

# The Feather Merchants

A shaggy dog story, with some history and a few personal insights.

# Internet Definition

## feather merchant

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### English

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#### Noun

#### **feather merchant** (*plural feather merchants*)

1. (*military slang*) A civilian. [quotations ▼]
2. (*military slang, by extension*) Someone with a cushy job or without combat experience. [quotations ▼]
3. (*slang, by extension*) Someone who does not do worthwhile work; someone who is more appearance than substance. [quotations ▼]
4. (*slang*) A short man. [quotations ▼]
5. *Used other than figuratively or idiomatically:* see feather, merchant. One who sells feathers. [quotations ▼]

MAX SHULMAN

*The Feather  
Merchants*



ILLUSTRATED BY WILLIAM CRAWFORD

THE SUN DIAL PRESS

GARDEN CITY, N. Y.

# Origin of the term

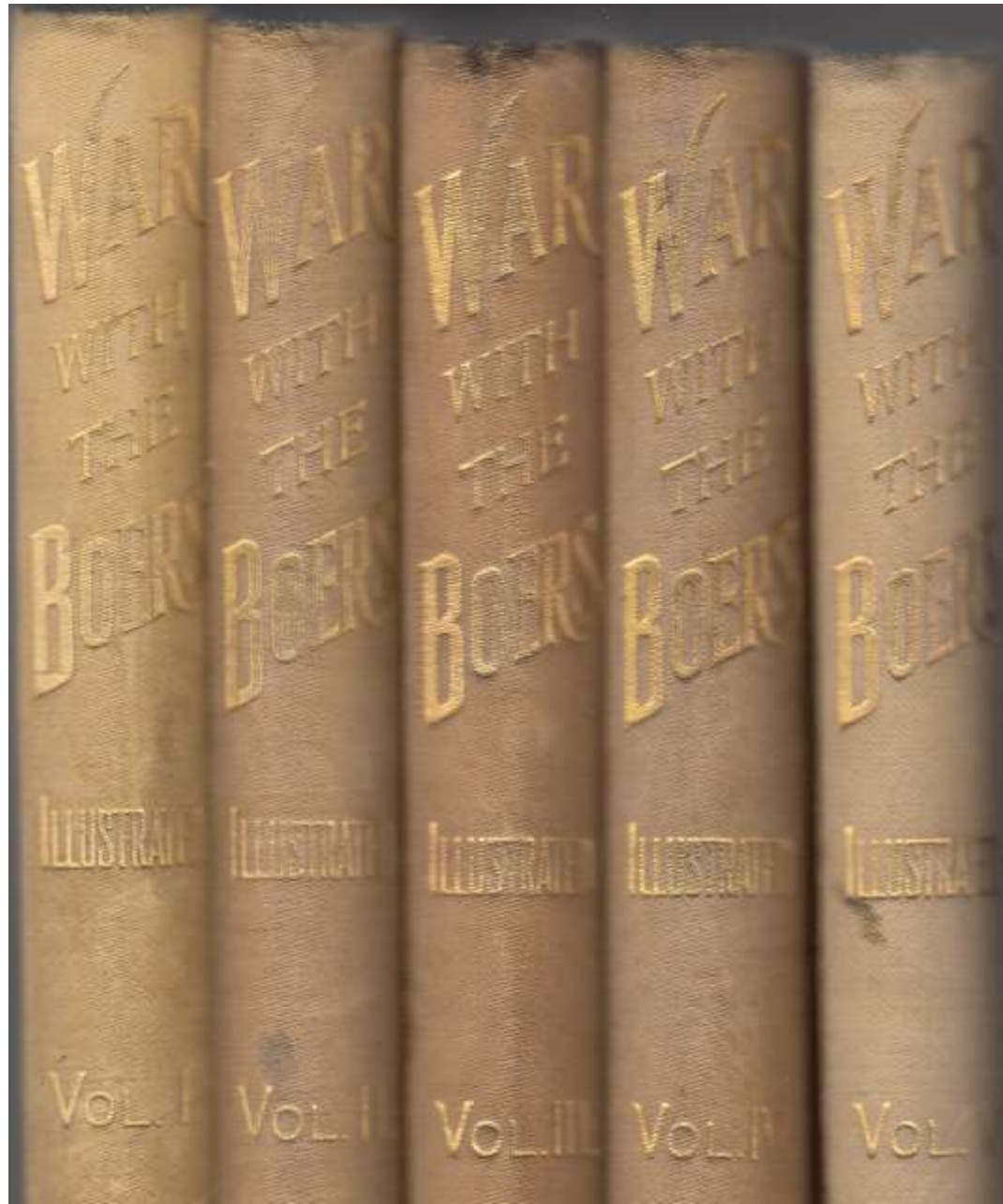
EVERY SOLDIER knows that "feather merchants" means civilians; but few know why it does. The origins of the term are indeed cloaked in mystery. Theories abound. Only one, however, seems worthy of even provisional credence—that of Professor Herk Bettzimmer, the famous "one-horse philologist" of Wilkes-Barre, Pa., whose testimony, you will recall, was no small factor in deciding the McCullough vs. Maryland litigation.

Says Professor Bettzimmer, "*Circa* 4500 B.C. two neighboring tribes, the Puntangi and the Snafu, went to war over the

# The Anglo-Boer War

1899-1902

# The Assignment



# Cliff Notes for the Anglo-Boer War

- **South Africa Colonized by the British and Dutch (Boers)**
- **Two British colonies – Cape of Good Hope and Natal**
- **Two Boer States – Transvaal and Orange River Colony**
- **Somewhat peaceful coexistence until the discovery of gold and diamonds**
- **Boers invade British colonies – initially successful**
- **British bring massive amount of troops from all over the empire – Canada, India, Australia, and New Zealand – overwhelm Boers**
- **Boers reduced to guerrilla warfare**
- **Peace treaty signed May 31, 1902 with British in control**
- **Four states combined into Union of South Africa in 1910**

# 1900 Map of South Africa



THE EXTENT OF THE BOER INVASION



1840 Great Britain issues the first postage stamp



# Ladysmith Siege Card

Ladysmith Siege Cards - Printed and used during Siege



Type 3 - Cross on flag on reverse  
Posted to Pietermaritzburg "JA 30 1900"  
Received "3 ML 1900" - 3 days after siege was lifted

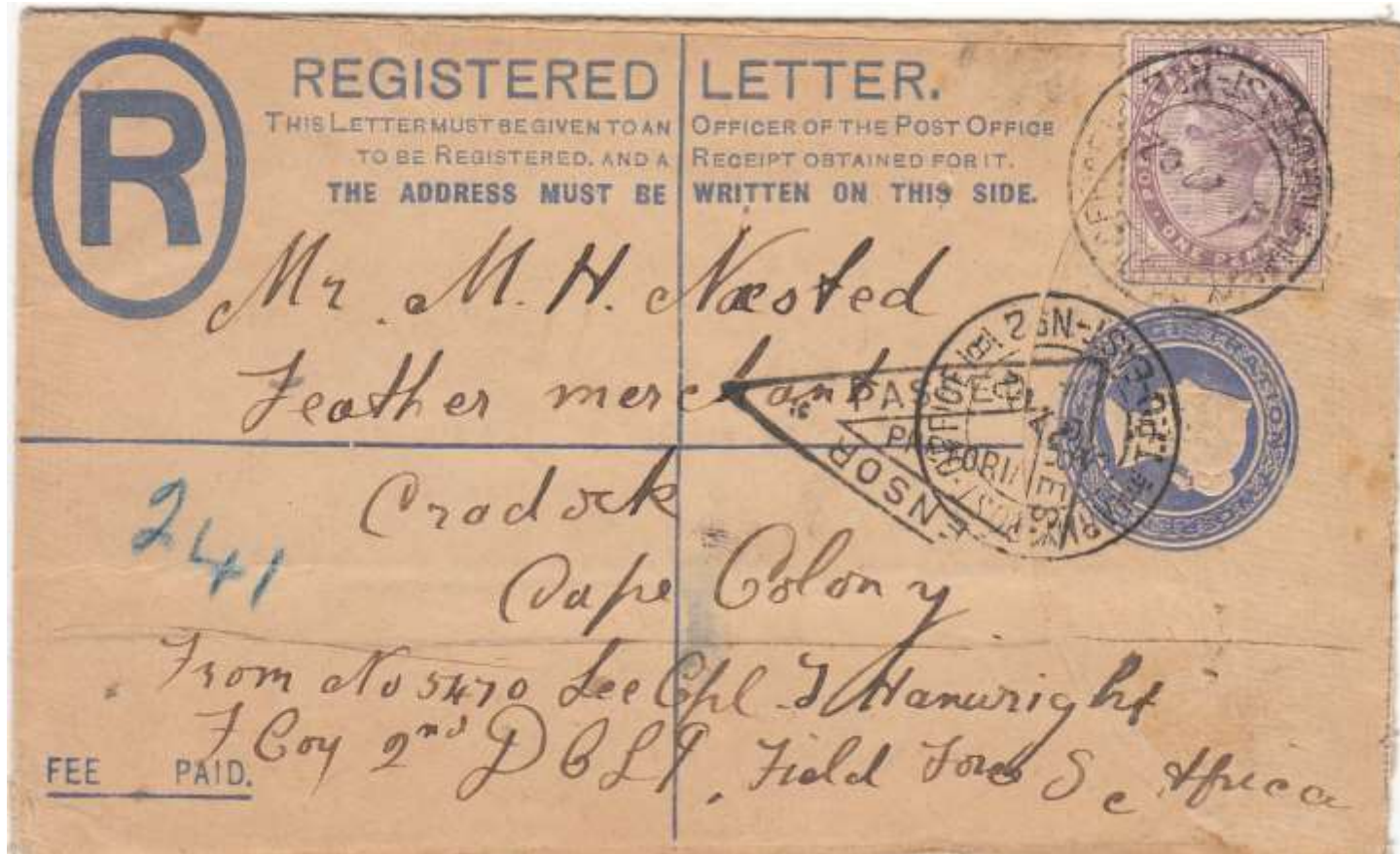
## Mail to POWs Routed Through the US Consulate

The requirement that mail from the nations at war be routed through a neutral site was satisfied by routing the mail through the US Consulate in Pretoria. An oval cachet, with the American eagle, was used to document this procedure.



**A postcard from India to Captain C.H. Hicks, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers who was captured Jan 24, 1900 during the battle of Spion Kop. Routed through Pietermaritzburg, Natal, where additional franking and British censor cachet type PMB2 was applied. Circular Boer "GEZIEN" cachet used for incoming mail.**

# British Army Post Offices



Posted "ARMY POST OFFICE –T.P.O. EAST – No 2

JA 27 02"

(Railway Travelling Post Office)

# More British Army Post Offices



# Hans Michael Naested

## The Father:

Born: 13 Mar 1827, in Holbaeck, Denmark

Died: 30 Aug, 1907 at age 80, in Craddock, Eastern Cape, South Africa.

## The Son:

Born: 22 Apr 1869 in Craddock, Eastern Cape, South Africa

Died 9 June 1915 at age 46, in Caddock, Eastern Cape, South Africa

# The Missing Piece



Addressed to “Ostrich Feather Merchant” !!

**A Victorian Lady  
Sporting an Ostrich  
Feather Hat**





# “Femme Fatale”



# Ostrich Farming in South Africa

- **First Feathers obtained from hunting wild birds**
- **Hunting ostriches outlawed in South Africa in 1821**
- **Farming started in 1860's**
- **Birds well adapted to dry and inland regions in South Africa**
- **Birds tended to spook and destroy eggs**
- **Invention of the ostrich egg incubator (1869) enhanced birth rate of chicks**
- **1865 – 80 tame ostriches**
- **1875 – 32,000 tame ostriches!!!**

# Ostrich Farming Statistics

- **Two crops of feathers per year**
- **One pound of feathers per bird**
- **Only diamonds worth more by weight**
- **At today's gold prices (\$35,000/pound), a couple of birds in the backyard would make a comfortable living**
- **Largest export from South Africa after gold and diamonds**
- **South Africa produced 75% of world's production of Ostrich Feathers**
- **Ostrich farmer's houses known as "feather mansions"**

# Hollywood Tragic Romantic Movie: “Titanic”

Leonardo and Kate  
come from different  
strata of society

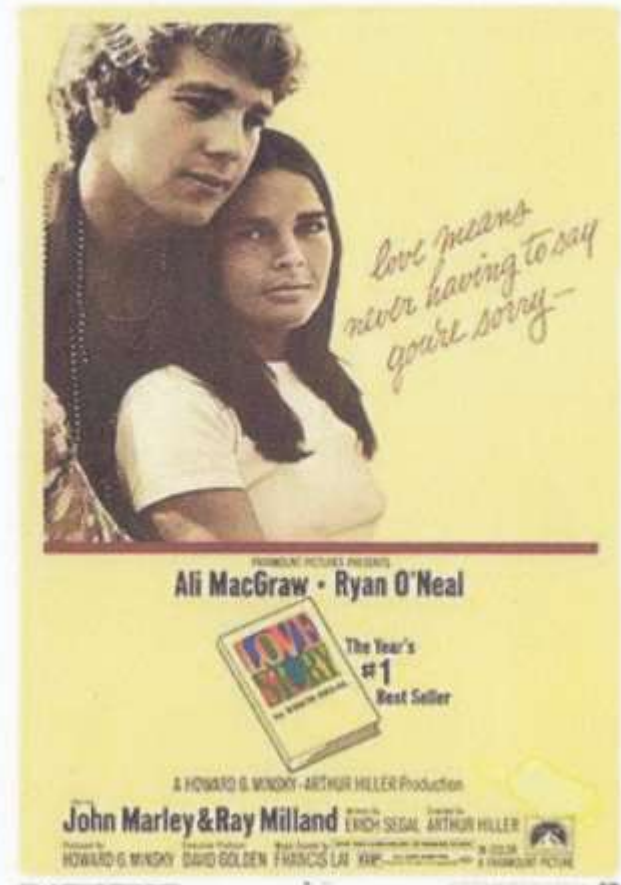
Leonardo drowns  
and freezes in the  
north Atlantic Ocean



# Hollywood Tragic Romantic Movie: “Love Story”

Ali and Ryan come from  
different strata of society

Ali dies from rare  
disease



# Real Life

Between a Fairy Tale and a Hollywood  
tragic romantic movie

# Titanic's Heart of the Ocean Diamond Necklace



# Portion of Titanic's Cargo Manifest

Ostrich feathers  
bound for New York  
fashion industry  
Insured for \$2.3M in  
today's money

Peabody, H.W. & Company	13 bales straw goods
Simon, A.I. & Company	<u>1 case raw feathers</u>
Wilson, P.K. & Sons	2 case linens
Manhattan Shirt Company	3 case tissues
Broadway Trust Company	3 case coney skins (rabbit)
Prost. G.	1 case auto parts
Young Bros.	1 <u>case feathers</u>
Wimpfheimer, A. & Company	3 case leather
Brown Bros. & Company	15 case rabbit hair
Goldster, Morris	11 <u>case feathers</u>
Cobb. G.H.	1 case lace tissue
Anderson Refridg, Mach. Company	11 case refrigeration apparatus



# Things to consider before attempting to recover the Titanic “Feather Treasure”

- Feathers have been in salt water for over 100 years
- Difficult to access at 17,000 ft under water  
Pressure of 8000+ psi  
Recent attempt to reach Titanic resulted in death of four explorers
- Fashion is fickle – Street value of Ostrich feathers not what it used to be

*“...and now you know the rest of the story”*

Paul Harvey

# The End

