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\* WINDOW DELIVERY AND ASSOCIATED HANDSTAMPS \*  
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Noting several delivery handstamps incorporating the word WINDOW in the material I have accumulated since joining the I.S.C. a year ago, I turned to the "India Post" (which, with its forerunner 'India News and Notes'. I have complete from 1950) in order to get a better understanding of this mark. To my disappointment, the only reference I could find was a question asked in 1970 querying the earliest date of a 'WINDOW' stamp, and answered in 1975 (!) instancing three Fort Bombay marks of 1900.

The questioner in 1970 was Ernest Oehme and I therefore turned to him and, as a result of his making available what detailed information he had, I am able to write this article. Maybe the 'skeleton' it establishes can be given greater substance in the future by those much more knowledgeable than I in India Postal History.

In essence it appears the WINDOW DELIVERY SYSTEM refers to a special service only open to those who register with the Post Office concerned to have their letters delivered to them in a controlled manner through a special WINDOW on production of a WINDOW TICKET. It must not be confused with Post Box or Private Bag delivery systems, although there are similarities with both. The earliest reference I know of regarding this type of service comes from Calcutta in 1821 and then in 1827 when apparently only business houses could avail themselves of it. Subsequently an item in the *Calcutta Gazette* of 1854 established that individuals could also use the system. The Postal Guide of 1875 introduced for the first time any mention of a specific charge and sets out much detail regarding the method of operation, whilst the 1903 Guide appears to restrict payment for the service to the presidency towns of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras only. It was not until 1900 that handstamps identifying with the system first appeared. In detail then.....

1827 - The Calcutta G.P.O. issued on January 9th 1827 a notice to the effect that much inconvenience was being caused by individuals not immediately paying postage due on letters and informing the General Public that strict instructions had been given to Distributing Peons and the General Post Office not to deliver any letter without getting payment in full "conforming with the Postmaster General's Notice of 14th April 1821". It went on "Houses of Business making deposits in cash at the G.P.O. Treasury, to cover periodical payments on the adjustment of their accounts, are exempted".

The last sentence referred to the practice established in 1821, when certain 'Houses of Business' in Calcutta who made deposits in cash to the G.P.O., were given Register Books with pages in duplicate. All letters to be sent through the Posts were entered in the book, both being presented by the servant of the Company concerned at the Post Office 'WICKET' (an early name for WINDOW) allotted to them at an agreed time of day. After checking, the book was duly signed and the duplicate copy extracted and kept by the Wicket Clerk. At the same time, all mail held at the Post Office was given to the servant who signed a book held by the Wicket Clerk, who in turn gave the servant a duplicate list of the items concerned. At agreed intervals, the accounts for each business house were checked and adjustments made to the deposits held.

1854 - The *Calcutta Gazette* of 29th March 1854 carried a notice signed by J.R. Boulton-Bennett the P.M.G. to the effect that, in order to prevent confusion, delay and risk of mis-delivery of letters, on and after the arrival of the next Steamer with the Europe Mails "...a WINDOW at the Ship and Steam Department of the G.P.O. will be set aside for the purpose of delivering letters. Paid letters to the address of private individuals will be delivered

from the WINDOW to any person who presents a Registered Ticket which will be supplied on application to the Deputy Postmaster General". A further provision was that Registered Tickets could be applied for on all weekdays "excepting those days Steamers may arrive, on which Tickets will not be supplied after the firing of guns has announced that the Steamer has passed Atchepore" (A Pilot Station on the river Hooghly).

This instruction implies a new procedure and suggests that WINDOW DELIVERY had not previously applied to individuals. It also indicates a service for 'European mail' only although, as we shall see later, in Bombay in 1859 'Overland mail' was specifically included. At this stage, there is no mention of a service charge for the Registered Ticket, although in later years a definite fee for the Ticket was laid down. Equally, no charge is mentioned for the Register Book service for so long enjoyed by business houses. The only charge mentioned there is for the Postage Due on incoming letters, and for the postage to be paid on outgoing mail, both to be accounted for periodically against deposits of cash.

1859 - That the WINDOW DELIVERY SYSTEM was also being used in Bombay is clearly seen in a notice from the *Bombay Gazette* of February 1859 and repeated in November of the same year - "OVERLAND LETTERS: The residents of Bombay are respectfully reminded that Overland letters are not delivered at the Post Office except to the holders of WINDOW DELIVERY TICKETS and Parties who do not possess such Tickets and yet apply in person or in writing for their letters only occasion disappointment to themselves and trouble to the Postal Authorities." These notices were signed by W. BLOWERS, Deputy P.M.G.

1875 - The Postal Guide for this year sets out RULES ON WINDOW TICKETS. It establishes that at Post Offices that had been authorised to grant them by the P.M.G. of the Province, DELIVERY TICKETS could be obtained at an annual charge of Rs.12 paid in advance. A Ticket holder was then entitled to receive his letters at the Post Office WINDOW or in a Closed Bag delivered by the ordinary Letter Carrier as long as the necessary bags were supplied by the addressee.

At offices authorised to have the WINDOW TICKET system, no person residing within the ordinary delivery range could claim to have his letters delivered at the WINDOW unless he held a Ticket. However, "the Postmaster may make such a delivery provided inconvenience is not caused to the general work of the office".

At Post Offices not authorised to grant DELIVERY TICKETS, delivery could be made at the WINDOW to any person who registered their name stating they required the service. No charge is mentioned and I suspect this was a free service as it was specifically declared to be in 1903.

1903 - The 1903 Postal Guide said "Except at the three presidency towns of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, any person residing within the ordinary delivery beat of the postmen can have all letters and other postal articles received to his address delivered to him regularly, during business hours, at the WINDOW of a Post Office, free of any charge in this account, provided that the articles are taken over loose...." Alternatively, they could be handed over at the WINDOW in a locked bag, provided by the addressee, at an annual fee of Rs.12, to be paid in advance.

*NOTE: The ordinary beat of a Postman in a large town was considered to be 5 miles.*

1912 - In 1912 Rangoon was added to the names of the presidency towns, otherwise the Postal Guide for that year confirms the WINDOW DELIVERY system to remain as in 1903.

The Pakistan Post Office and Telegraph Guide for 1953 shows there has been little change in the system throughout the first half of the twentieth century. The heyday of its use over many locations however could well have

been in the latter half of the 1800's and the early 1900's. It is interesting to see the sales figures given in the POST OFFICE ANNUAL REPORT for 1881-82:

Sale of Window Delivery Tickets 1880-82.

	<u>1880-81</u>	<u>1881-82</u>
Bengal.....	2370	2257
Madrás.....	1104	1236
Bombay.....	2016	2082
N.W.Provinces.....	216	228
Punjab.....	133	60
British Burma.....	1320	1284
Central Provinces..	--	--
Oudh.....	--	--
Rajputana.....	--	--
Assam.....	468	276
Behar.....	60	12
East Bengal.....	24	--
Central India.....	12	12
Sind.....	24	132

It was likely the sale of these Tickets would be mainly at Stations at which there was a large concentration of Europeans, both civil and military.

So much for a potted history of WINDOW DELIVERY. I am conscious that I may well have put the wrong interpretation on certain statements I have quoted, or missed a point that those more familiar with India take for granted. Correction regarding any part of this article would be most welcome.

Finally, we come to the actual WINDOW handstamps themselves. Ernest Oehme and I have between us 44 examples which, together with the 3 given in the 1975 answer in "India Post", are listed below. They are in three basic types, two of which have four sub-types (see illustrations), making nine varieties in all. Dates range from 22 MA 1900 to 7 DEC 1947 (Pakistan marks not included in this study continue at least into the 1960s). 10 different locations are listed, although alternative presentations of place names result in a larger number of different marks. I would appreciate it if I.S.C. members could let me have lists of examples in their possession, showing DATE, LOCATION, TYPE (as illustrated, or tracing, if different), in order that I can get a more complete picture of their use.

1900	22 MA 00 Fort Bombay		1907	15 AU 07 Bombay Fort	2
	28 MA 00 Fort Bombay			14 OC 07 Bombay Fort	2
	30 AP 00 Fort Bombay			9 NO 07 Fort Bombay	2
	4 JU 00 Fort Bombay	1a		10 NO 07 Fort Bombay	2
1901-2	-----			30 DE 07 Fort Bombay	2
1903	11 FEB 03	1b	1908	5 AP 08 Fort Bombay	2
1904	30 JA 04 Umballa	1a		28 MA 08 Fort Bombay	2
	5 JU 04 Fort Bombay	1a		16 JU 08 Fort Bombay	2
	30 JU 04 Fort Bombay	1a		24 AU 08 Fort Bombay	2
	22 DE 04 Fort Bombay	1a	1909	6 MA 09 Fort Bombay	2
1905	21 JA 05 Fort Bombay	1c		5 MY 09 Fort Bombay	2
	24 JA 05 Fort Bombay	1c		13 JU 09 Fort Bombay	2
	31 JA 05 Fort Bombay	1c		29 AU 09 Fort Bombay	2
	23 JL 05 Fort Bombay	1c	1910	-----	
	11 NOV 05 Ferozepore	1a	1911	22 OC 11 Ambala	1a
1906	9 JA 06 Fort Bombay	1c	1912	9 JL 12 Peshawar	1d
	22 MY 06 Fort Bombay	1c		21 SE 12 Kalbadevi	3a
	30 OC 06 Fort Bombay	1c		17 OC 12 Kalbadevi	3a
1907	16 JA 07 Fort Bombay	2		27 OC 12 Kalbadevi	3a
	21 JU 07 Bombay Fort	2	1913	9 JA 13 Rangoon	1d
	23 JU 07 Bombay Fort	2	1914-16	-----	
	27 JU 07 Kasauli	1a	1917	16 JA 17 Kalbadevi	3a
				17 AP 17 Kalbadevi	3a

1918-26	-----			1937	19 JA 37	Sialkot City	3a
1927	21 SE 27	Sialkot	3a	1938	7 JU 38	Kalbadevi	3d
1928	18 OC 28	Kalbadevi	3b	1939-43	-----		
1929-34	-----			1944	20 SE 44	Allahabad	3a
1935	15 DE 35	Kalbadevi	3c	1945-46	-----		
1936	15 FE 36	Kalbadevi	3c	1947	7 DE 47	Muzaffarnagar	3a

The sudden cessation of FORT BOMBAY marks, followed soon after by examples from KALBADEVI, suggests that the service was transferred between these two urban offices of Bombay; after all, they were next door neighbours.

The use of handstamps incorporating the word WINDOW was surely to perform no other function than indicate which items of mail were distributed through the WINDOW DELIVERY system, should any subsequent query arise. But what happened to such mail prior to 1900?

It seems to me that from relatively early on in the Post Office's history, checks were built into the system by means of either different or coded handstamps that could determine not only the route taken by a letter but as often as not by what method it entered or left the system. This would seem particularly relevant in the case of WINDOW DELIVERY, hedged around as it was with strict rules and for which often a charge was made.

In closing, I must say a big thank you to Ernest Oehme. All the basic documentation from which this article is drawn has come from him, and he has generously made it available to me.

TYPE 1 - SINGLE CIRCLE

1a.



Single Circle 25 mm. 5 mm. panel, bottom line across circle centre. Place name above. WINDOW below  
Time of delivery in panel. Date below panel.

Place names recorded: FORT-BOMBAY, UMBALLA, AMBALA, FEROZEPORE, KASAULI.

1b.



Single circle 25 mm. No panel.  
Place name at top. WINDOW below.  
Number (time?) of delivery in one line. Date in second line.

Place names recorded: MOOSTAN.

1c.



Single circle 26+ mm. 5 mm. panel, bottom line 1 mm. below circle centre. Place name above. WINDOW below.  
Time of delivery in panel. Date below panel.

Place names recorded: FORT BOMBAY.

1d.



Single circle 25 - 26 mm.  
Place name above. WINDOW below. Dely. below place name.  
Time below Dely. in either closed or open ended box 5 mm. from circle at either end. Date below time.

Place names recorded: PESHAWAR (open box) RANGOON (closed)

TYPE 2 - DOUBLE CIRCLE WITH PANEL TO OUTSIDE CIRCLE.

2.



Double circle 29 mm. 11 mm. double panel to outer circle. Place name above. WINDOW below. Time of dely in top section of panel. Date in bottom section

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Place names recorded: BOMBAY-FORT, FORT-BOMBAY.

3a.



Double circle 32 mm. outer 21 mm. inner. 11 mm. panel within inner circle. Place name above. WINDOW below separated by ✕ either side. Dely. between top of panel and inner circle. Time on top line in panel, date on bottom line, or vice versa.

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Place names recorded: KALBADEVI, SIALKOT, SIALKOT CITY, ALLAHABAD, MUZAFFARNAGAR.

3b.



Double circle 32 mm. outer 21 mm. inner. 11 mm. panel within inner circle, often worn. Place name above, town below, separated by ✕ either side. Dely. between top of panel and inner circle. WINDOW between bottom of panel and inner circle. Time on top line in panel, date on bottom line.

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Place names recorded: KALBADEVI, BOMBAY No.2.

3c.



Double circle 32 mm. outer 21 mm. inner. 11 mm. panel within inner circle, often worn. Place name and town above. WINDOW below, separated by ✕ either side.

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Time in top line of panel, date in bottom line.

Place names recorded: KALBADEVI-BOMBAY.

3d.



Double circle 32 mm. outer 21 mm. inner. 11 mm. panel within inner circle. Place name above, town below, separated by ✕ either side. Dely. between top of panel and inner circle. WINDOW between bottom of panel and inner circle.

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Date in top line of panel, time in bottom line.

Place names recorded: KALBADEVI, BOMBAY.

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