

THE MOUNT SELINDA MISSION IN PRE-COLONIAL SOUTHERN RHODESIA (1897-1923)

PURPOSE/SCOPE

This one-frame exhibit tells the social history of the establishment and early development of the Mount Selinda Mission station in pre-colonial Southern Rhodesia (present-day Zimbabwe).

BACKGROUND

Mt Selinda (Silinda) Mission was founded by the American Board of Commissioners missionary society in 1893 – the first American-based mission in what would become Southern Rhodesia. The mission (and all other missions) would not flourish until colonial rule was firmly established after the Matabele/Shona uprising in 1897.

Nearly all missionaries, including those of the American Board, withdrew by 1978 during the “war of liberation.” As of Zimbabwe’s Independence, mission stations were under control of local African churches. Before independence, Africans were educated exclusively in mission schools and primarily served by mission hospitals and clinics, which continue to play an essential role.

EXHIBIT PLAN:

- Background
- Early Missionaries
- Postal Service
- Teaching
- Healing
- Sister Mission Stations
- Colonial Southern Rhodesia
- Epilogue



DB B/W collotype. Publisher/photographer ET Brown, Umtali, Southern Rhodesia. Copyright 1952.
Depicts Mt Silinda Mission Church

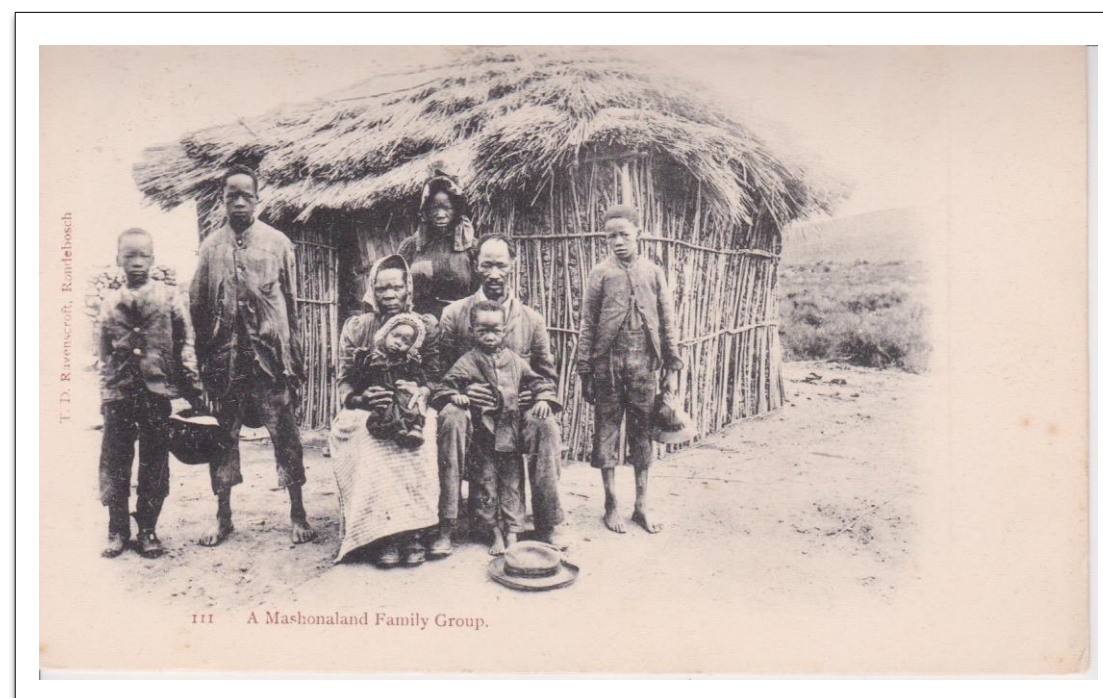
Missionaries from the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (American Board) to Rhodesia were part of a broader Protestant **missionary movement** grounded in the “Second Great Awakening.”

The peoples served by the American Board’s Mt Selinda Mission were the **Ndau** – a subgroup of the Shona.



American Board was the first American missionary society. Founded 1810. First missionaries to Africa sent 1835.

American Board contribution certificate – receipt of “ten cents” donated for “Mission School Enterprise,” 1857.



Ndau Peoples

Subgroup of the Shona (VaShona) Peoples - related to the Bantu-speaking peoples. Lived mainly in east/northeast of the country (Mashonaland) in farming villages (kraals).

“A Mashonaland Family Group” Undivided Back [UDB] B/W collotype Photographer/ publisher – TD Ravenscroft, Cape Town. No “II”. Commissioned after Boer War to take photos of Southern Africa, including Rhodesia. ca. 1902-1908.

EARLY MISSIONARIES

FULLER

The American Board of Commissioners (American Board) established the **Mount Selinda** (*Silinda*) **Mission** station in 1893.

Other early missionaries didn't arrive until after the suppression of the Shona Uprising in 1897.



Earliest reported photograph of Mt Silinda Mission (1908).

Transcription (partial):

"Ndaues waiting at our back door to sell grain. We should be glad to see them now as the draught has brought us to the verge of famine. Very hot and dry now. We hope for rain soon."



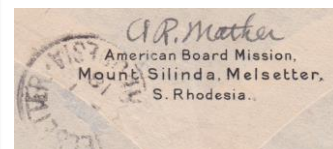
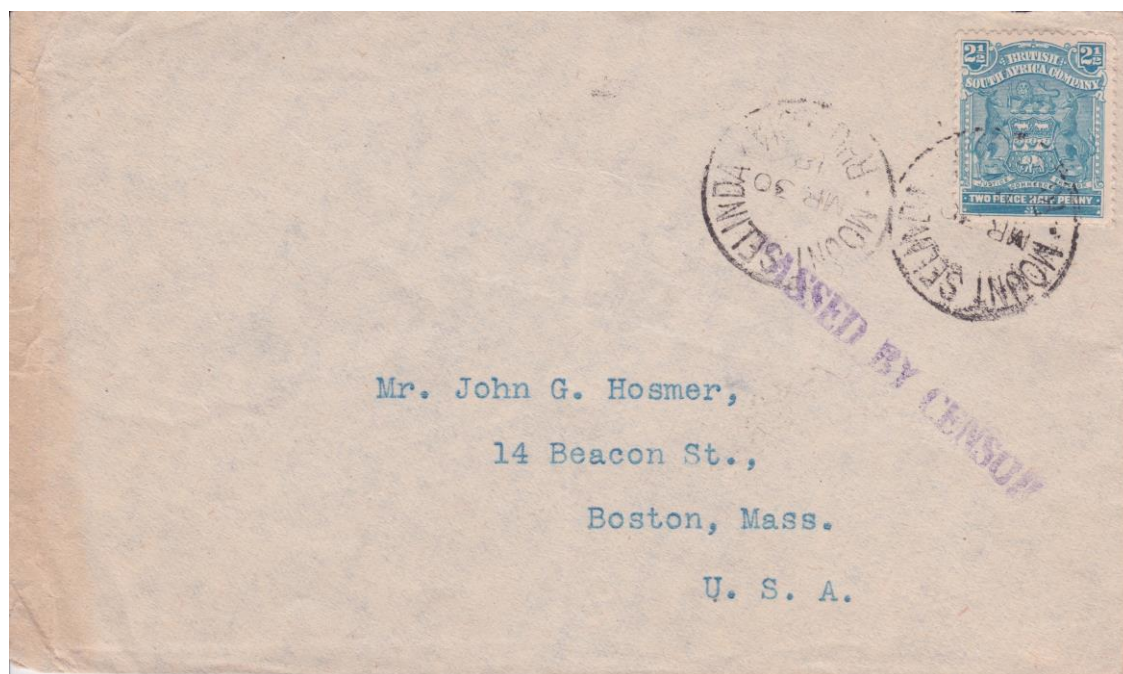
Scan of front

DB Real Photo Post Card from Fuller to hometown of Bozeman, Montana, canceled Mount Selinda NO 21/ 8 (1908).
Melsetter transit stamp.



Enlarged scan from reverse

Missionary **CC Fuller**
In back row (partially hidden)
Arrived 1902. Founder of Industrial Department; Helped translate native ChiNdau language into English.



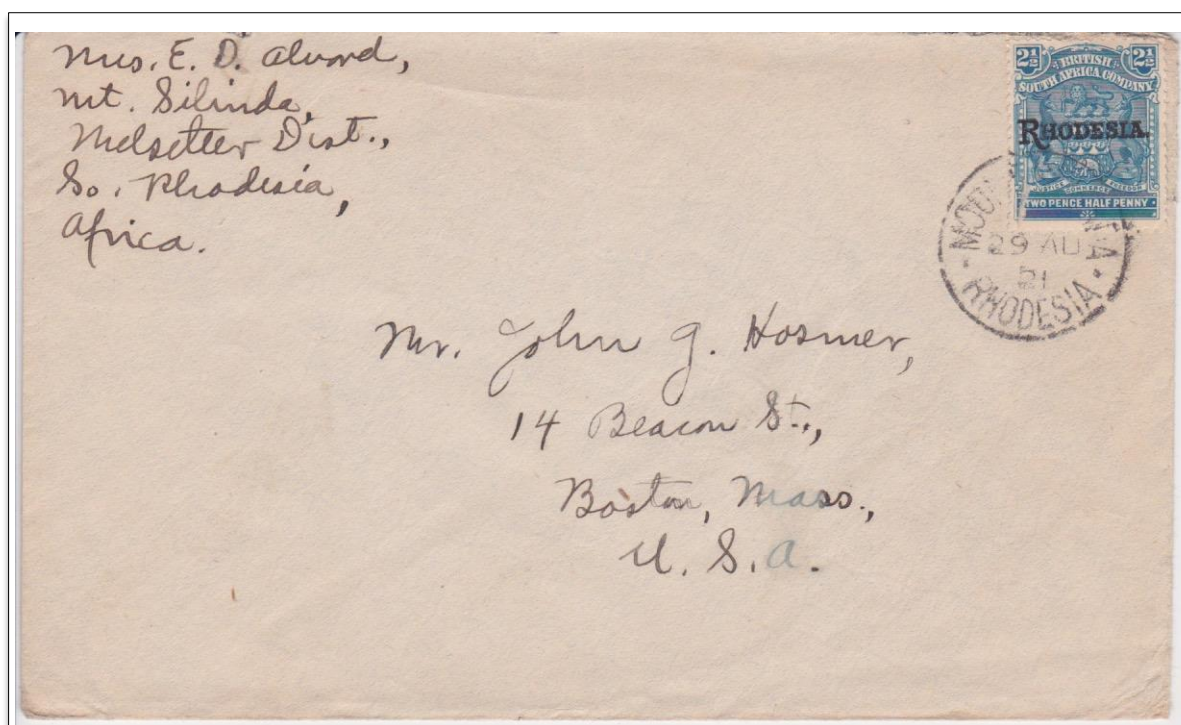
Scan of return address
on reverse

A.R. Mather – at Mt. Silinda
1917-22. School Principal,
first Superintendent of
Training and Practicing
School founded 1918.

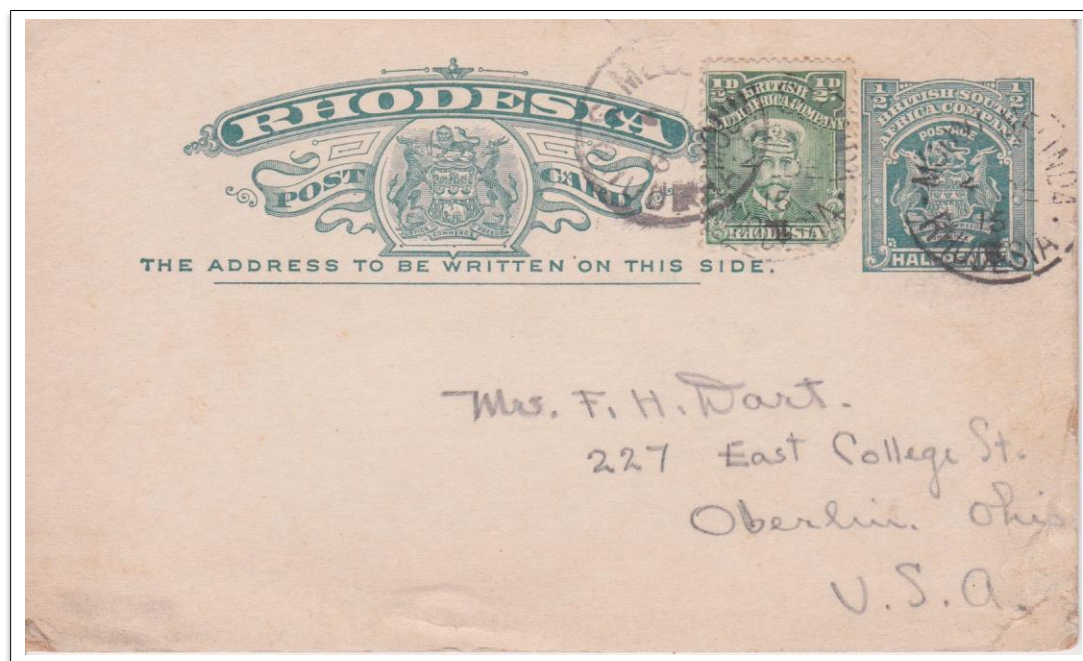
Mt Silinda Mission letter – to home offices. Canceled Mt Selinda, MAR 30/ 18. Transit through Melssetter.
WWI straight line “PASSED BY CENSOR” hand stamp in violet (applied in Bulawayo)

Mr. & Mrs. E.D. Alvord –
at Mt. Selinda 1917-26. Mr.
Alvord taught agriculture –
Agriculturalist for Instruction
of Natives, 1926-43

Alvord established
Nyanyadzi irrigation
scheme, still in use.



Mt. Silinda Mission letter – to American Board offices. Canceled Mt Selinda, 29 AUG/ 21. Melssetter backstamp



Sidney Dart – arrived Mt. Selinda 1911. Transferred to West Central Africa Mission (Angola) 1917.

Mt Silinda postcard to Dart's parents in Oberlin, Ohio. Canceled Mount Selinda 4 DE/ 15.
 1/2d blue-green Rhodesia postal stationery card in use beginning 1903
 Up-rated with 1/2d "Admiral" to pay 1d overseas postcard rate as of June 1901.



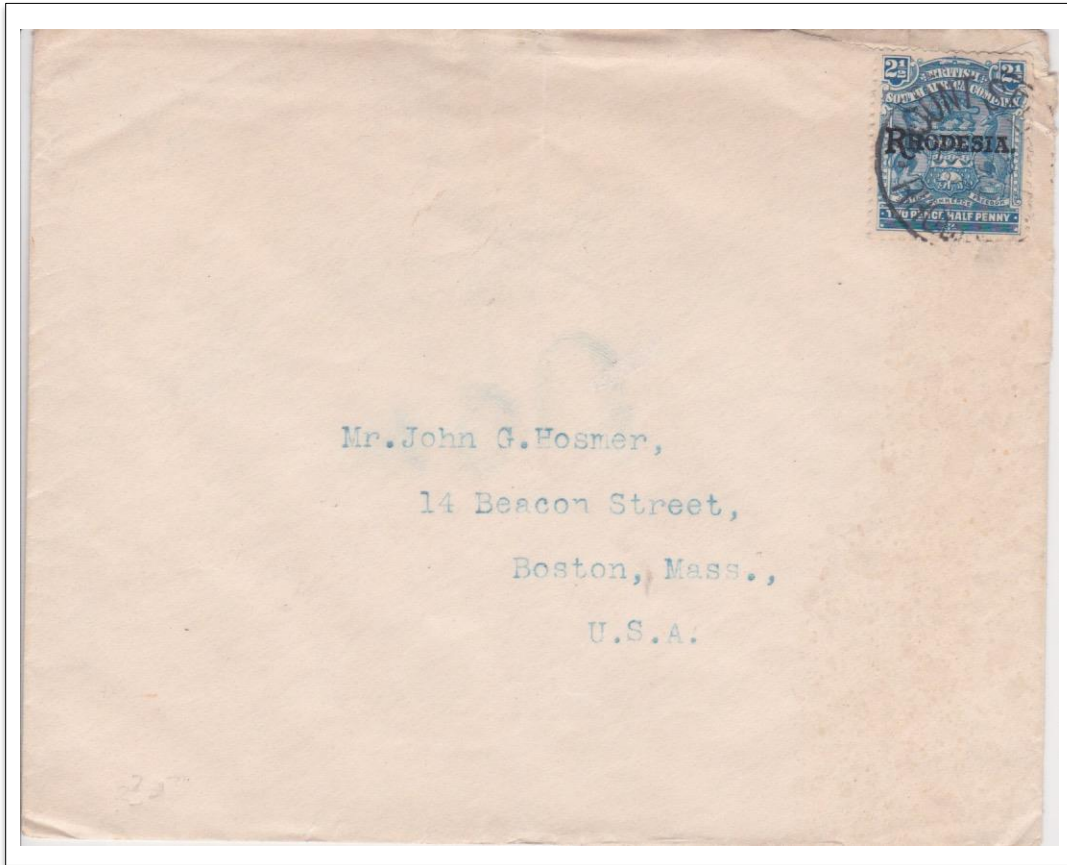
Rev. John Dysart – arrived 1911. First wife died 1913 during child birth. Remarried and returned to Rhodesia 1918.

Mt Silinda letter – Mrs. Dysart to home offices, Boston. Canceled Mount Selinda DE 7/18.
 Melsetter transit stamp on reverse. WWI Censor stamp applied Cape Town, South Africa.

POSTAL SERVICE

Mt Selinda Postal Agency opened October 1897.
Missionary Dr. Thompson first postal agent.

The initial canceler mistakenly spelled Silinda as "Selinda."
Both "Silinda" and "Selinda" spellings were subsequently used.



American Board Mission,
Mount Silinda, Melsetter,
S. Rhodesia.

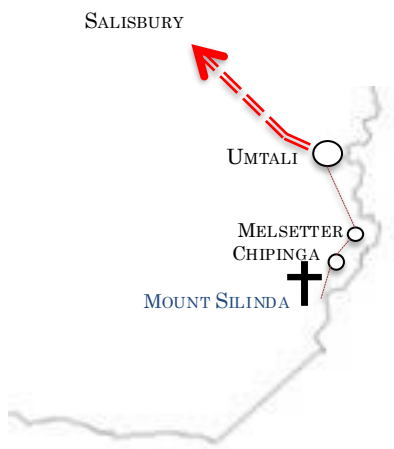
Scan of return address from reverse

Earliest recorded out-going cover from Mt Selinda Post Office and earliest recorded use of "Mount Silinda" mission stationery envelope (reverse).

Mt Silinda Mission cover – to American Board offices in Boston. Canceled Mount Selinda JU 19 / 02 (feint). Melsetter transit stamp on reverse. Overseas 2½d letter rate in effect 1902 – 1921

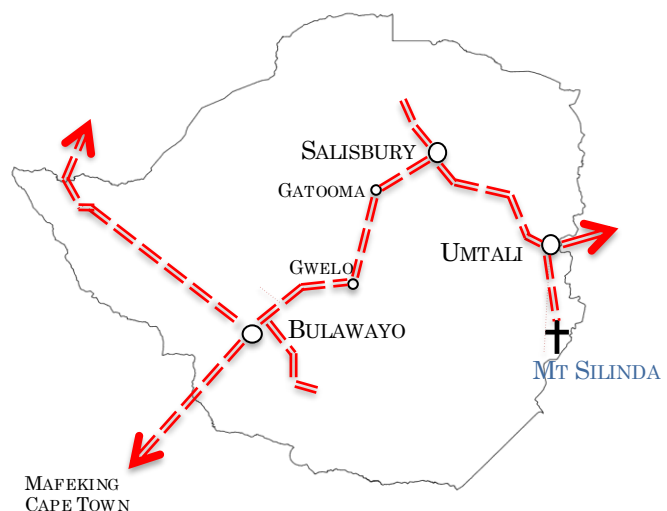
Initial Mail Route

Mail initially by runner, fortnightly to Melsetter (later via Chipinga).



Mail Routes as 1923

- Mail primarily by "line of rail"
- By cart/runner to nearest railhead
- Mail to England/America rail to Cape Town, steamer to England
- To India, Far East - Umtali via Bieria, PEA



Mt Selinda mail to the US was subject to WWI censorship. Generally censored in transit through South Africa, with circular "PASSED CENSOR" marks, applied in Cape Town.

Original research posits that the straight line **PASSED BY CENSOR** and **PASSED CENSOR** handstamps were applied in Southern Rhodesia.



W.T. Lawrence –
Early missionary at
Mt Selinda (1900-47).
Missionary doctor.

Mt Selinda letter – to American Board offices, Boston. Canceled Mount Selinda MY 11/ 18.
WWI "PASSED CENSOR 10/ 99" censor handstamp



PASSED CENSOR.

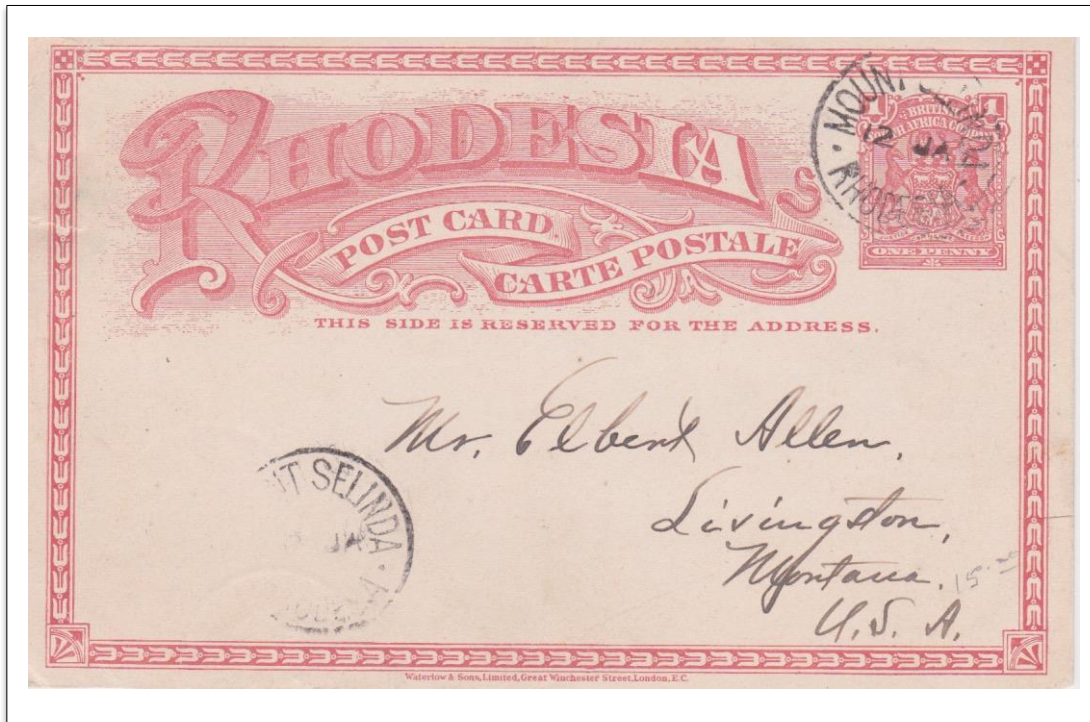
WWI blue ink "PASSED CENSOR" mark – Mount Selinda to American Board home office, canceled 25 MAR / 15.

One of three reported WWI blue "PASSED CENSOR" marks on Rhodesia covers

Industrial Departments – focus of early education
 Provided vocational training to boys in woodworking, agriculture, brickmaking, etc.

Mt. Silinda, Rhodesia, So. A. Jan. 15/04

Scan of address from reverse

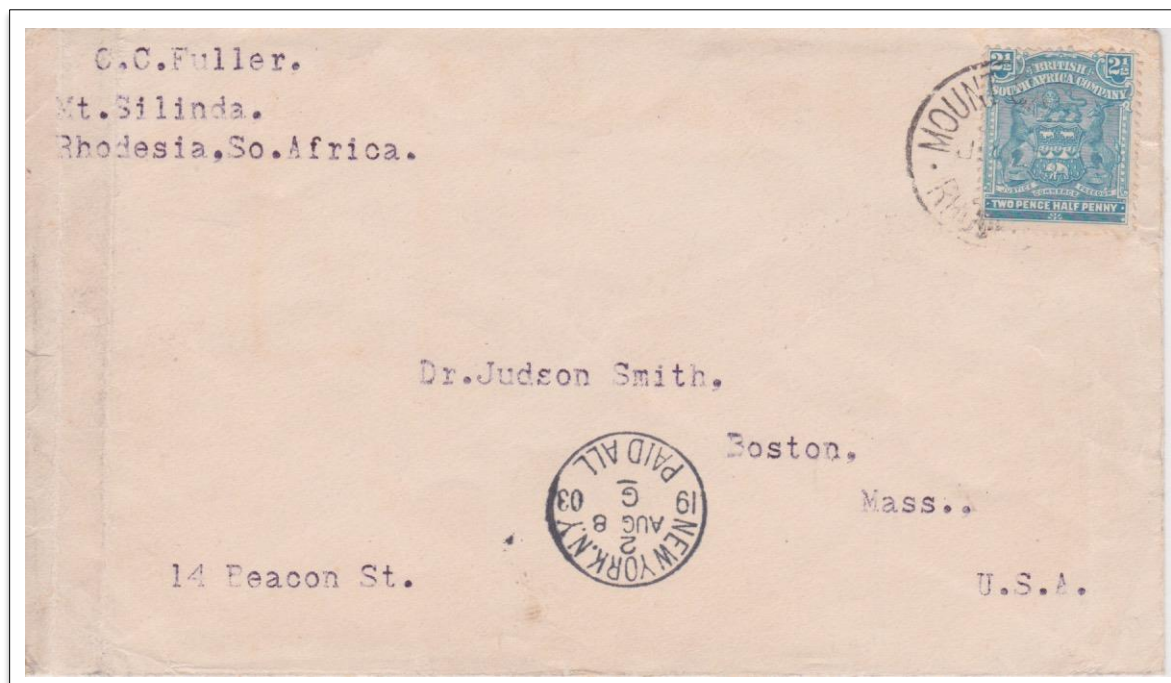


Transcription (partial) from reverse – describes bringing in steam engine and **setting up sawmill**:

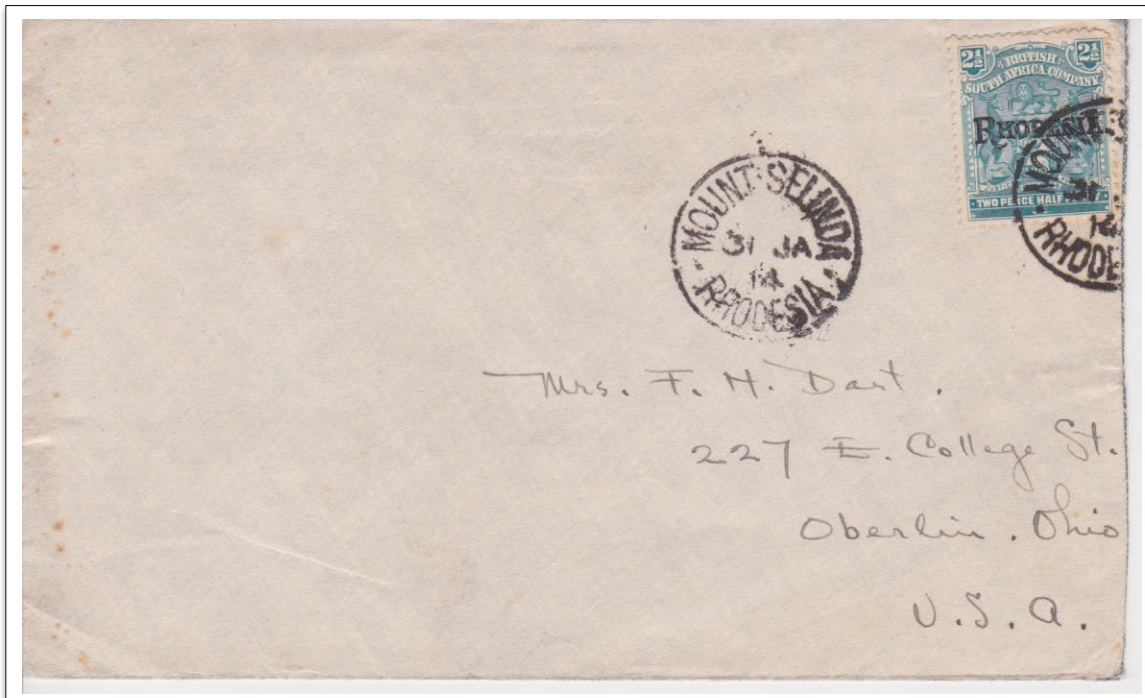
"[Your letter] found us hard at work getting the sawmill into place and set up. It came in with most of the other machines by big 14 & 16 ox teams from Umtali. We got the [steam] engine up in safely last June and Nov. 19, just one year from the day we reached here, started the saw mill."

Mount Selinda postal stationery card – CC Fuller to Montana, canceled Mount Selinda 12 JA __ –
 Melsetter back stamp dated JA 15 / 04
 Overseas 1d postcard rate in effect 1902.

CC Fuller –
 founder of
 Industrial
 Department.

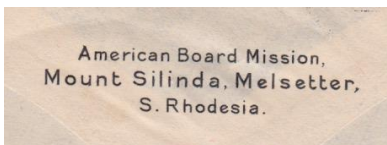


Mt Silinda letter – CC Fuller to home offices, Boston. Canceled Mount Selinda, date indistinct.
 Melsetter transit stamp on reverse dated JY 3 / 03. New York "PAID ALL" transit stamp.

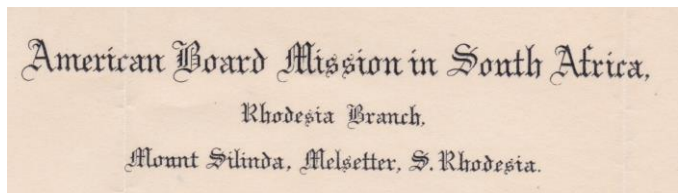


Sidney Dart –
In charge of
Industrial Dept.
1911 – 1917.

Mt. Silinda letter - to Dart family in Ohio. Canceled Mount Selinda, 31 JA/ 14. Melsetter transit back stamp.



Mission stationery
Scan from reverse
and enclosed letter



Yesterday I ground about 3500 lbs. of meal in two hours and weighed it up into 60 lb. loads, but the day before I spent my time monkeying with the injector, and yesterday p.m. sponging off a hot bearing. If things would only work right I would get an awful lot done!

In the carpentry Dept. we are making two dump carts for clay-hauling and a corncrib for our coming crop, as well as windows, tables and doors on other orders.

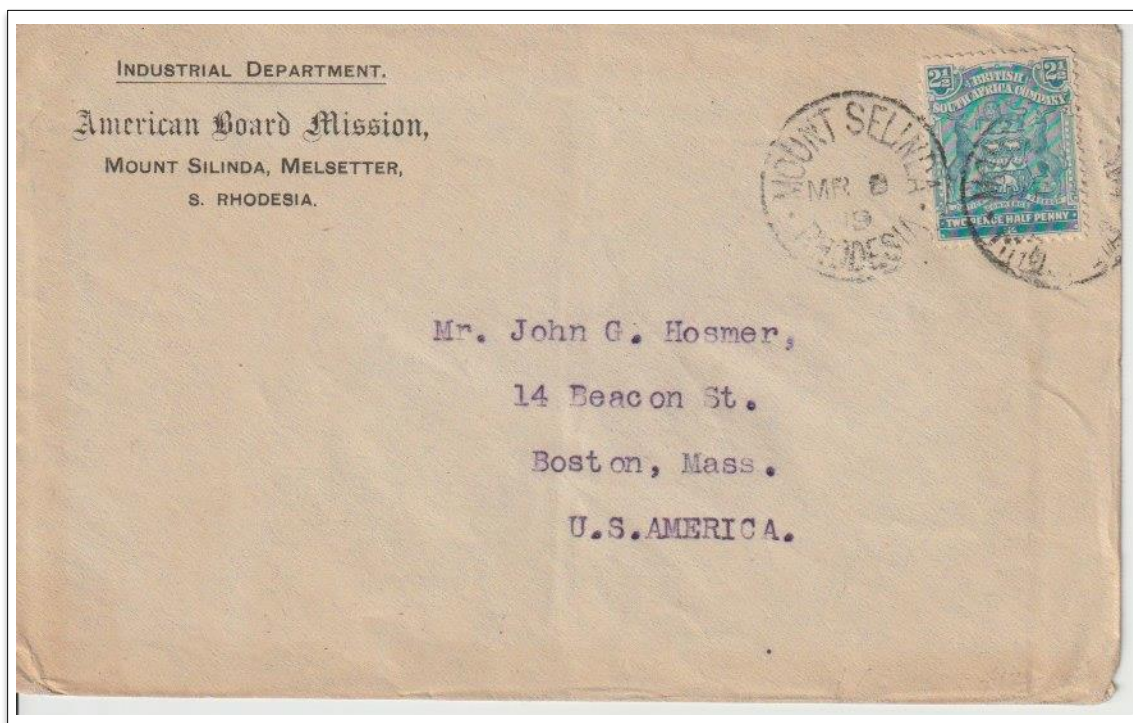
Transcription (partial) – describes work in **Industrial Department**:

"Yesterday I ground about 3500 lbs. of meal in two hours and weighed it up into 60 lbs. loads, but the day before I spend my time monkeying with the injector, and yesterday p.m. sponging off a hot bearing. If things would only work right I would get an awful lot done!

In the carpentry Dept. we are making two dump carts for clay hauling and a corncrib for our [corn] crop. As well as windows, tables and doors on other orders."



Mt Silinda - Industrial Department – Dart to parents, Oberlin, Ohio. Canceled Mount Selinda, 4 SP /15.
WW I “PASSED CENSOR C3” censor stamp.



Mt Silinda - Industrial Department – to American Board offices. Canceled Mount Selinda, MR 8 /19.

Early missions like Mt Selinda established rudimentary hospitals & dispensaries
Western medicine was an important part of Christian ministry,
opening the door to evangelism

Mt Silinda was the first permanent medical mission in Southern Rhodesia



"Dr. Thompson of Rhodesia" –
Vintage "Magic Lantern" slide, No. 52



Image from Magic Lantern slide

Pioneer medical missionary Dr. W. L. Thompson –
Mission co-founder. Opened dispensary 1893. Served
1893-1932. **First postmaster** Mount Silinda post office



Second-earliest documented
American missionary cover in Southern Rhodesia.

One of two known
"manuscript" stampless
official covers from
Melsetter during this
period.

Stampless official ("free") letter to Dr. Thompson, Mt. Selinda – from Lt. Greyman, British South Africa Police by runner.

"Melsetter" (single "t") cancel DE 27/97 Branch post between Melsetter and Mt Silinda opened October 17, 1897.



Postal route

Oberlin, Ohio, US By steam ship via London to Cape Town	Aug 6, 1909
Rail from Cape town to Bulawayo Station	Sep 10, 1909
By rail to Umtali, Rhodesia	Sep 11, 1909
By cart to Melsetter, Rhodesia	Aug 8, 1939
By runner to Mt Silinda, Rhodesia	

Incoming uprated postal card to Dr. Thompson, Mt. Silinda – canceled Oberlin, Ohio Aug 6 / 1909. Bulawayo Station, Umtali and Melsetter transit cancels – documents postal route to Mt Silinda from US.



Earliest recorded Mt Silinda Medical Department corner card; one of three.

Mt. Silinda Medical Department letter – to home offices, Boston, canceled 4 NO / 16. WWI purple circular “PASSED CENSOR / C.1” censor handstamp applied Cape Town, South Africa. Melsetter transit backstamp

SISTER MISSION STATIONS

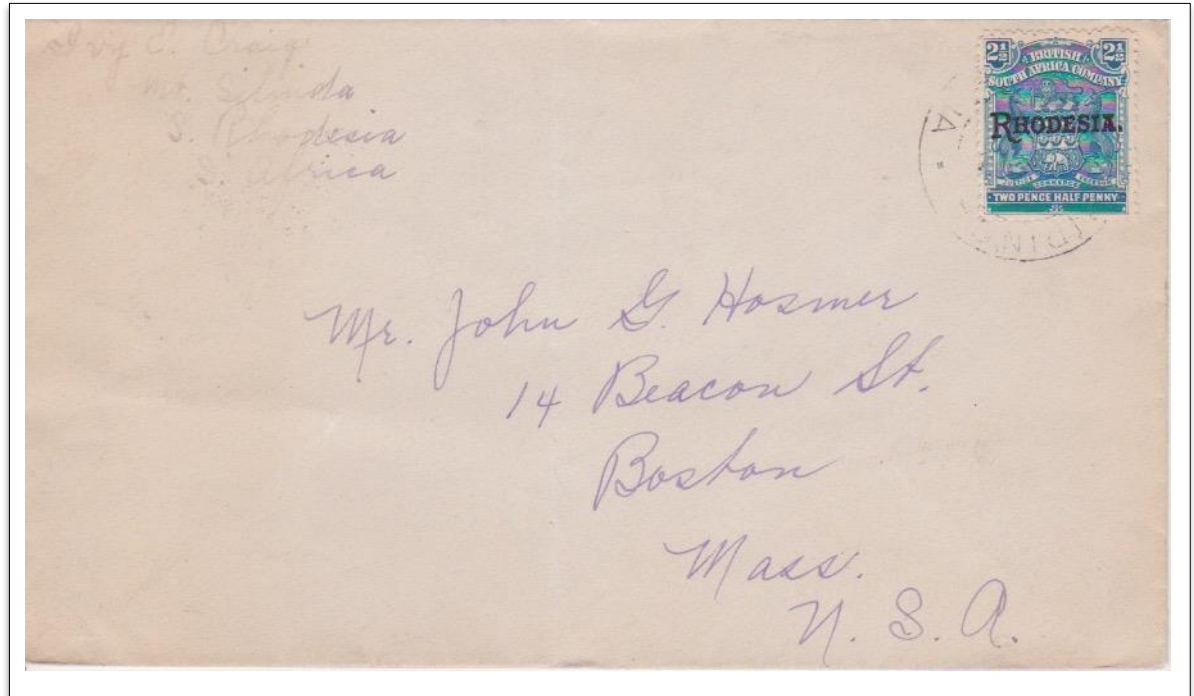
CHIKORE MISSION

The **Chikore Mission** station was opened by Rev. Wilder 1895, 18 miles NW of the sister station at Mt. Silinda.

Missionaries served at both stations.
It is now operated by the United Church of Christ

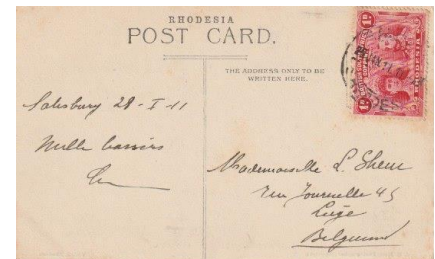
Ivy E Craig – at Mt. Silinda & Chikore 1920–54.
At Chikore at this time for native language training.

Postal service – prior to establishing its own post office at Craigmere in 1925, Chikore mail posted via Mt. Silinda or Chipinga (note Mt. Silinda return address)



Chikore letter – Craig to home offices. Canceled Chipinga (1920 faint). Melsetter transit cancel on reverse (OC 20/20)

Representative kraal (village) near Chikore Mission



Scan of reverse.

Position 42,
plate A. Red
dot on right
inner frame



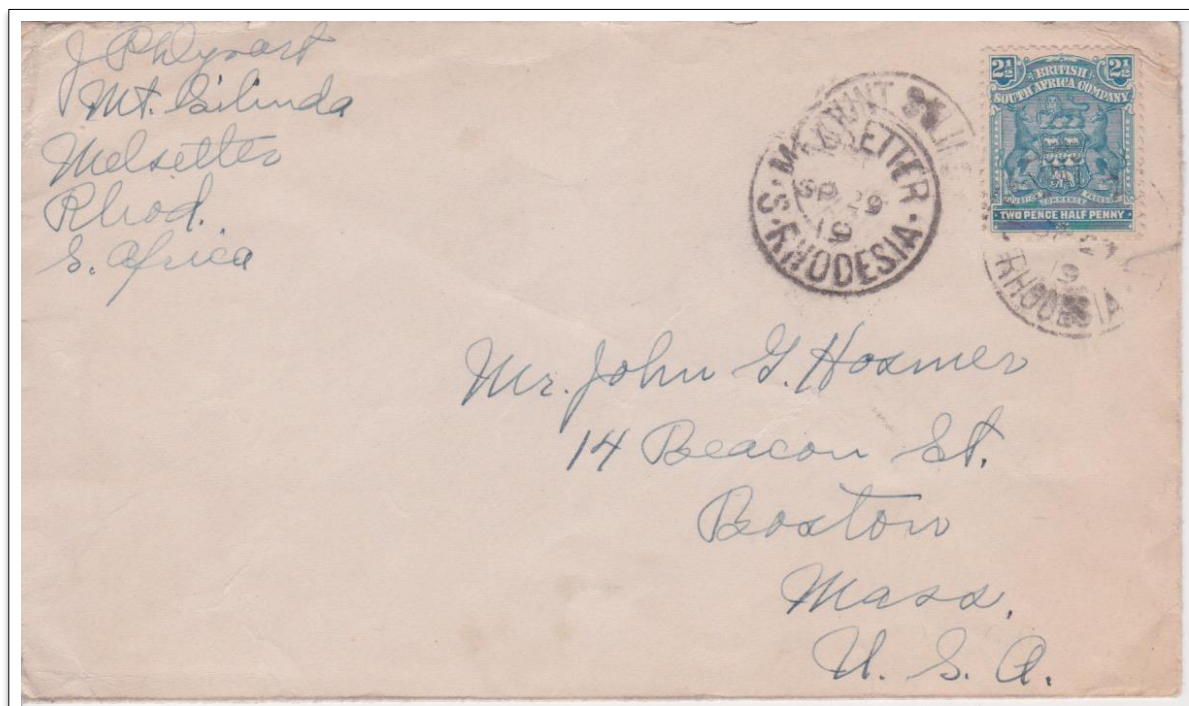
Enlarged scan of
1d "double head"
on reverse.

DB B/W chromograph used to Belgium, canceled Salisbury 23 JAN 11.

Published by Raphael Tuck & Sons, London. Photographer, J. M. Mein, Umtali, So Rhodesia. 1 of 18 in series.

1d "doublehead" paid overseas postcard rate in effect 1902.

Gogoyo (Gogoi) Mission was founded 1917, 31 miles across the border in Portuguese East Africa (P.E.A.). It was staffed by missionaries from Mt. Silinda. Mail was posted at Mt. Silinda. Closed 1942



Rev. John P Dysart – Co-founder Gogoyo Mission.

2nd wife, M.T. Dysart, joined mission by 1921. Both at Gogoyo at time of these letters.

Second earliest reported cover from Gogoyo Mission – staffed by only 3 missionary families

Gogoyo letter posted at Mt Silinda – Rev Dysart to home offices, Massachusetts, canceled Mount Selinda SP 29/ 19.
Mail posted across boarder via Mt. Silinda. Melssetter transit cancel.

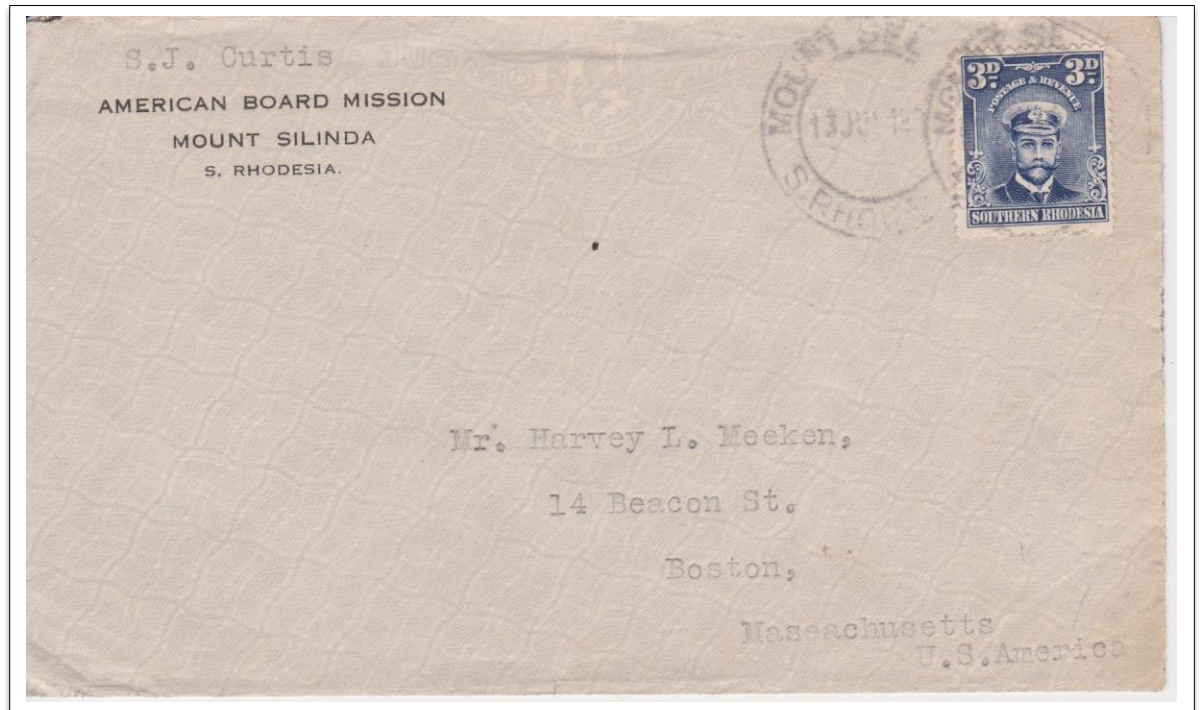


Gogoyo letter posted at Mt Silinda – Mrs. Dysart to home offices, canceled Mount Selinda 14 JAN / 21.
Mail posted across boarder via Mt. Silinda. Melssetter transit cancel on reverse dated FE 16/ 21.

COLONIAL SOUTHERN RHODESIA

Mt Selinda and Chikore Missions continued to flourish during colonial Southern Rhodesia (1923-1955) and the Federation of Rhodesia & Nyasaland (1923-1964), with the arrival of several new missionaries.

S. J. Curtis – Principal
Mount Silinda Training
School – taught local
school teachers,
In Rhodesia 1927-39.

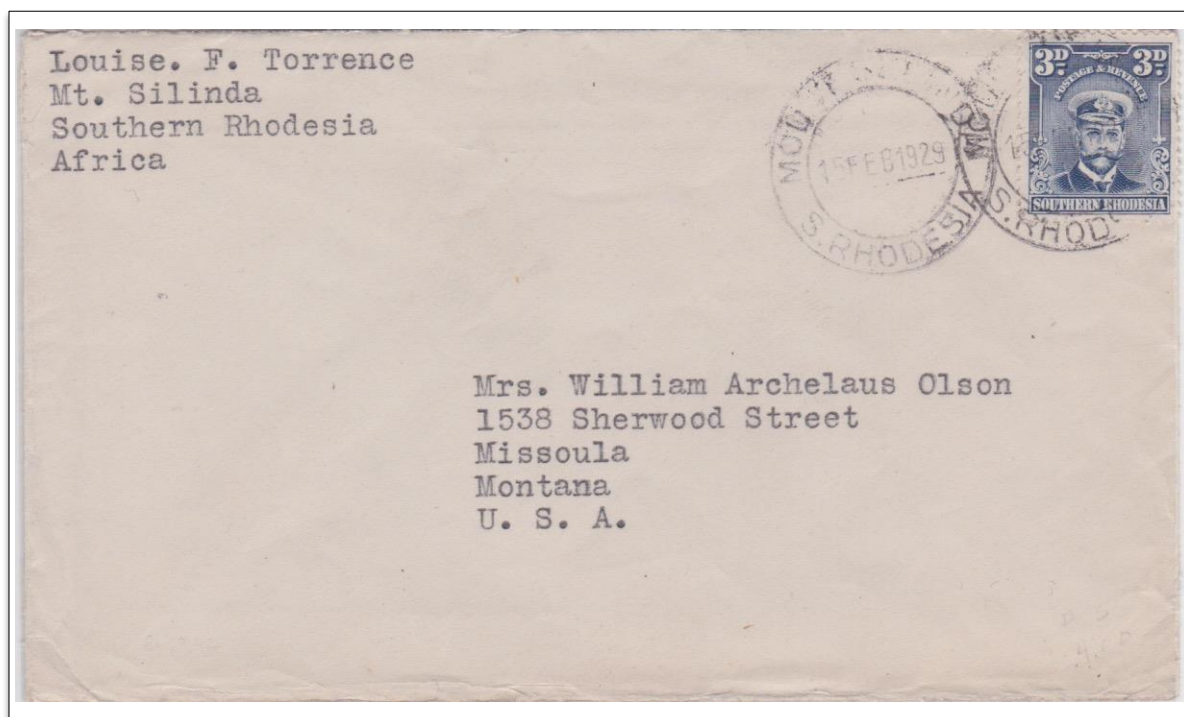


Mt Silinda letter –
S.J Curtis to American
Board home office, canceled
Mount Selinda 13 JUL 1923.



Mr & Mrs Marsh –
served at Mt. Selinda and
Chikore 1926 – 1956. Mr.
Marsh served as Chikore
chairman and treasurer.

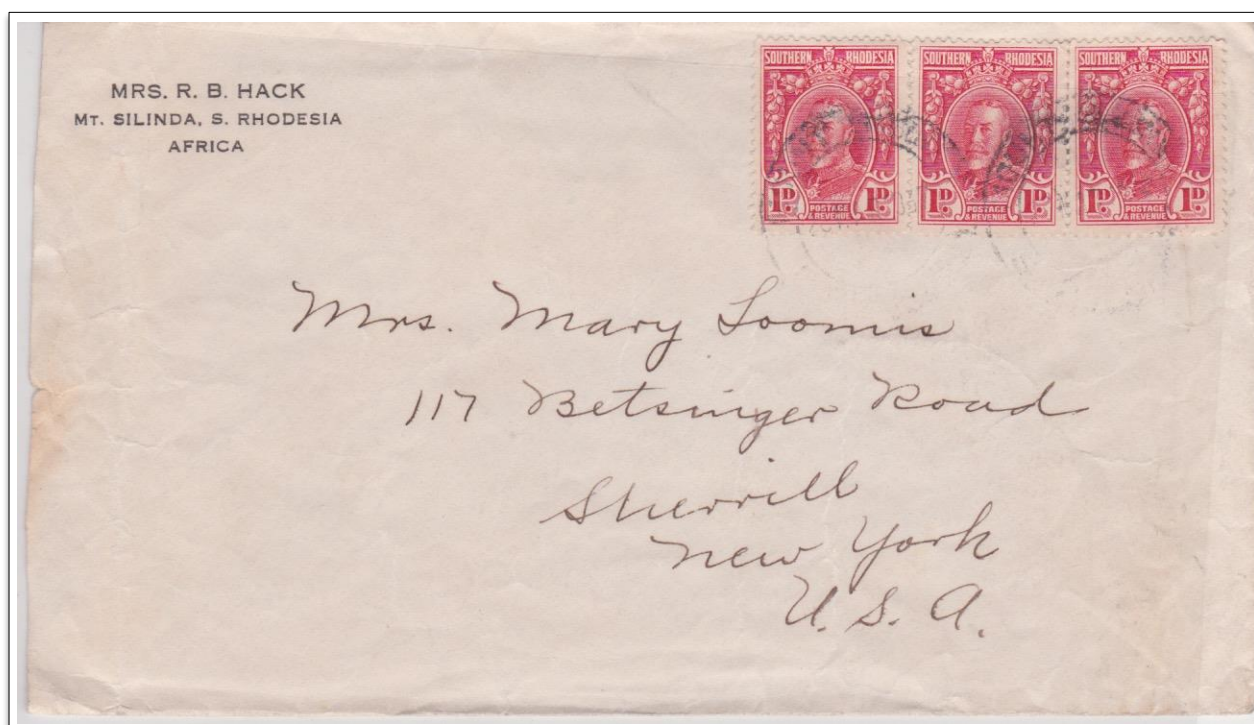
Mt Silinda letter –
Mrs. Marsh to American
Board home office,
canceled Mount Selinda
DE 23/ 26.



Louise Torrence –
Teacher Mt Silinda
Training School.
In Rhodesia 1929-62.

Mount Silinda letter –
to home state of Montana,
canceled Mount Selinda
15 FEB 1929

Mabel E. Hack –
Teacher Mt Silinda
Training School,
acting Principal
1927. Died
Rhodesia 1955.



Mount Silinda letter – Mrs. Hack to New York, canceled Mount Selinda, 26 MAR 1937.

EPILOGUE

Missionaries were caught up in the “war of liberation” (“Bush War”) in the late 1960’s -1970’s. American Board missionaries, Abbots were deported 1966 for opposing the apartheid regime. Chikore Mission school was closed 1976 by Government forces.

All American Board missionaries had left the country by end of 1978. Missions passed to local control following Zimbabwe Independence 1980, now operated by the United Church of Christ, Zimbabwe.