Postcards were often less about travel and more about the traveller. Clear handwriting was always appreciated by the recipient (and they didn’t always get it) but, it seems, a spelling mistake on a postcard, whether on the printed card itself or in the greeting, was nothing to write home about.

In official printing, issued stamps and the like, the highest production standards held firm and improved, but there is an area in which a softer legacy develops and that is postcards. Many were produced locally, for a start. They were an easy expression of the excitement of the Rhodesias. They naturally referenced topographical wonders and the mighty Victoria Falls was most certainly top of that list. Friends and family became familiar with the Rhodesias through this pleasant communication.

*This display focuses mainly on the Victoria Falls* and on some amusing production slip-ups, most notably in spelling errors. Spelling, it should be noted, was more ‘fluid’ at the turn of the 20th century. It was a familiar vanity to alter (slightly or more so) the name one used in a new life abroad. Even Dr David Livingstone dropped the ‘e’ from his surname when it suited him.

The various scenic parts of the *Victoria Falls* soon received descriptive names: the Boiling Pot, the Rain Forest, etc. These names were not used consistently. ‘Errors’ and the tinting of postcards heralded a subjectivity rarely found in plain photographs.

Alternative spelling, casual grammar, problems of pronunciation and poor description are all things that distinguish postcards from regular mail...and if something could go wrong, in all the eagerness, then it did go wrong. This display enjoys some of the shortcomings found and tries not to be too critical!
These appealing scenes, with pleasantly cool colours, should surely have justified two separate postcards, especially the top one.

The postcard is finely tinted, unused and with a divided back. It was produced by "SAPSCO" Real Photo Box 5792, Johannesburg, with a ‘For Inland Postage and some Foreign Countries this space may now be used for communication’ etiquette in the left half, and a plain box for a single stamp on the right of the division.

On the picture side, the first problem is ‘Best of Good Wishes’. Because of the typeface chosen it reads as ‘Rest of Good Wishes’. In any case it is clumsy English. The title of the top image simply says Rhodesia. However the picture below, which should say ‘A Rhodesian Homestead’, is misspelt as: A Rhodesian Homested.
Another spelling mistake - ‘Canon’ instead of ‘canyon’

This tinted, used postcard from 1907 was produced in Cape Town and shows one of the classic views of the Victoria Falls, with the new bridge on the left. The outline of the bridge has been poorly ‘strengthened’ and looks almost added on - as a drawing. But it is still a pleasant enough image. It is a pity though that the title is spelt as Canon below Victoria Falls. It was produced by P.S. & C. - Box 1205 - Cape Town and has a code number 1309.
Whether you prefer the tinted one or the black and white one, the Livingstone misspelling is what jumps out, especially being in red ink on the blank area at the base. These postcards were printed by P.S.&C. - Box 1205 - Cape Town. There are other variants on the hand tinted colouring. This one has the sitting African with a red hat added on!

The matching backs are pretty standard – divided and address area indicated. The left side: “This space may be used for Communication” (capital “C” not needed). There is the printer’s logo at the bottom left hand corner. Both have a Small Arms B.S.A.C. stamps but the later black and white one has a penny value. Both are sent from Bulawayo, the top one on 24 NOV 03 the bottom one from sometime in 1906.
There are no clues as to who produced this postcard, but it is a rather interesting view of some of the homes and offices at Livingstone. The stamp is cancelled with a Livingstone postmark dated 15 JUL 1905 and is addressed to “Lealuyi, Barotsiland”. I’ll let those two spelling mistakes through, as I’m more concerned with the way the instruction for communication is laid out. The font size changes four times and although the instructions are clear enough, if you speak it through (as opposed to just briefly reading it through) it has a humorous lilt to it...and the little “BUT FOR INLAND ONLY” proviso is like a ‘should have read the small print’ joke.
“Borotse (sic) Women, Victoria Falls Bridge.”

This unused, black and white postcard is titled as above. It was produced by “SAPSCO” Real photo. Box 5792. Johannesburg” and has a copyright number on the front: K.499.

Barotseland is a well established name. ‘Ma’ is singular and ‘Ba’ plural and they indicate a man/ or the people/tribe of Lozi (or “rotse” or “lotsi”...both different spellings accepted for the same meaning). “Si” indicates the language.

However the spelling Borotse is not very usual and I suggest here it is, more than probably, a spelling mistake and should have read “Barotse Women, Victoria Falls Bridge. However, the Barotse Flood Plain has been officially referred to as the Borotse Flood Plain, so maybe there are some who choose to use the ‘Borotse’ form as a preferred pronunciation.
This rather attractive, unused, black and white postcard was phototyped in Berlin prior to 1914 and was published by Percy M. Clark, Victoria Falls, (Copyright). The title of the card is *The Devil's Cataract Through "The Nisch", Victoria Falls*. Firstly, it does correctly have the possessive apostrophe after the 'l' in "Devil's"...which seems quite often to be left out. But then, secondly, "The Nisch" doesn't make much sense. It is not a German, Swedish or Afrikaans form of "niche", nor is it an English alternative. The geology shows a deep, quite wide gap in the rock, which could be called a ravine, but not what would normally be called a niche, which tends to have a closure to it. Obviously it was considered a particularly good, photogenic viewpoint for the Devil's Cataract but 'view of' would have sufficed. Perhaps when the word was used orally it was usefully descriptive for visitors.

The second postcard used in April 1903 and published by The Argus Printing & Publishing Company (a Type 1) shows an example of no apostrophe after the 'l' in "Devils", so we see *Victoria Falls Devils Cataract 8* which is incorrect.
This postcard is slightly irritating only in that the 'Palm Grove' was given capital letters and the 'Knife Edge' wasn't. Both of course are particular parts of the complex Victoria Falls. Because of the sheer size of the Falls, there are many viewpoints and it is difficult to capture the experience of seeing the entirety without multiple photographs and even aerial photographs can fall short. (This is good news, of course, for the postcard producers who want to sell their range of views). The postcard was produced by Percy M. Clark, Photo: N. W. Rhodesia. The scarce Wankies cancellation (Hoyte Type 10) is dated AU 24 05 (stamp missing) and there was transit through Bulawayo to Salop (an abbreviation for Shropshire), England.
The missing letter ‘l’ in ‘The Boiling Pot’- and a ‘b’ for the letter ‘h’ in ‘Published’

This hand-tinted and unused postcard of the Victoria Falls was produced in Germany and published by E. Peters, Cape Town (Copyright). It was a part of a series and is number 51. Quality control seems to have deteriorated somewhat here and the letter ‘l’ in ‘Boiling Pot’ is virtually missing...a tiny fraction of the top of the letter is printed.

However, less forgivable is the ‘b’ for the letter ‘h’ within the word ‘Published’ in the bottom left-hand corner.
Postcards of the ‘Matoppos’ and ‘Motopos’

This first unused postcard is titled “**Burial Place of the late Hon. Cecil Rhodes in the Matoppos**”. It was printed by Braune & Levy, Johannesburg. No.2543. It is a classic instance where an African name has alternative English spellings, so not exactly a spelling mistake. Nowadays the location is properly called **The Matobo National Park** and this reflects the correct vernacular pronunciation. Originally it was Rhodes Matopos National Park, established in 1926. The spelling Matopo or Matopos were the commonest spelling. But having the double ‘p’, as on this postcard, would generally be regarded as a spelling error.

The second postcard is titled “**View of the World**’ but a subtitle in the top left says **Motopos Rhodesia** which is unusually wrong...with the three ‘o’s. (Neither of these cards is used and the second one has no printing at all on the back).
Another two postcards with spelling alternatives

The first postcard was published by E. Peters, Cape Town (Copyright) and printed in Germany. It is titled, in red, 45 Cottage in the Matoppos and it is a finely tinted landscape view. However the two letter 'p's is an error of spelling, as on the previous page. It has a POSTED TOO LATE handstamp on the reverse (shown below). The second postcard was produced by 'Copyright Percy M. Clark. Victoria Falls' and is titled "Rock Scenery in the Matoppos", which is definitely an unusual spelling with the two 'a's. and "Scenery" doesn't need a capital letter...or at least nowadays. It was printed in England and was posted on the 14 June 1920 in Salisbury and it cancels a penny brick red Admiral, that perfectly complements the printing shade.
This unused postcard shows a conventional but still rather fine view of the Victoria Falls. It would seem to have been taken from the public house called 'The George'. This is, of course, a spelling mistake and should read the Gorge. Further confusion can be obtained by trying to understand the postal instructions on the reverse side: in the little box for a stamp is written “phototyped in Berlin”. The card bears a Percy M. Clark photograph, but the production in Germany perhaps explains the spelling mistake in the title.
This slightly odd image is simply called ‘Victoria Falls’ and almost certainly uses a previous photographic postcard view of the Victoria Falls seen through trees. It becomes a little like a painting by the novelty of putting the image on a canvas and an easel. This is taken further by including a painter’s palette with hand tinted colours. The wood grain on the palette is very well rendered. What jars just a little are the words over the palette: “Compliment of The Season”. It is usually expressed as “Compliments of the season” i.e. plural and a small ‘s’ for season. (‘Complement’ shouldn’t be used as this should only suggest successful relationships e.g. “That tie complements your shirt.”).

This postcard is unused and the back is shown with the logo of G.B. & Co., plus code number 208 E.
The red lettered heading on this postcard is fairly small but it doesn’t excuse this poor spelling mistake – “rout” instead of ‘route’. The postcard was made by GB&Co and is an unused example. It has a logo and code number 239P and a rather attractive banner on the reverse (shown below) with shorthand perforations for the stamp part. The image is quite unusual. The railway in perspective is dreadfully symmetrical but the green tinted vegetation suggesting a rooftop (plus a real one) near the vanishing point is interesting and the regularly placed, false pink flowers are acceptable, I suppose. Then in the border we have twenty white doves, only two of which are actually in the employment of delivering mail, but nicely rendered. The seasonal wishes are embossed and printed in a lovely sparkling gold.
This 1910 photographic postcard shows or purports to show the building in Bulawayo where the infamous Jameson Raid was planned. The veracity of it would be more convincing if the main culprit's name had been correctly spelt, that is Jameson and not "Jamieson". The fact that the 'X' under the window is part of the negative helps redress the case for authenticity, even though it appears, at first, to have been drawn on later. The card was produced by Geo. C. Brown, Stationer etc., Bulawayo, Rhodesia. The handwriting is dated the 10th July 1910.
This rather lovely black and white view of the Zimbabwe ruins is somewhat spoilt by the dreadful spelling mistake “Zimbabe” instead of Zimbabwe. The postcard, with undivided back, was produced by Strachan & Co., Photographers, and the postal cancellation provides a date of September 1906. The instructions on the back say “This side is reserved for the address” and the French “Carte Postale” is also present with the English “Post Card”.

Unfortunately the postal cancellation is missing the place name. However, the handwriting is exemplary in the address to Grahamstown.