** Botanical Gardens, Sydney
- RC8** Bulli Pass
- RC9** Cabbage Trees, Illawarra District
- RC10** Coast Scene at Clifton
- RC11** Empress Falls, Wentworth Falls
- RC12** Lake Cootapatamba, Australian Alps
- RC13** Katoomba Falls, Katoomba
- RC14** Meryla (Twin) Falls, Moss Vale
- RC15** Mosman's Bay, Sydney Harbour
- RC16** Nepean River at Penrith\*
- RC17** Snowy Mountain, Mount Kosciusko\*
- RC18** Stanwell Park
- RC19** The Hawkesbury River

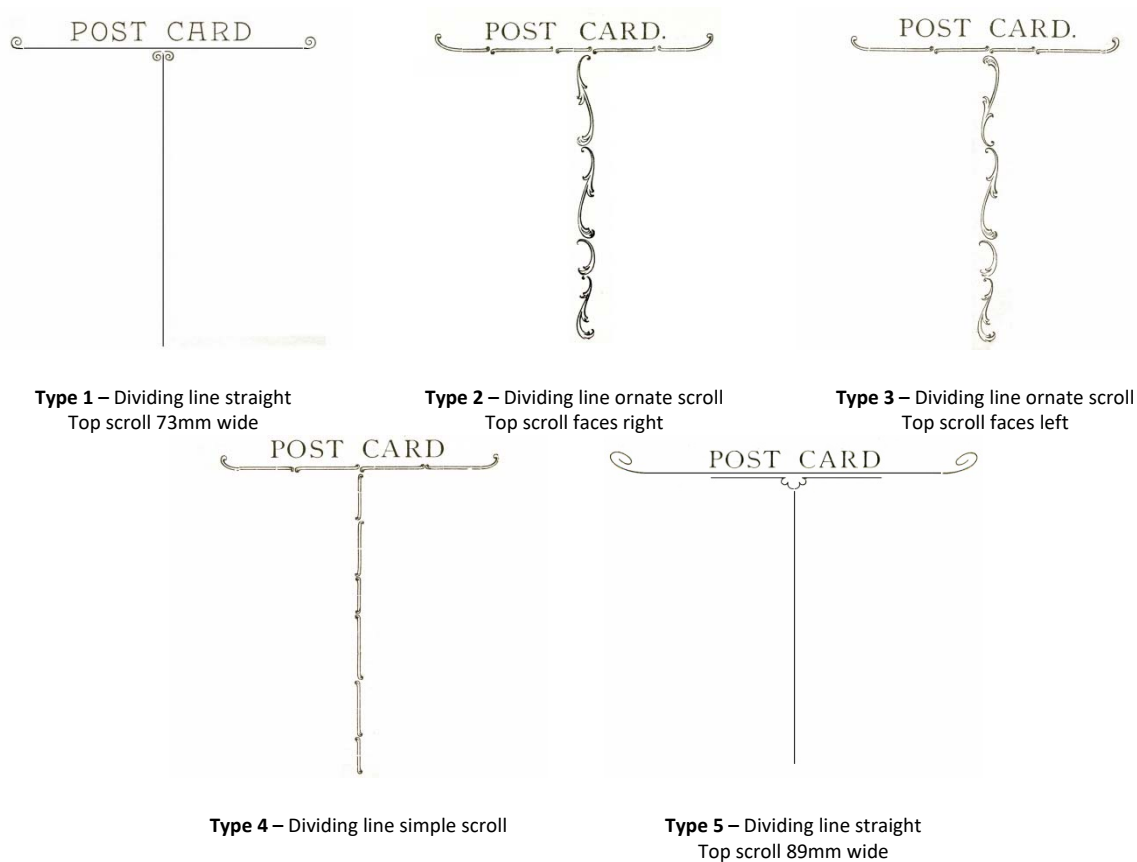
- RC20** The Hawkesbury River Bridge, Hawkesbury River
- RC21** The Willows, Jenolan Caves
- RC22** Trout Fishing - Snowy River
- RC23** Woy Woy

**\*Notes:** The John Bell paper had a separate listing for both ‘Nepean River’ and ‘Nepean River at Penrith’. The two Nepean River cards reported to date (RC16 and RC16a) have exactly the same image but different caption wording so it seems highly likely that John was not reporting two separate images. Similarly, the John Bell paper had a separate listing for both ‘Snowy Mountain, Mount Kosciusko’ and ‘Mount Kosciusko, Snowy Mountains’. As only the ‘Snowy Mountain, Mount Kosciusko’ card has been seen to date by the author it is unclear whether John was reporting two separate images or the same image with a different word order in the caption. Until this is clarified this paper assumes the latter.

### The Address Side Central Dividing Line

There are five known different types of central dividing line that separated the address side of the card into two parts (see Figure 2):

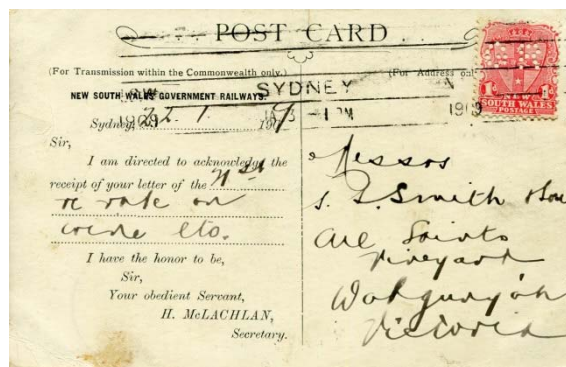
- Type 1** straight dividing line with ornamental scroll at the top, top scroll 73mm wide
- Type 2** dividing line is a series of ornate scrolls with the top one facing right
- Type 3** same top line as Type 2 but top ornate scroll is inverted and facing left
- Type 4** same top line as Type 2 but dividing line a series of simple scrolls
- Type 5** straight dividing line with ornamental scroll at the top, top scroll 89mm wide



**Figure 2.** Types of Central Dividing Line

It should be noted that NSW and the other Australian colonies agreed to the use of divided fronts on postal cards in late 1904. Stieg (2005) reports a Railways postal card postmarked 24 Jan 1905, a very early usage of divided front postal cards. The suggestion that use of these cards extended up to and including 1912 is confirmed by the example from the Guerin collection postmarked 31 Jan 1912 with matching manuscript date within the card message.

A fifth type of dividing line has been found on examples of Railways post card that do not have an impressed stamp (see Figure 3) but a NSW postage stamp with a GR perfin. These post cards all come from the same source within NSW Railways (the office of H. McLachlan, NSW Railways Department Secretary). Other examples seen are postmarked 1907 and 1908, years that overlap the time of usage of the other Types B and C cards. These cards are very scarce to rare and it is a mystery why they were produced as a new variety (no impressed stamp) rather than using the impressed stamp Types.



**Figure 3.** Type 5 Dividing Line on Railways pictorial postcard having GR perfin and no impressed stamp.

To further complicate the story, the Guerin collection has a 1907 postmarked Railways pictorial with Arch Cave view, from the office of H McLachlan with a GR perfinned stamp rather than an impressed stamp and a Type 1 central dividing line (see Figure 4).



**Figure 4.** Railways pictorial postcard having no impressed stamp and Type 1 Dividing Line.

## Positions of the Impressed Stamp

The impressed stamp (1d NSW Shield Die 2) occurs at either the top right corner (see Figure 5) or below a rectangular stamp box printed in the top right corner (see Figure 6). There is no recorded explanation for this vacant stamp box and it could be speculated that it may have been intended that the stamp be printed in the box as for the 1908 Fleet cards of Qld, SA, Tas and WA. There is also no definitive official list of which particular Type B or C cards have this vacant stamp box.

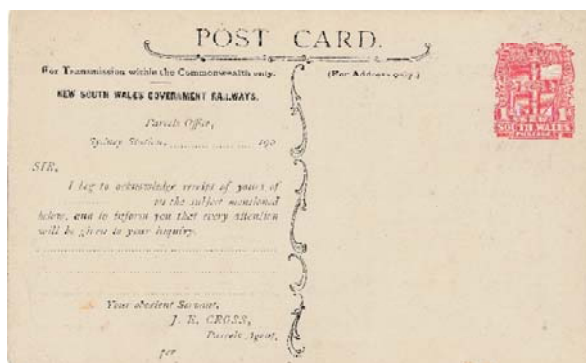


Figure 5. Impressed Stamp at Top RHC

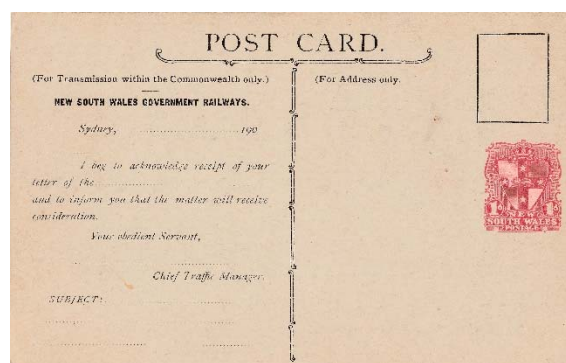


Figure 6. Impressed Stamp Below Stamp Box

## Cataloguing the Railways Pictorial Cards

Due to the lack of archival records and the scarcity of these cards a definitive listing of how all the different elements of the cards are related is difficult. However, some observations, mainly by Bell (2009) and Guerin (2000), have been made:

- a. The first postal cards issued were the sepia Type A's in 1905, all with the Type 1 dividing line. The use of only the Type 1 dividing line on the sepias has been supported by all the examples seen of RC1-4.
- b. The Type B issues followed quickly in 1906. The Type 2 Dividing Lines can be found at earlier dates than the Type 3 but there is strong overlap from 1908 onwards. The Type 3 Dividing Lines are scarcer than the Type 2's.
- c. The Type 4 Dividing Lines are found exclusively on the stamp box Railways postal cards. There is a date of use overlap (examples seen from 1906, 1908 and 1909) with Type 2 and 3 Dividing Line cards which further adds to the mystery of why this address side design was created.
- d. The use of Railways postcards with GR Perfined stamps and Type 1 and 5 Dividing Lines overlap strongly with the use of the other Type 2-4 Dividing lines. See Figure 3 and 4 for examples from 1906 and 1908. The evidence suggests that H. McLachlan, Secretary to the NSW Railways, or his office, separately decided in 1905 that they would have a different approach than other parts of NSW Railways: they would solely rely on the GR Perfined adhesive stamps with initial use of the Type 1 Dividing Line from 1906 evolving to a new Dividing Line design (Type 5) in later years from 1908.
- e. Some of the cards (eg. RC5 Arch Cave) show significant differences in caption text alignments as evidence of multiple printings. Also, slightly different croppings can be observed in some cards. These variations are not included in the Catalogue.

The task of relating all the views to particular dividing line types remains a challenge owing to the scarcity of the cards.

## **The Users within NSW Government Railways**

Bell (2009) reported that the message side of the card could be either blank, for a handwritten message, or have a pro-forma to be filled in.

In alphabetical order, with the addition of the recently seen Clerk-in-Charge, Central Booking Office, Wynyard Station card, the signatories for the pro-forma messages observed to date are:

Chief Traffic Manager  
Clerk-in-Charge, Central Booking Office, Wynyard Station  
District Superintendent  
Goods Manager, Sydney  
H. Fox, District Superintendent  
J.G. Bissett  
Parcel's Agent  
Parcel's Agent, Sydney Station  
J.E. Cross, Parcels Office  
H. McLachlan, Secretary, NSW Government Railways  
Station Master, Darling Harbour  
Station Master, Sydney  
Superintendent of Lines

## **The Origin of the Pictorial View Photographs**

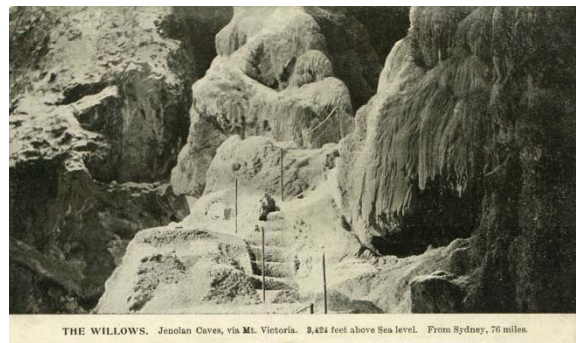
The Government Printing Office began to form a photographic collection of NSW scenes in the 1860's. Many views may be attributed to photographer John Sharkey, manager of the photographic collection from 1890, and others from the collapsed "Star" newspaper (Peck, 2001). Many appeared in contemporary publications, others being used by various government departments for "instructional" purposes. Private citizens also used some of the images (notably some picture post card producers). The negatives from this period are maintained in the NSW State Archives.

Examination of these photographs shows that certainly most, and probably all, of the scenes used for View postal cards for sale to the public, and the Government Railways Pictorial cards were derived from this source. Two examples of archival photos and their adaptation for railway cards are shown in Figures 7 and 8.





**Figure 7.** RC10 Coast Scene at Clifton –original photo and issued card



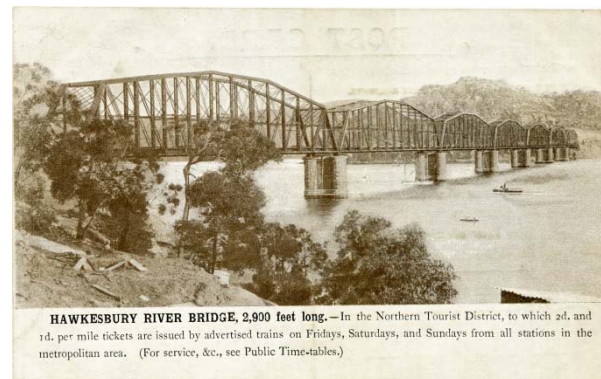
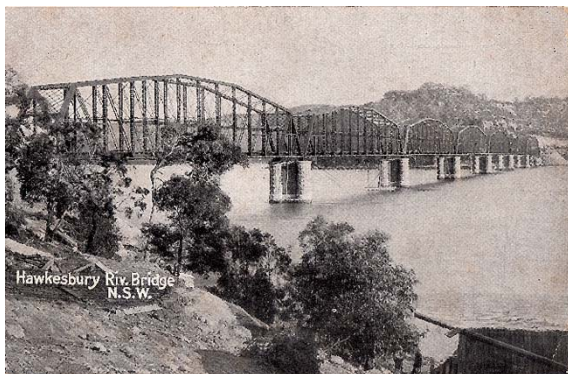
**Figure 8.** RC21 The Willows –original photo and issued card

Cook (1986, p21) suggests that the NSW Railway cards were derived from the NSW Post Office View Cards of 1898 as they “used the same pictures”. Cook is correct inasmuch that both groups of cards used illustrations from the same source. However, only four out of 20+ locations on the Railway cards show the same views as the earlier Post Office View Cards, namely Weeping Rock, Wentworth Falls; Katoomba Falls; Hawkesbury River Bridge and Mosman’s Bay. The Mosman’s Bay view seemed particularly popular, appearing also on unstamped Government Railway cards, privately produced picture post cards, and (in two sizes) on Commonwealth Lettercards (Watson 1984).

As mentioned previously, private citizens also made use of these images and some private postcards of that era showing exactly the same or similar scenes. Private postcards entitled Hawkesbury River (a Copperstyle published by Giovanardi – see Figure 9 below) and Hawkesbury River Bridge (publisher not indicated – see Figure 10 below) are almost exactly the same as Railways card images.



**Figure 9.** Use of same image in Giovanadi private postcard and NSW Railways card (RC19a).



**Figure 10.** Use of the same image on private postcard and NSW Railways card (RC3) except for addition of small steamship and boat on the Railways card.

### Acknowledgements

Thanks are extended to Abacus Auctions and Auktionshaus Christoph Gärtner for permission to use images from their catalogues. Assistance from Michael Blinman, Peter Guerin, Dingle Smith and Gary Watson in providing advice and/or scans from their collections is gratefully acknowledged.

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