

Cross-Writing on Postcards

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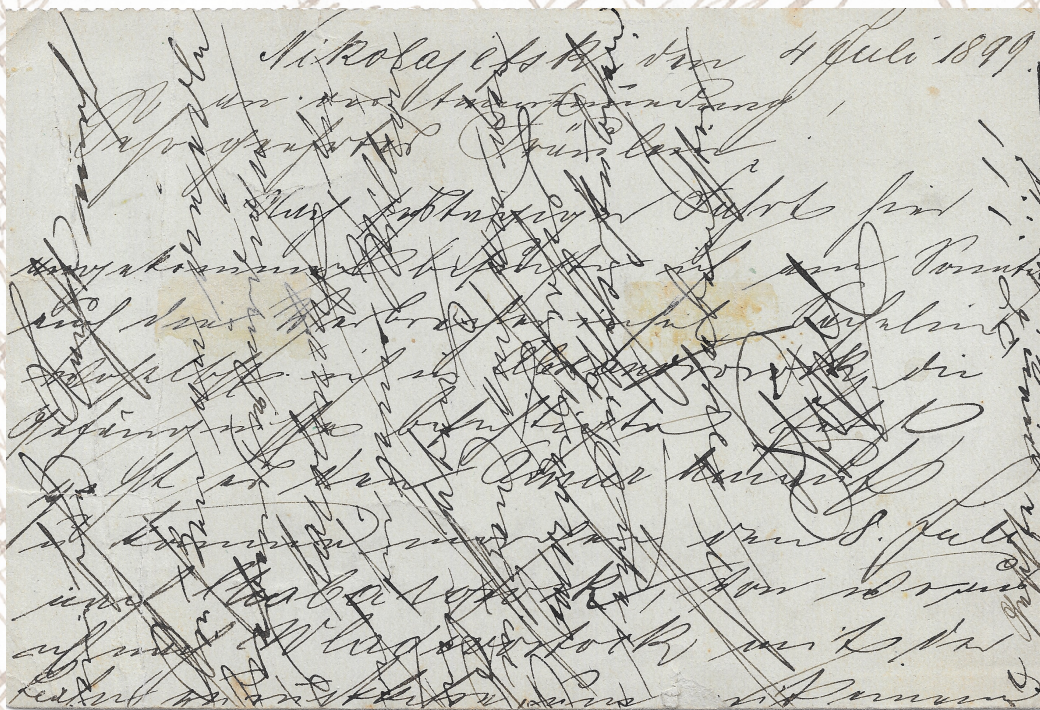
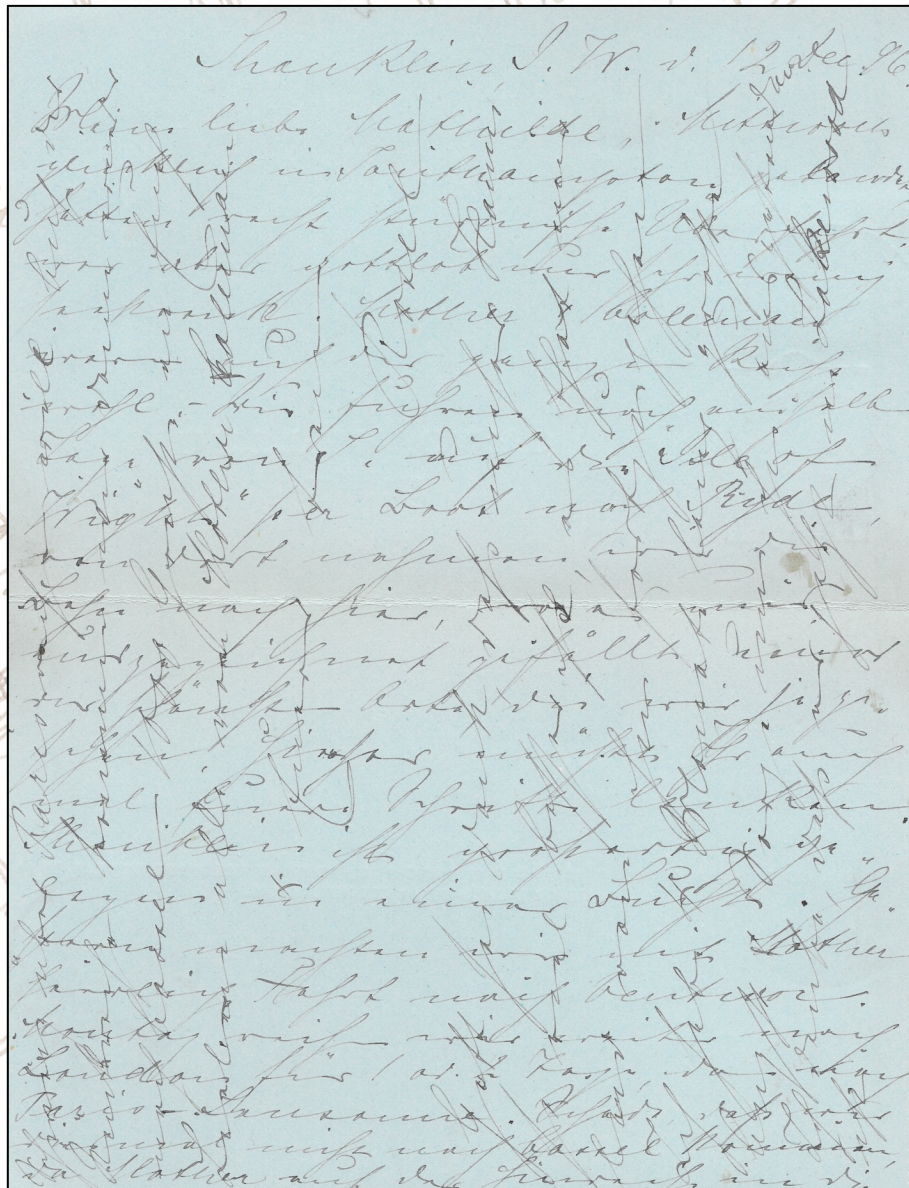
Before the arrival of the penny post in Great Britain, the cost of mailing a letter depended on the weight of the letter and the distance it was to travel. One way to save money was to be brief. Another was to use cross-writing. This involved writing a message then turning the page ninety degrees and writing over the part you had just written. It was hard to read, but it saved money and paper (which was also expensive).

In time cross-writing went into decline. Paper, and the cost of postage, was no longer an issue.

However, some people still used cross-writing during the late 19th century and well into the 20th to pack more information in the limited space available on a post-card or postal stationary.

Here are some examples of cross-writing as it continued for a generation or two as an echo, or a fossil, of a letter-writing practice from a much earlier time.

Right; Cross-writing on an English Letter Card from London to Germany dated December 12, 1896. Letter cards were folded cards, a form of postal stationary with a bit more space for writing. They were first used in Belgium in 1882. Added postage UK Sc. 65 1p Queen Victoria (Shown at 95%)



Left; An example of German cross-writing on an 1899 letter card. Sent to Heidelberg, Germany from Chenfoo (now Yantai), a treaty port in China. Added Russian postage for the trip across Siberia. Front – shown at 55% Back – shown at 110%



Above; English cross-writing continued past the Victorian era and the end of the 19th century. Collotype postcard (Stourton Tower) dated March 1, 1904. UK Sc. 102 1/2p King Edward VII Front – shown at 85% Back – shown at 45%



Right; A late use of Dutch cross-writing on a February 2, 1922, postcard from London to Amsterdam. Photo-lithography Postcard (Whitehall, London). UK Sc.154, 155 1/2 p, 1p King George V Front – shown at 90% Back – shown at 50%

