

The Line of Rail

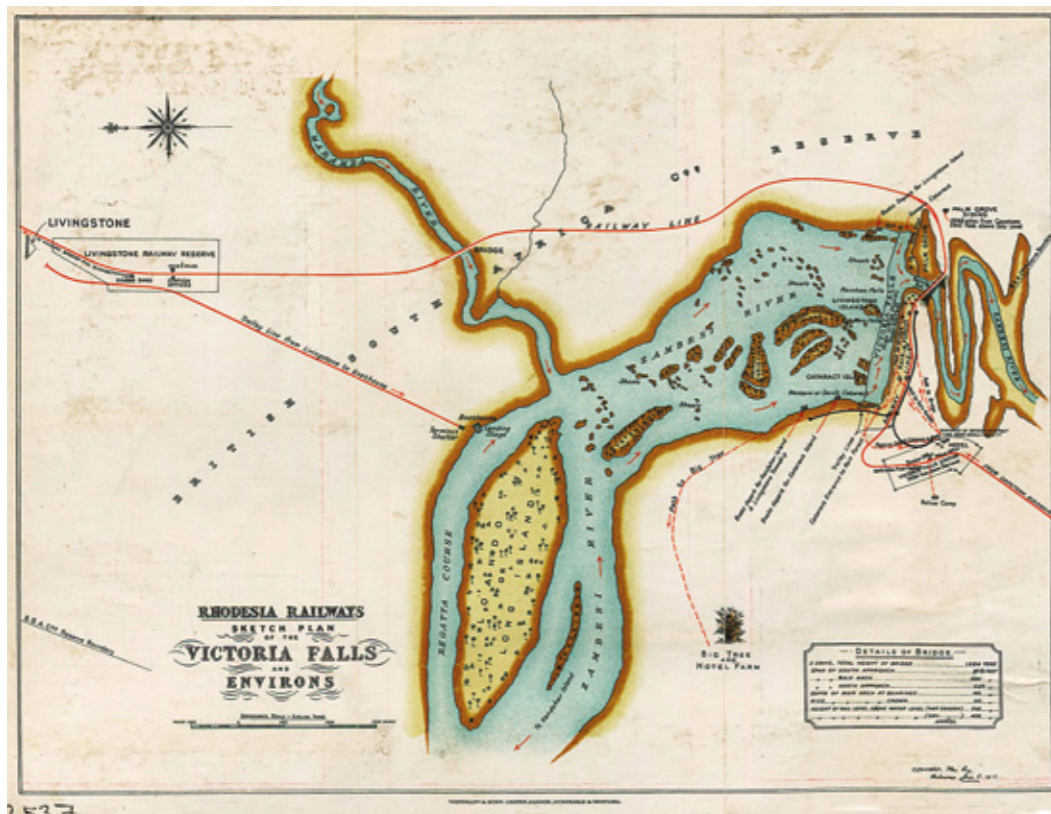
“There were neither people, nor houses, only trees, rocks and God”

- Lusaka pioneer Frieda Glasser

In 1905 the great railway bridge, the Victoria Falls Bridge, was constructed over the Zambezi gorge and this led to the establishment of the town of Livingstone, the capital of Northern Rhodesia from 1911 until 1935 when the capital became the new town of Lusaka. In the 1970s, the Chinese connected the railway line to East Africa by constructing the Tanzania-Zambia railway.

Even before the Victoria Falls Bridge was completed, the building of the railway north of the Zambezi had begun as a single-line track with sidings every twenty miles to allow the daily north and south bound trains to pass each other. Some of the sidings, Kalomo, Choma, Monze, Mazabuka, and Lusaka grew into villages and then expanded into towns. Known locally as the ‘Line of Rail’, the railway and its surroundings formed the commercial spine of the country.

Jewish traders followed the Line of Rail from Livingstone to the Congo and were often the first traders at the new settlements along the line in Ndola, Broken Hill, Lusaka, and other towns. Jewish families, including the Glassers, Kollenbergs, and Fischers, were among the founders of Lusaka, and many buildings and shop fronts that had been owned by Jews in the towns along the Line of Rail survive to this day.

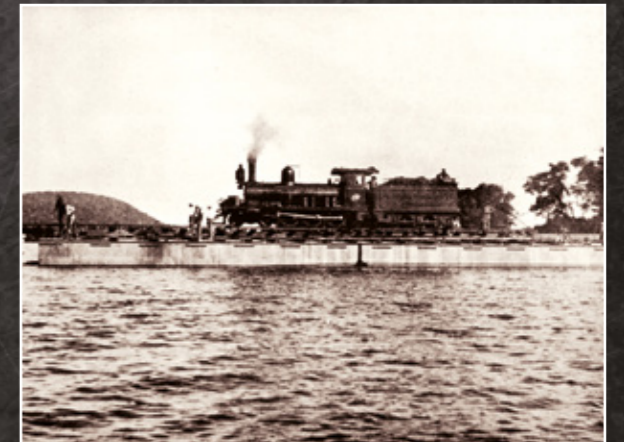


Sketch plan of Victoria Falls and environs by Rhodesia Railways, 5 June, 1913
(National Library of South Africa)



Aerial view of the railway bridge across the great Zambezi river

The great Victoria Falls Bridge nears completion over the Zambezi Gorge, opening the gateway to economic and exploratory opportunities in the North, 1905
(National Library of South Africa)



A pontoon ferries a train across a river in Northern Rhodesia, circa 1900.
(National Library of South Africa)



Map showing the Line of Rail, circa 1939
(National Library of South Africa)



At work on the realisation of Cecil Rhodes' dream of a railway from the Cape to Cairo