

POST OFFICE NUMBERS (1911-1918)

One Winter day in 1984, I was sitting with my friend Dr. A.Y. Kantharia, discussing with him the history of "Registration in India", he showed me a few registered letters of King George V having an extra number besides the printed registration number on the registration slips, and enquired about its importance. Prima facie, it appeared to me that the extra numbers on the slips are post office numbers, but I did not have sufficient proof. The problem fascinated me thereafter and I started collecting covers with the extra numbers on the slips – they are hard to find.

If we examine the registration slips more closely, we may find these extra numbers besides the printed number – handstamped in red ink or in manuscript, also in other colours.

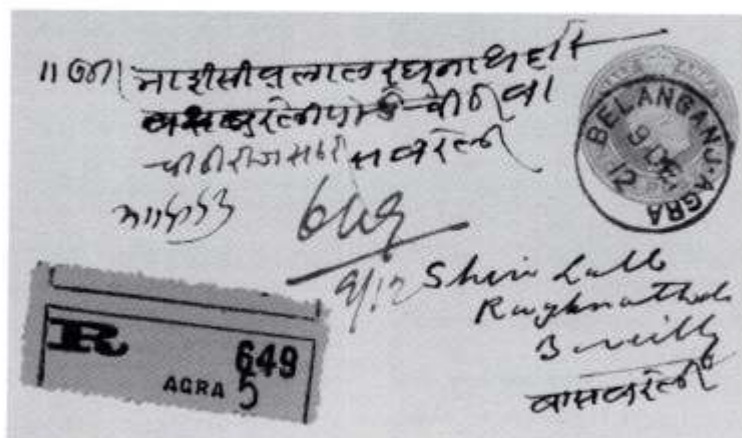
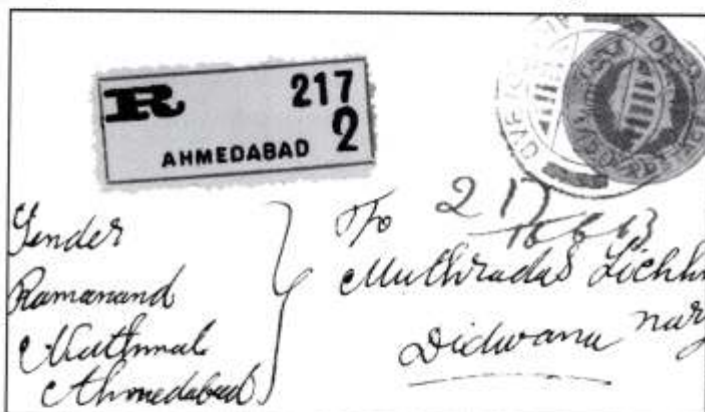
Now the question arises as to why we should accept these extra numbers as post office numbers, and I submit the following reasons:

1. These extra numbers are found with City names, not with post office names. If there is a name of a post office, such as "Kalbadevi" on the slip, the number is missing, but if there is a city name, such as "Bombay", the extra number is there.
2. These extra numbers were used only when the name of the city was printed on the slips in 1911. Before that, slips which were introduced in 1909 had only numbers printed on them and the name of the post office was handstamped. The Postal Department must have thought at that time that it would be easier and more economical to print only the name of the city instead of post office names, and to decipher from which post office the article has originated. Presumably that is why they allotted different numbers for different post offices in the city.
3. I have 6 covers of Calcutta – 8 from 19.11.1912 to 30.9.1915 which show the canceller of New Bara Bazar P.O., 5 covers of Ahmedabad – 1 from 23.10.1913 to 14.10.1916 which show the canceller of Kalupur P.O. and 10 covers of Lucknow – 16 which show the canceller as Yahiaganj P.O., as well as many others. This means that Calcutta – 8 was allocated to New Bara Bazar P.O., Ahmedabad – 1 to Kalupur P.O., Lucknow – 16 to Yahiaganj P.O. I have not seen, against a city name, the same number used by more than one post office. The period of use of these post office numbers, as per my collection, was from 2.9.1911 to 25.4.1918, therefore we may safely say that P.O. numbers on registration slips were used between 1911 and 1918.
4. I have registered covers used between 1911 and 1918 with post office names which had no extra, or P.O. number on them, but when the same post office used city name slips, had P.O. numbers on them. Delhi Gate P.O. of Ahmedabad used its own name on 22.7.1912 and 11.12.1916 and the slips do not show the P.O. number, but the same P.O. used city name slips on 15.6.1913 and 13.10.1915 which show "No.2." against Ahmedabad.
5. Although post office numbers were not generally used by the public in addresses, I have got 5 covers showing P.O. No. 2 for Kalbadevi/ Bombay in the address on registered covers, in my opinion these P.O numbers were not

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popular among the Postal Department and the public at large, and that is why they were discontinued from 1918. I think the introduction of P.O. numbers on slips was an experiment for an

initial period only. Names of P.O.'s on registration slips were still being printed and used concurrently with P.O. numbers, and this is one of the main reasons why covers with P.O.



numbers are not found in plenty. There was no hard and fast rule for the use of P.O. numbers – they are found in different sizes and in different coloured inks from the same P.O., and sometimes in manuscript instead of handstamped.

It appears that the Postal Dept. considered neither alphabetical order nor locality when allocating numbers to the P.O.s. If it were alphabetical, how come that in Bombay Appollo Bandar got No. 19 and Kalbadevi No. 2? Seeing Kalbadevi and Mandavi

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numbers, it appears that the Postal Dept. had followed the numbers of the Urban Post Offices, and New Post Offices. (which were not opened until Urban P.O. numbers existed) were allotted numbers

as per alphabetical order. Upto now, I have been able to collect these P.O. numbers on slips from 18 cities only. Details of my collection are as follows:

<u>Name Of City</u>	<u>Name Of P.O</u>	<u>Allotted NO.</u>	<u>Earliest Date</u>	<u>Latest Date</u>
Agra	Belaganj	5	27.11.1912	2.11.1914
Ahmedabad	Kalupur	1	23.10.1913	14.10.1916
"	Delhi Gate	2	15.6.1913	
"	Manek Chowk	4	15.12.1913	
"	Raipur	5	28.6.1915	13.7.1915
Ajmer	Dargaha Bazar	2	14.5.1912	1.11.1915
Amritsar		7	8.11.1913	
Bareilly	Bareilly City	2	25.1.1912	
Bellary	Bruce Pettah	2	10.1.1914	
Benaras	Benaras City	1	13.2.1912	
Bombay	Kalbadevi	2	8.8.1912	25.4.1918
"	Mandavi	3	1.6.1914	
"	Apollo Bandar	19	1.12.1912	
"		20	22.9.1912	
"	Jumma Masjid	27	16.11.1912	5.6.1913
"	Mumbadevi	30	5.1.1913	15.3.1916
Calcutta	New Bara Bazar	8	19.11.1912	30.9.1915
"	Khengrapati	31	4.2.1914	28.5.1914
"	Royal Exchange	42	1.7.1914	31.5.1915
"	Vaisha Sabha	58	18.11.1912	22.11.1912
Cawnpore	Collectorganj	6	22.11.1911	
"	Generalganj	8	29.1.1912	13.12.1913
Delhi	Chandni Chowk	2	13.12.1913	
"	Dareeba	5	13.7.1912	16.2.1918
"	Sabji Mandi	15	17.6.1912	17.6.1914
Indore	Indore City	1	2.4.1913	
Jaipur	Jaipur City	1	2.9.1911	2.6.1913
Karachi	Bunder Road	4	3.1.1916	
Lahore	Cutchery	7	8.11.1912	
"	Cant. Sardar Bzr.	9	21.4.1914	
Lucknow	Aminabad	1	21.2.1913	
"		3		
"		8		
"		11	26.1.1912	
"		15	20.12.1912	
"	Yahiaganj	16	19.9.1911	14.10.1912
Madras	Broadway	2	7.9.1914	
"	High Court Bldg.	15	25.6.1913	
"	Sowcarpet	33	10.1.1913	6.8.1915
Muttra	Cantonment	2	19.2.1912	