HISTORY OF POSTAL SERVICES IN KUWAIT

By:

Mohammed Abdul-Hadi Jamal

Center for Research and Studies on Kuwait
Kuwait, 1998

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Table of Contents

Chapter Three: The India Postal Administration
in Kuwait

Chapter Four: The British Postal Administration
in Kuwait (1948-1958)

Chapter Five: The Establishment of the Kuwaiti Mail Department

Chapter Six: The Kuwaiti Mail During the Iraqi Occupation of Kuwait and After Liberation

Preface

When I read "Kuwait and the Days of Occupation" by Mohammed Abdul-Hadi Jamal, I realized that a distinguished researcher had to be behind that effort. That book had clearly, objectively, and thoroughly put down the stand of the Kuwaiti people in confrontation with the Iraqi aggression. The writer presented to us a lively personal experience at "Mishref" (a suburb in Kuwait) during that period. It was my wish then that this academic effort would extend to other serious research for the sake of Kuwait and its progress.

I was happy when the writer expressed his wish to cooperate with the Center for Research and Studies on Kuwait to issue a book on "The History of Postal Services in Kuwait," in which he would handle the establishment of the public utility of Post in Kuwait, the people who contributed to establish this utility, the efforts exerted to develop it up to now, as well as a detailed statement of postage stamp issuances and their occasions. This effort – undoubtedly – will support the goal for which the Center for Research and Studies on Kuwait is operating, i.e. displaying the distinguished entity and statehood of the state of Kuwait through the academic study of the efforts exerted by its ancestors for the sake of building the political, social and cultural structure of their country amidst challenges and obstacles.

This book presents a historical and objective overview of the development of the postal service in Kuwait. Its pages enlighten us with a significant aspect of Kuwait which spans more than 200 years of postal service. Undoubtedly, the author – in this distinguished

academic work – has shifted from a mere display of a large collection of stamps to a detailed history that reflects the concerns, interests and role of a people. Hence, the author has successfully achieved what we are striving for, i.e. developing historical records while establishing the origins of Kuwait's society and its sconcerns, interests and achievements.

The Center for Research and Studies on Kuwait, when acknowledging the author for this factual and faithful effort, hopes that such an academic work will be an incentive to Kuwaiti researchers to contribute to further studies and research on Kuwaiti affairs – for the sake of documenting the country's progress and its people's efficacies over the years.

We ask God to grant us success to fulfil our duty towards our country and carry on our efforts which support its humanitarian endeavors to build the individual and consolidate the principles of peace and stability in the area.

Prof Abdullah Al-Ghunaim
Center Chairman

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my beloved grandfather, the late Hajji Isma'il Ali Isma'il Jamal, who died as I was about to finish this book.

I am very much indebted to this great philanthropic man. As the paterfamilias for over sixty years, he was responsible for all the affairs and worries concerning this family. As well, he was a reliable source of information and historical events witnessed by Kuwait and countries of the area during the period that followed the first World War and up to his death. His memory with respect to the dates and events rarely failed him. His talks and meetings were never boring. His word was the arbiter. His love of Kuwait was limitless.

I ask God to bestow His mercy on his virtuous soul and consolation to his family and friends.

As well, I dedicate this work to my small family: my wife and my children Nadeen, Areej, Ali and Ula who suffered with me to complete this book.

Preamble

Thanks to God, the Omnipotent, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the World – and peace be upon his Messenger Muhammad, his posterity, companions and followers till the Day of Judgement.

The idea of issuing a book on the history of the post and postage stamps came to my mind long ago. When I was young and for four decades, I was fond of collecting these "small works of art." I was attracted by the views and pictures conveyed from every country which reflect the social life and civilization of a country, as well as its history and geography. Besides they display the fine art shown on their pictures and views.

After the Iraqi invasion, it became important to get full use of any event and information that serve the just case of Kuwait. Hence, I was of the opinion that any access to historical events and documented information in the domain of postal services in Kuwait over more than two hundred years would be great evidence of the independent entity of Kuwait and the outstanding role it played in international relations – be it economic, commercial or political. That was the goal that convinced me to start this work and complete it whatever the circumstances may be. I believe that we should not belittle any evidence, whatever its domain or its role, which would further our cause. In fact, that led me to describe the historical events related to postal services in Kuwait. That was the point of departure to prove our viewpoint.

I do believe that the presentation of the role played by postal services in Kuwait, which historically started in the first half of the seventeenth century, will contribute effectively to proving the fact that

this country was built and developed thanks to the forefathers who suffered over the years.

In recent years, the idea of the postage stamp has developed from being a small piece of paper recording postage fees, to a work of art enriched with information and ideas. It has become a record of historical events – past and present. The drawings and symbols displayed on that small piece of art are meaningful and expressive.

It is no wonder, then, that this stamp has become the center of concern for hundreds of establishments, international information centers, governments, press houses, communication centers, world organizations, and others. If the postage stamp and its economic, political, informational, and social effects were not important, they would never give it that great interest which is reflected in the issuances of thousands of books, circulars, periodicals and catalogues.

During my research and readings in this field in the last twenty years, I wished to see a complete study in Arabic covering the history of the postage stamp and postal services in the Arab countries. Unfortunately, nothing satisfied me except for few translations, articles, and simple pamphlets. Yet, the Arab World is rich with information and activities in this concern, such as the philatelist societies.

Egypt was among the first countries in the world (1866) to issue postage stamps. Some years later other Arab countries followed. Their postal issuances – since the beginnings of this century – have been considered a historical event. Therefore, there is a great need for research and writing to enrich the Arabic library with historical, literary, and artistic information to make up for the shortage in this sort of literature.

What motivated me to write this book – which I did not expect to be of this size – was the fondness for this hobby, the love of history, the search for unnoted events and information and, above all, the desire to display the actual status and the distinguished role that Kuwait has played for three centuries or so, when it was a haven for any who sought safety and security as well as a place to earn one's

living. Living through many of the historical events in the Arabian Gulf area from the beginnings of the seventeenth century, the reader will see that Kuwait was not only a refuge for those escaping the hardships of life or the tyranny of dictators or those seeking better lives, but also it was a distinguished center which the influential international powers then regarded as a stable secure haven with a prosperous economy, far from the influences of the big powers and empires in the area, particularly Persia and the Ottoman empire.

Through reading of the history of the postal services in the Gulf area in the last three centuries, the reader will be aware of many events that confirm the independent location of Kuwait and its distinguished entity among the countries of the area. As well, the reader will get acquainted with its independent policy which helped the European countries to maintain trade in the area and secure their postal communication which was essential for maintaining their interests.

Those who seek the truth will see in the historical events presented here strong evidence that refutes the claims of those who wish ill for this generous country.

In this book I have done my best to mix history with hobby. That is to help the reader see that postal services are historically and closely related to the peoples' civilizations over the years. Also I have tried to draw attention to philatelists that this hobby is related to economical, social and political aspects of peoples' lives. Therefore, it is possible to get the full use of this hobby by studying beneficial information in many areas of history, politics, economy, commerce, art, and literature. As mentioned before, the Arabic library suffers from a shortage in this sort of literature, whereas the west is rich with thousands of useful and artistic books and periodicals on the history of postal services and postage stamps.

In my trial to bridge the gap between the general historical events in Kuwait and history of its postal services, as well as to help the reader examine each stage separately and profoundly, I divided the book into seven chapters, each of which relates separately and in detail the story of an era supported by pictures and documents.

In the first chapter on the history of postal services, I did my best to provide the reader with a brief overview of man's need for postal communication and the establishment of this service which was previously restricted to kings and ruling families. I also stated the developments which the postal services witnessed over the different ages, until these services became one of the most profitable commercial operations in Europe in the middle ages. As well, I referred to the reforms related to postal services up to the appearance of the postage stamp in Britain in 1840 and its revolutionary impact on the world of correspondence.

The second chapter concerns the postal services in the Arabian Gulf in general and Kuwait in particular from the beginning of the seventeenth century, when the western powers began to extend their authority in the area after settling in many of the neighboring countries such as India. During that period the importance of the Arabian Gulf as a water passage increased so as to facilitate trade and postal communications between India and Europe. As well, there was an increasing need for safe and secure centers to serve as rest houses for the trading caravans after long sea travel. Kuwait was one of those outstanding centers that provided those caravans with everything they needed. Kuwait represented a center of stability in an area that witnessed much instability, such as that resulting from the decline of the Ottoman empire and the rise of many social and political conflicts in the area. I reviewed those developments and their influences until the beginning of the twentieth century when the postal services in their current form unofficially appeared in Kuwait in 1904 in the British Commissioner's residence. Then in 1915 in the same place the first post office was officially opened, and it was under the management and supervision of the India post office which was subject to Britain then.

The third chapter describes the India post office in Kuwait, the various collections of postage stamps issued in Kuwait, as well as the different postmarks used. The chapter also covers the introduction of the airmail to Kuwait. In addition, I referred to the first Kuwaitis who

worked in that office at the beginning of this century, their constructive role in operating it efficiently and regularly and some of the hardships they faced during that period.

In the fourth chapter, the focus is on the British post office in Kuwait which succeeded the India post office at the end of 1940s when India got its independence. I discussed many of the events at that time. I then referred to the economic developments that Kuwait witnessed and their influence on the amount of post circulated, the necessary requirements to meet the service expansion, and the role played by the post in supporting trade by means of regular and speedy service. In this chapter I also recorded many incidents, events and memories through interviews with a good number of workers in the British post office in the 1940s and 1950s. As a matter of fact, they were a fundamental source of information for this book.

Chapter five concerns the first trial to issue memorial national postage stamps for Kuwait in 1947, the early stages of establishing a national post office in 1956, the official opening of the national post office in 1958, the first postage stamp issuance, and then the development and expansion of this service until reaching its golden age in the 1960s and 1970s. I also referred to the principal features of the Kuwaiti issuances, their characteristics and the role they played in bringing the pioneering role of Kuwait among the nations into view. I also drew attention to the importance of taking care of this service which reflects the civilizations of nations, and which contributes – by means of postage stamps – to displaying the uniqueness of each country, which in turn enhances mutual understanding between nations.

Chapter six refers to the destruction that befell the post and its foundations during the barbaric Iraqi invasion, and how the invaders plundered and devastated what was constructed over tens of years. I also referred to the state of postal services during occupation when it was impossible to receive or send a letter. As well, I stated the attempts of the oppressive invaders to efface the history of Kuwait and its landmarks by printing their filthy postmarks on that which they

wrote, giving the impression that Kuwait was subject to Iraq. They thought that would prove to the world that Kuwait became their own, the thing that reflected their crime, greed and ill dreams.

In the same chapter I touched on the return of the postal services after the liberation and the postal issuances which reflect the victory and liberation of Kuwait as well as the participation of the friendly states who, through their postal issuances expressed their joy on the occasion.

I hope I have rendered some service to those who are keen on increasing their information in respect of the history of postal services in Kuwait. As well, I hope I have contributed – even though a little – to the cause of our deal country, by recording the historical events and irrefutable facts that lend strength to its position against the lurkers. Those facts are to be enriched day after day so as to consolidate and support the loyal and faithful citizens and friends.

Acknowledgement

I thank God for the capability, determination and patience He granted me. But for them, this book would not have come to fruition. As mentioned before, the idea of writing this book has been in mind for long, but many circumstances – the most important of which were the work and the lack of sources – led to postponing it a year after year. However, the change of circumstances and the acceleration of developments in various fields has left the door wide open for researchers to look into matters and issues that did not seem very important before. It is that change that encouraged me to write this book.

Hence, I relied on the support and assistance of many interested brothers who never failed me for the sake of our dear country. I thank in particular Mr. Saleh Mohammed al-Yousuf, the Managing Director of the Industrial Bank of Kuwait. He was always encouraging me, and never failed to support me when the book was in print. He put the secretarial facilities of the bank at hand. It is worth mentioning that this foundation has always been a pioneer in the service of the causes of Kuwait.

As well, I thank very much Professor Dr Abd-Allah Yousuf al-Ghunaim, Chairman of the Center for Research and Studies on Kuwait, for his offer to print the book at the Center's expense. Though founded only after the liberation, the Center's imprints are obviously felt, and it has always been supporting the causes of Kuwait promptly and comprehensively. Also I thank Prof Dr al-Ghunaim for the historical sources and important documents he provided and which contributed to supporting the book historically.

My thanks also go to the dear brothers whom I interviewed so as to get the facts and information directly from the original sources. Those brothers – who were the best source of information – were employees in the different post offices in Kuwait over the past years since the middle of this century. They lived during those different stages and contributed effectively to operating these offices and developing them. I also got much information from the sons of the early post offices employees in Kuwait in the beginning of this century. In my interviews with those brothers, the dialogues were useful, and the pieces of information were deeply examined and precisely analyzed. Those brothers, who were from different generations, were very nice and never failed to provide me with valuable, scientific information that enriched this work. I am really lucky that I obtained so much information from these original sources. I do feel grateful to them for their time and thoughts for the sake of our dear country.

I also thank Mr. Ezzat Mohammed Ja'far who provided me with important information concerning the memorial issuances of postage stamps bearing the effigy of the late Sheikh Ahmed al-Jaber al-Sabah in the end of the 1940s. As well, my thanks go to Mr. Khalid Khalaf who provided me with information related to the work of his father, the late Khalaf Hussein, in the India post office in Kuwait in the beginning of this century. This information enriched the book and rendered the chapter on the India post in Kuwait one of the most comprehensive and interesting chapters. I also thank brothers Bader and Yaseen, sons of the late Jassim Hussein Abdal. They provided me with many events and memories related to them by their father about his early days in the post office at the beginning of this century.

Among the brothers who contributed a lot to providing me with information was Mr. Abd-Allah Hamad al-Hameedy whose father worked in the India post office. He was responsible for repairing the telegraph poles extending from Kuwait to Basrah, and which were set up during the First World War to serve the Allies for military purposes. As well, many of the brothers who worked for the British post office in Kuwait – which replaced the India post office in the 1940s – were really a rich source of information. That information was the basic element of the chapter on that period, as it correspond to

great social, economic and political change succeeding the oil exploration which led to the economic expansion and consequently to the increasing importance of communication with the outside world. At the head of the list were Messrs Abdul-Samad Mohammed Sadeq al-Mahmeed, Ghuloom Mohammed Khajah, Abd-Allah Hamad al-Hameedy, and Ali Abbas Khajah who also provided me with pictures and important documents concerning the British post office in Kuwait.

I also thank Messrs Khalil Isma'il al-Saleh and Dawood Sulayman al-Jassem who were the main source of information concerning the post office of Kuwait Oil Company which was established in the end of the 1940s. Mr. Khalil Isma'il al-Saleh helped me a lot to get access to a number of his old colleagues who worked with him for the Kuwaiti post department. He also arranged for my interviews with them. He provided me with pictures and valuable documents that enriched the book and rendered it a historical, pictorial and documented reference.

I am grateful too to Mr. Abd-Allah Mulla Yousuf al-Eed, the first Kuwaiti employee who worked for the Kuwaiti post department in 1956. Mr. Abd-Allah al-Eed generously provided me with information and pictures which rendered the chapter on the national post vividly and pictorically documented.

I would be ungrateful if I forgot brother Abdul-Mohsen Taqi Muzaffar, who started his work for the post in the late 1950s when he was not yet twenty. He provided me with many events and information concerning this vital utility of the country in its early days. He provided me with various pictures and important documents that displayed the role of the Kuwaiti post department in the 1960s and 1970s. Also I am grateful to him for revising the book before going to the press. His sound suggestions, advice, and opinions contributed strongly to pushing the book ahead.

I am also grateful to Mr. Delawer Hussein who was an expert philatelist. Mr. Delawer was a reference when needed to confirm some information or give more details on matters related to the postal services in Kuwait.

I would not forget the family of the late Abdul-Aziz Hussein Sheshtri who was one of the first Kuwaiti youth who worked for the post. He was very young when he died in his office in the old Safat post office. His family was generous enough to provide me with photographs he took of the different post divisions and his colleagues at work in the early days of the Kuwaiti post department.

In conclusion, I am indebted to sister Lamee'ah Abul-Hassan who contributed to proofreading the book and revising it linguistically. In fact she was the Unknown Soldier who worked silently. She is worthy of praise and gratitude.

As well, I appreciate and thank Dr. Ja'far Ya'qoub al-Iryan Head of Education Research Unit, Ministry of Education, who always encourages and supports any action taken for the sake of our beloved country. In fact he never failed to exert any effort for the sake of Kuwait.

I would be ungrateful if I did not thank my family for their patience and sacrifice as I prepared this work. They hardly saw me for the ten months or so it took for this book to come into being. In fact, all my time, effort and thought were but for bringing this book into a shape that satisfies my conscience and attains my goals. The time taken for this book was at the expense of my rest and family's time. Therefore, I feel indebted and grateful to them all. I ask God to compensate them for their suffering and patience.

It should not escape me to mention that I did my best to arrange for an interview with brother al-Sayed Ibrahim Yousuf al-Abdul-Razzaq, the former assistant under-secretary of the Ministry of Communications for postal affairs. He is considered to be at the head of the founders of the Kuwaiti post department. Undoubtedly, his information would have added a lot to the book. However, his difficult circumstances impeded interviewing him. I ask Allah to restore him to health and grant him success.

Finally, my thanks and gratitude go to all those beloved brothers. But for their efforts, offers, and support in the process of writing this research, the book would not be in this shape. I hope I have participated in the service of our beloved country.

Chapter One

Postal Services Through History

– A summary of the development of mail delivery through the ages

– Postal services in Europe

– Expansion and development of postal services in Europe

– Postal reforms and their impact on mail performance and costs

– Rowland Hill's reforms

– The first postage stamp

– Development of postal transportation

– Universal Postal Union

– Development of air mail

– Foreign post offices and services rendered to other countries

Chapter One

Postal Services Through History

A summary of the development of mail delivery through the ages

Man has known the post since early ages, when post delivery was done by animals such as horses, mules, and carrier pigeons. These means went on for centuries without being developed or changed due to the lack of alternative means and the unimportance of time.

Therefore, letters took long weeks and sometimes even months to arrive at their destinations; the message was sometimes irrelevant by the time it arrived. However, this did not prevent fast delivery of letters sent by kings or other very important persons (VIPs) to their counterparts in different countries. Those letters used to be sent by special messengers who traveled non-stop to deliver those important letters.

The history of post goes back to the era of ancient empires, as fast and continual communication was essential to maintain and control the vast areas subject to those empires. Many rulers gave a special importance to the post for its great role in supporting the governments on the vast, extensive borders of their empires and king-doms, in order to be aware of events in those areas. History states that those who first used post were the pharaohs in approximately 2000 B.C. (i.e. about 4000 years ago), followed by the ruling family in China in approximately 1000 B.C. Perhaps Old China – in the era of

the Mongolian Emperors – was the first state to establish a postal system with specified places for mail reception in the various cities and areas of the empire.[1] China had the largest postal communication network in the Old World. However, that service was restricted to the ruling family, the emperor's attendants and the distinguished officials of the state. The center of the postal network was located in Peking with about 25,000 branches spread all over the empire. Yet, the public was not permitted to use that service. Historians inform us that the Greek and Roman invaders copied the postal system of Egypt for their countries. They also affirm that the word 'post' originates with Julius Caesar who named the postmen "POSITI EQITES," i.e. riding messengers, as they used to ride animals in their travels.[2]

In about 600 B.C. the Persian State and the Roman Empire had an advanced postal system based on organization, discipline, fast delivery and safety of mail delivery to the rulers and governors of the various cities and governorates of those empires. Post in those empires was considered an integral part of the administrative and military system of the state, due to the importance of confidentiality of the letter content and delivery to the persons concerned. Mail delivery was located at the main crossroads linking the cities to facilitate letter delivery and collection. Some historians state that the Persians were the first to establish a postal department in the sixth century B.C. and that the word 'post' originates with the Persian word "porida," which means 'tailless,' as the animals used in carrying the post at that time were tailless to distinguish them from other animals.[3]

At the early stage of Islam, the Caliph Omar Ibn-ul-Khattab orga-nized the distribution of mail among the Islamic countries. He founded "Al-Musafir Khana" (the Traveller's House), which was a building where postmen met when they arrived from all over the country, and where the public came to receive their letters. This emphasizes the importance of correspondence at that time and the concern of the state for that vital matter.[4]

When the Islamic conquests expanded and the Islamic State grew vast in the time of the Ommiad State, the Caliphs gave great impor-

tance to the post, as that necessitated the establishment of postal services by which the soldiers' news and the various governorates' conditions were reported to the Caliph. At that time, the post was mainly between the Caliph and his governors. Its primary purpose was the fast delivery of reports concerned with the governorates, funds and related affairs of the state. When the governor stopped delivering the post to the Caliph, it only meant disobedience or separation.

When the Abbasides came to rule, they took great care of the post and established a well-organized postal system. For that purpose, they constructed six main roads, with sign-posts distanced at not more than two miles apart. They also dug wells near the sign-posts which were far from the cities, secured food, and cultivated some crops to provide the postmen with the necessary food and water they required.[5]

The mail roads started in the Caliphate center and branched off to the state borders. Each road was subdivided to stations where there were horses and camels. At those stations, the postmen used to exchange their horses or camels for rested ones for the sake of speed. Most of the Arabs used camels, as they are more patient and more suitable for the nature of the desert than other animals. There were 930 post routes during the Abbaside State. As well, the cost of postal services was 159,100 gold dinars per annum (including the animals prices, breeding and postmen scales of payment). The postal caravan consisted of between one and fifty animals. The speed was according to the route and the type of animal used (camels or horses). Bells and chains were hung around the animals' necks so as to be heard when they moved. Moreover, the post was sent by ship overseas.[6]

Mail was also delivered personally by postmen, who would run patiently for long distances. Al-Mu'iz Li-Din-illah al-Fatimi was the first to initiate mail-delivery by postmen. In his time some of them were renowned for going on foot for tens of miles each day.[7]

The person in charge of the post was one of the closest persons to the Caliph. He was in direct contact with him. No one could get informed of any news before getting the Caliph informed first. Only

the Caliph had the right to circulate it or keep it secret. Among the duties of the person in charge of the post was maintaining the roads and keeping them safe from robbers, highway men and espionage. He used to receive messages from the governors and deliver them to the Caliph, selecting the shortest roads and fastest means.[8] His station was in Baghdad, and under his authority was a large number of postmasters and postmen in various areas and towns. They ran the service accurately and efficiently with speed and commitment. The role played by the post in the Abbaside State was so important that the Abbaside Caliph Abu Ja'far al-Mansour used to say that his rule was based on four pillars: a fair judge, an efficient police commander, a just tax collector, and an honest postmaster.

The Arabs also used carrier pigeons for conveying messages. Communications were constant between the main cities in the Islamic State via carrier pigeons. There used to be towers in the Citadel of Cairo for that such pigeons during the reign of the Ayubites. Towers were also spread in many areas for flocks of carrier pigeons.[9]

Postal services in Europe

Interest in postal services in Europe started in the Middle Ages. A number of factors contributed to the establishment of a regular postal communication system. Among the most important of those factors were the foundation and development of cities, the progress of industry and trade, the establishment of trade and craftsmen syndicates, the development of commercial relations among European countries, as well as the establishment of banks. Geographical discoveries in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and their subsequent conquests that led to the European colonization and influence over vast regions in various parts of the world also had a prominent influence on the importance of regular postal communications.[10]

Due to the numerous active syndicates and trade unions, Italy was the most advanced European country in the field of postal services in the thirteenth century. There were regular postal services between the major trade centers in Italy such as Florence, Genoa and Siena as well

as cities of northern France. Later on, postal services developed gradually in Italy, due to the commercial prosperity it witnessed, as well as its diplomatic commitments, particularly after the expansion of its international relations and the necessity of establishing regular postal communications between it and other countries via postmen or messengers. Hence, a perfect system for mail collection and delivery, fees and postal agreement terms was established. That system played a great role in developing the common trade between the various countries of Europe. As well, its activities were extended overseas to some provinces of the Ottoman State, and then to the East. The regular postal route between Venice and Constantinople in the twelfth century had a great influence in developing trade between Italy and that part of the Islamic State. Due to the importance of the role of the post in serving trade between Italy and the East, the king of Persia issued a decree in 1320, accorded Venetian post carriages the right of free passage throughout his domains on their way to India and other countries.

Development of the postal system in Italy in the fifteenth century is the basis of the present postal system. This was due to one of the Italian families whose name as 'Taxis,' as most of the postmen appointed by the rulers of Italy were from that family. Those people played a significant role in developing postal services and mail transportation between the countries of Europe. The role of that family in postal services in Europe started in 1488, when the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian decided to get full use of the postal communications network in Italy. The expansion of his authority over Austria, Holland and great parts of Italy required the establishment of a perfect communication system to link the borders of his empire. That led him to arrange for a tripartite meeting with the Prussian Emperor Frederick the Third and Franz von Taxis in 1488 in the city of Innsbruck and to sign an agreement with them to establish a regular postal communication system. According to that agreement, Taxis was in charge of that system. Since then, the role of the Taxis family expanded to include most of Europe. In addition, the authority named after that family became responsible for the postal services across Europe for a period of four centuries or so. That noble family established a system for all

Italian cities, and later for most countries of Europe. The number of mail carriages belonging to that family at one time reached 20,000. The Taxis offered their services over Europe regularly, speedily, reliably and profitably as well. They built postal centers established at convenient intervals provided with horses along the main roads. They also appointed agents in the various European cities and steadily expanded their services.

The succeeding generations of that noble family continued to offer those services until 1867, when many governments declared postal services to be a State monopoly.

In France, King Lewis VI established the Royal post in 1464 to operate side by side with the private postal authorities operating in France then. They were operating on the same basis which was established previously by the Romans. Postal centers – at a distance of seven kilometers from one another – were founded on the main roads. A postmaster was appointed for each center. He would have four or five horses ready to be used at any time to serve the royal court. At one time the number of carriages used for postal services in France reached 230. Those royal postal services were restricted to the king, high officials as well as the papal court. Sometimes the king's intimates were allowed to take advantage of the royal post for a fixed fee paid for using the horses from one center to another.

A rival to the imperial post in France came into being during the fifteenth century, and that was the "Sorbonne post." Universities in Europe at that time cared for mutual correspondence and foreign students used to correspond with their families and relatives, specially after the regulation of parcel delivery coming from their homelands. Therefore, that post developed and grew efficiently to compete with the royal post. Most merchant cities founded their private post enterprises to convey postal services for substantial fees.

**The postman in Europe
in the sixteenth century**

Many postmen used to go on
foot. There were syndicates for
them in many European cities.
They used to wear special uniforms.
Each postman was provided with a
spear, and he had a notebook to record
times of arrival at and departure from
every city.

Source: Stamps and Stamp Collecting,
Frantisek Svark, Chancellor Press,
1993 - p. 23

In the sixteenth century the common people were permitted to
use the royal postal services for a fee, with the aim of covering postal
costs and increasing income. Hence, France had two post authorities:
the Royal post and the Private Sorbonne Post. The two of them oper-
ated side by side until the latter diminished, lost its importance and
broke up at the beginning of the eighteenth century.[11]

As for England, postmen – from antiquity – carried out the task
of transporting letters either on foot or by stagecoaches. Regular
communications were made only during exceptional circumstances or
during war as was the case during the Roses war in 1455 - 1485.[12]

In the middle of the sixteenth century, king Henry VIII took on
the task of regulating the post, improving its services and appointing a
postmaster in his court in 1516 to be responsible managing and regu-
lating postal services on the roads leading to London. The first attempt

The postman on horseback – A mounted courier in Europe in the seventeenth century
Source: Stamps and Stamp Collecting, Frantisek Svark, Chancellor Press, 1993 - p. 27

to regulate and control letter delivery in Britain was in 1591 in an announcement issued by Queen Elizabeth I, according to which letter transportation overseas by unauthorized people was forbidden. The main reason behind that was to impose restrictions on foreign traders who used London as a center for this job.

The first post department in Britain was founded in 1635. Consequently, post collection and delivery by postmen was regulated. King Charles I permitted the public – for the first time in Europe – to use postal services. That was mainly for the purpose of collecting the money required for those services. As a result, postal services expanded. A number of public stations to post letters were founded. Most of those stations were located in pubs which had stables for horses to rest. Owners of such pubs were known as post station managers.
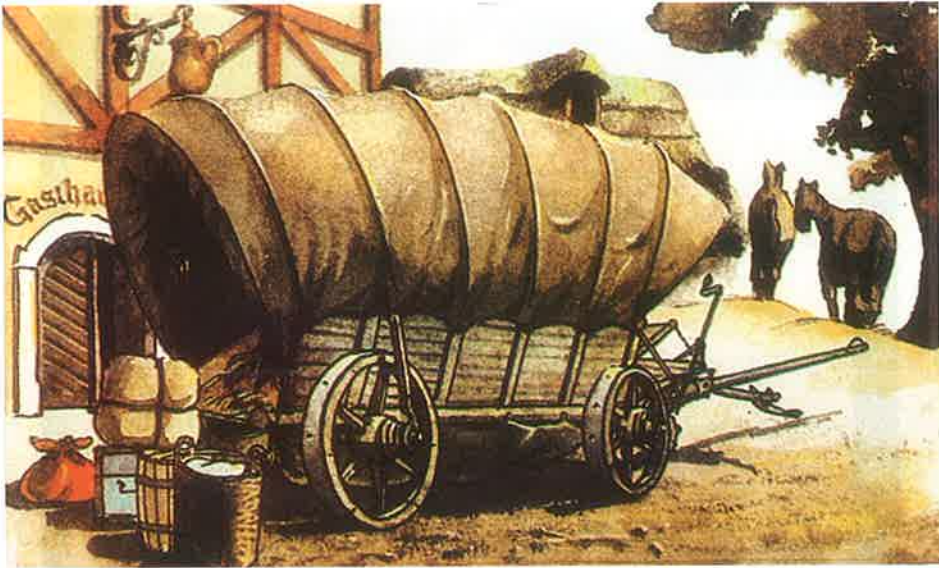
The post carriage in England in the seventeenth century in front of of one of the pubs
Source: Stamps and Stamp Collecting, Frantisek Svark, Chancellor Press, 1993 - p. 27

In 1657 the state's control over postal services increased. In that year the British government issued a law calling for the establishment of a central post department under the authority of the government to undertake postal services.

However, only a small proportion of people were able to send letters by post at that time, as postage was highly expensive, in addition to the fact that few people were able to write. In fact, the process of posting a letter at that time was not easy. Not only was it costly to post a letter – particularly if it comprised of a number of pages – but also the addressee was responsible for paying the costs, a matter which left the door wide open to tricky methods and deception. The great expansion that commercial and industrial companies witnessed was one of the most important factors that led to increasing correspondence. Moreover, great numbers of workers moved to industrial

A letter sent to Brag in 1739 a hundred years before the postage stamp was known

areas, and were constantly in need of corresponding with their families. The prosperity of industry and trade necessitated the circulation of letters to advertise and market industrial products, as well as invoices, receipts and price-lists. That meant increasing the amount of correspondence and minimizing costs of postal services. Therefore, by 1840 the people were badly in need of regulations to organize and facilitate postal service as well as reduce its costs in a way that would be accessible for everyone to use.

Expansion and development of postal services in Europe

At that time, ordinary postal services existed in countries with active trade movement. Traders had to establish private postal services

for their own benefit. Therefore, by the end of the fifteenth century, postal services in Europe began to serve the commercial movement, as traders and industrialists established postal systems that served their expanding interests. Hence, many syndicates and trade unions at that time established postal systems for the benefit of their members. Those establishments benefited from the commercial caravans between cities as those caravans used to transport with them the post to their destinations against fixed fees. That service started first in Venice, Italy, which exchanged trade mainly with the Middle East and later with different countries in Europe. By the end of the sixteenth century postal services were widespread all over Europe under the control and supervision of those trade companies which earned a good income from that service. However, even at that time, laymen could not benefit from that service due to the high expense of postage and the fact that postal services were restricted to the traders and industrialists whose syndicates supervised and controlled those services.

Postal reforms and their impact on mail performance and costs

Despite the expansion and efficiency of postal services, they remained costly due to high costs of transportation. Moreover there were many problems in calculating fees due to the number of kingdoms, cities and empires used for postal routes, as well as the differing rate of fees collected from one country to another, the matter which necessitated entering into many agreements. This led to the delay of post delivery and costly postage.[13] Since delivery fees were usually collected from the addressee, the people in charge of the post did not think of collecting those fees in advance for the sender. Therefore, the process went on as such, although – logically speaking – the sender should have paid those delivery fees, as he was the main beneficiary.

Many attempts were made to reform the postal system and avoid the problems it faced, especially the payment of delivery fees. Among

the most important of those attempts was that of Renoir de Fillier in France in the middle of the seventeenth century. He rented the post office of Paris Municipality between 1653 and 1660 and introduced the idea of payment in advance. The fees were received against issuing a card or a voucher attached to the letter for the postman to be sure that the fees were paid.[14] This method was one of the factors that played a role in organizing correspondence as well as guaranteeing the state's rights in collecting the fees fully.

As for Britain, Henry Bishop – who was the postmaster of the British post between 1660 and 1663 – was the one who introduced the idea of the postal seal which was stamped on the envelope to indicate the day and month on which the letter was deposited. That helped to minimize complaints related to negligence and delay in post delivery. However, that system was complicated by the fact that it had to use a different postmark daily, a matter that necessitated a great number of postmarks. A number of years later, the Royal Post Department developed the postmark. Only two types were sued: one for the day and the other for the month.[15]

Finding an efficient way to facilitate the process of letter transportation and promotion remained without a solution for a long time. Though a good number of genius inventors in various countries suggested reforms and amendments on post systems, the required results and solutions were not reached. Some of them suggested ideas similar to the idea of postage stamps. One of those ideas was to introduce a stamp – whether marked on the envelope or separate in the form of a small picture glued on it for paying postage fees.

In 1834 the British publisher Charles Knight suggested using a roll of paper on which a postmark in the value of one pence was printed for newspaper delivery. Yet, it was the British James Chalmers, owner of Dunee Bookshop and Press, who was the first to suggest a postage stamp between 1834 and 1838 and to whose mind came the idea of printing various forms of postage stamps in his

press.[16] It was also his suggestion to use glued postal paper, although the idea did not come into being.

Rowland Hill's reforms

The birth date of the postage stamp in England was closely related to the reforms suggested by the British Rowland Hill (later Sir Rowland Hill). Though he had nothing at all to do with post, he offered a number of suggestions which – in his opinion – would remove many obstacles and solve many problems facing the post department. His ideas were based on reducing postage fees by imposing a fixed rate regardless of the distances covered. He also suggested cancelling exemptions from postage fees and related privileges granted to higher officials. As well, he suggested the idea of paying those fees in advance, the idea on which the postage stamp was based.[17]

The publication in 1837 of "Post Office Reform: Its Importance and Practicability, by Rowland Hill (later Sir Rowland Hill), a British educator and tax reformer, is justly regarded as one of the most important milestones in postal progress. In his study, Hill attempted to analyze and examine all the previous suggestions, as well as develop them and reach a practical solution for post delivery and postage fee collection. His idea was to impose a fixed postage fee for all letters not exceeding 15.5 grams. That fee was to be paid by the sender in advance. He also suggested the idea of sticking a small stamped card behind the envelope to indicate that the fee had been paid.[18] It seemed that Hill preferred the idea of using a postmarked envelope, as he suggested the idea of envelopes bearing drawings of the British lion, Red Indians, elephants and camels. Anyone who wanted to send a letter would have had to put it on that envelope after paying for it, then deposit it at the post office. But the idea was strongly criticized and censured by the press as well as some British representatives. That led Hill to introduce a simpler system, i.e. the idea of postage by means of adhesive stamps in the value of one pence. But that idea was

James Shalmers – a press owner in England – who suggested what looked like a postage stamp. He printed a number of forms between 1834 and 1838.

Rowland Hill – initiator of the idea of postage stamps and standardizing delivery costs with a prepaid single rate in Britain in 1840.

Source: Stamps and Stamp Collecting, Frantisek Svark, Chancellor Press, 1993 - p. 31

also sarcastically rejected, though supported by some British authorities. Many post officials considered the idea impractical and feared it could lead to bankruptcy. However, Hill insisted that it would increase the state's revenues. The English economist Charles Cobden supported the idea, and he predicted that the one-penny postage stamp would increase the state's revenues in the very first year. Moreover, he expected that those revenues would exceed the state's income in the previous years.[19] After much debate, the project was ratified by the British Parliament in 1839, and the postage stamp was introduced. In 1840 that law was enforced, making Britain the first country in the world to use the postage stamp.

The idea of introducing the postage stamp in Britain caused a heated dispute. On the one hand, the public strongly supported the idea as it helped reduce the postage fees to a great extent, whereas, on
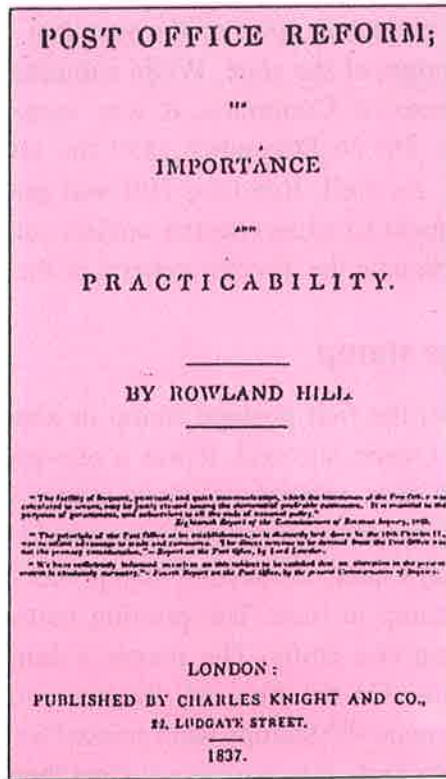
The first page of Rowland Hill's study submitted to the British government in 1837
Source: Stamps and Stamp Collecting, Frantisek Svark, Chancellor Press, 1993 - p. 31

the other hand, it was rejected by the post officials who described it as being inapplicable. However, the idea won the support of some tradesmen who formed a commercial committee in 1836, which in turn launched a strong campaign to support the idea. Popular meetings were held, articles were published in the press, and thousands of petitions signed by four million people were lodged at the parliament. Hence, the parliament formed committees to study the project. Those committees were of the opinion that the idea be applied for many

reasons, the most important of which was the expected influence that would be felt on commercial and industrial prosperity. The government accepted the project in spite of the fear that the fees reduction would affect the budget of the state. When submitted to the House of Lords and the House of Commons, it was agreed upon by overwhelming majority. On 26 December 1839 the law concerning that reform was issued. As well, Rowland Hill was put in charge of the Royal Post Department to supervise the application of the suggested reforms. Later, he became the director general of the Royal Post.

The first postage stamp

On 1 May 1840 the first postage stamp in history was issued. It bore the picture of Queen Victoria. It was a one-penny stamp and its color was black. It was printed on glued paper in Perkins Bacon House at the rate of six pence per thousand and sold in the post offices in Britain. A few days later, the second stamp was issued and sold. It was a two-penny stamp in blue. The printing house printed 500,000 stamps a day, during two shifts. The people's demand far exceeded the supply of stamps. On the first day the post office sold 600,000 stamps for 2,500 pounds.[20] Stamps were printed on a large paper and a paid of scissors or a knife was used to separate them.

At the same time postal envelopes were issued. They bore a design which represented the British Empire surrounded by some scenes representing the various colonies. But those envelopes were so strongly criticized that they were stopped and withdrawn in January 1841.[21]

The invention of the postage stamp revolutionized the world of communications. Sixty-eight million letters were posted in the first ten months, each with that stamp glued on. The number of letters in Britain increased from seventy-six million letters in 1838 to 642 million letters in 1863, which highly increased the revenues of the British treasury. The national income of the government from postage fees increased from 2,346,000 pounds in 1838 to 3,870,000 pounds in 1863. The net profit was 1,790,000 pounds, which was considered a

huge amount at that time. That was in addition to the great activity which trade witnessed due to the ease of correspondence. The post office of London announced that the delivery of 572 letters with postage paid in advance took the same time as the delivery of 73 letters with postage paid on delivery.

In 1862 the British Parliament granted Rowland Hill a reward of 20,000 Sterling pounds after his retirement in appreciation of all he had done for the postal services. One of the members of the parliament described him as the only civilian who should be titled as the benefactor of the state.[22] Hill died in 1879, and was buried in the royal church, Westminister Abbey, where kings of Britain were buried. His grave was close to that of James Watt, inventor of the steam engine. As well, a statue of Hill was raised in London in 1882 in appreciation of what he had done.

The second country to use postage stamps was Brazil, which issued three stamps of different denominations in 1843. In the same year stamps were issued for two states in Switzerland, viz. Zurich and Geneva. As for the United States, different stamps were issued in each state until 1847 when the first official stamps were issued in five-cent and ten-cent denominations. The former bore the picture of President Franklin, whereas the second bore the picture of George Washington.[23]

It is worth mentioning that when postage stamps were introduced for use in the first half of the nineteenth century, they were not perforated. They were printed on a whole page and the purchaser had to use a knife, a cutter or a pair of scissors to separate them.

At that time perforation was known, but it was not used for postage stamps until 1848 when Irish man Henry Archer invented a machine for that purpose. He wrote a letter to the manager of the general post in Britain stating the advantages of perforating the postage stamp papers. The idea was positively met. Archer made a number of attempts in this field until he succeeded. He made tiny holes around the stamp so that when the paper was folded at the perforated line, the stamp could be easily separated and looked as if small

The first British "penny post" stamp issued in Britain in 1840

Source: Harmers of London 1918 - 1978 Rarities of the World Diamond Jubilee Auction Catalogue; 8 November p. 24.

The first two "one penny" (black) and "two-penny" (blue) stamps issued in Britain in 1840.

Source: Robson Lowe at Christie's, London; Reivew of the Year 1983.

The six stamps on the right - with the picture of President George Washington on –
were issued in New York in 1845. The two on the left – with the pictures of president
Franklin (5 cents) and President Washington (10 cents) – were issued in 1847 to be
sued across the United States.

Source: J. & H. Stoplow Inc. Catalogue. Public Auction Sale Catalouge, May 1978 - p. 5

The frist two French stamps issued in 1849 - in ten centimes (yellow) and one franc
(red)

Source: Harmers of London 1918 - 1978 Rarities of the World Diamond Jubilee Auction
Catalogue; 8 November 1978 - p. 20.

The first Egyptian postage stamp collection – issued in 1866 (From the author's collection)

teeth surrounded it. Archer's idea of perforation was applied in 1854. Britain issued the first perforated postage stamps in that year.[24] Other countries followed Britain's example of perforating postage stamps. The process of perforation consisted of making long vertical and horizontal lines on the stamped paper which separated one stamp from the others in a way that made each stamp perforated on the four sides.

It was not as easy in France as it was in Britain to reform the postal system. In spite of the many articles in the press which enumerated the advantages of advance-payment postage fees, as well as the propaganda, brochures and petitions, the French government took a hard-line attitude towards introducing any amendment on its postal system. The attitude remained as such until 1848 when the government changed and the postal reform law was issued. In 1849 the first French postage stamp was issued so that postage fees could be paid in advance. That stamp bore the picture of the gods of Harvest, Agriculture and Civilization.

The consequences of using postage stamps in France were similar to what happened in Britain. The correspondence movement was

noticeably activated in a way that increased the number of letters from 122 million to 158 million letters in one year.

However, the process of introducing postage stamps faced two major problems: forgery and the attempt to reuse stamps by taking them off the envelopes and removing the inky postmarks with chemical solutions. Hence, a penal law was issued for those two crimes.

Development of postal transportation

The process of postal transportation developed in the last four centuries and witnessed a lot of improvements for the sake of speedy and safe post delivery. Centers for post transportation and delivery in many European countries were established. Special means of transportation were assigned. As well, modern and developed means of transportation, such as trains and ships, were introduced. In Britain, for example, special horse carriages were used for this service for the

The royal postal carriage in Britain in 1830
Source: The Stamp Atlas p. 15

first time in 1784. Post transportation by train began in 1830, when the first train for passengers travelling between Manchester and Liverpool was inaugurated.

Sea post started for the first time between Britain and France in 1633 in the reign of King Charles I. That date was considered the first recorded date of regulating postal services by sea. Before that mail was transported by means of private small ships running between the two countries.

Airmail also started in 1911 in Britain. That service was inaugurated on the occasion of the coronation of king George V. Letters were first transported between some British cities. The first overseas airmail took place between London and Paris in 1919. The service expanded later to cover the air route between London and India in 1929.

In America, the regular postal service began in 1639 when the British governor of Massachusetts issued a decree in this respect. In 1787 the American constitution entitled the Congress to establish post offices and routes between the states. On 26 September 1789 postal service was regulated by a decree issued by President George Washington. In the fifteenth century the post was transported by means of horse carriages. Then the service developed quickly and was annexed to the Treasury Department. Trains were used for mail delivery in the seventeenth century. In the twentieth century postal service in the United States developed amazingly to become one of the biggest economic establishments. The amount of mail in the United States in the mid-1980s was estimated to be about 413 postal items per person per year. Thus the grand total of postal items delivered was approximately ninety billion a year.

Universal Postal Union

The development of means of transportation in the nineteenth century had a great influence on the speed of mail delivery as well as the progress and development of postal services. However, many

problems between different countries developed due to the enormous volume of mail exchanged, postage fees collection, the transmission of mail across countries, and so on. That led to many bilateral agreements to regulate and standardize the procedures related to the post and overcome many of those problems. Yet, a number of complicated matters developed due to the huge number of postal agreements between countries. The disorganization which reflected on the service as a whole, led to great increases in postage fees. The situation grew worse because of the different measures applied in each country with respect to weights, currencies, and postage rates.

Therefore, in 1863 fifteen European countries besides the United States agreed to hold a conference in Paris to discuss and solve the accumulated problems related to postal services. Officials in charge of post in those countries met and put the bases for mutual postal cooperation with the aim of facilitating the postal procedures, mail delivery, its speed and safety, and fixing postage fees and methods of their collection. The conference resulted in agreement on the necessity of entering into an international convention to be observed by all countries. From here, the idea of establishing the Universal Postal Union sprang. However, the implementation of the idea was delayed for some years because of the outbreak of the Civil War in the United States of America.

In September 1874 representatives of Egypt, the United States and twenty European countries convened in Bern, Switzerland, where they agreed on establishing the Universal Postal Union (UPU). The agreement was signed on the 9 October of the same year, and its clauses became effective on 1 July 1875. The Union expanded and many countries joined it. In 1949 the Union became one of the specialized agencies of the United Nations. The Union played a great role in organizing the post and increased cooperation between nations in this respect. The Universal Postal Union is considered one of the most efficient and organized international unions. The majority of countries are now members in it. Among the most important principles of this union is the commitment of all member countries to

collect and deliver foreign mail carefully, freely and speedily on the basis that all member countries constitute a single postal region. As well, countries receiving mail should not ask for prepaid postage fees from countries collecting and transmitting it. This principle is based on the fact that each letter has a reply, which means that the latter will repay postage fees to the former so that postal service is mutually rendered. The second principle is to facilitate the procedures of collecting postage charges. Another agreement is to pay specific fees to the countries via which mail is transmitted. The process of developing the regulations issued by this organization continues to this day due to constant change in international situations.

It is worth mentioning that the Universal Postal Union also plays an important role in informing the member states of new issuances of stamps. It is one of the provisions of the Universal Postal Agreement that post departments all over the world send a specific number of their stamp collections to the international office of the Universal Postal Union, to be delivered in turn to the various post departments in the world.

As well, among the outstanding activities of the Universal Postal Union is the coordination between members to issue special stamps for the different occasions celebrated and observed by all countries of the world, with the aim of strengthening cooperation and mutual understanding among nations. Joint issuances of different countries on those occasions are considered a prominent indication that international cooperation is important to achieve world peace and mutual understanding among nations.

Examples of joint issuances of Universal Postal Union member countries can seen in the similarity of design to show the importance of occasions such as the World Health Day and the World Campaign against Hunger. There are also issuances for political occasions, such as the anniversary of the United Nations Organization, which is observed by most countries by issuing special stamps on this occasion. Among historical and civilizational occasions celebrated by most countries of the world was the World Campaign to save the Monu-

ments of Al-Nuba in 1967, when many countries issued stamps on that occasion to support that campaign. There are also many other occasions which countries of the world celebrate annually by issuing memorial stamps.

The Universal Postal Union entitled different countries to enter into regional agreements to facilitate the process of mail delivery and postage fees standardization. Consequently, some regional unions such as the Arab Postal Union, African Postal Union and other unions were established.

It is noteworthy that the development of postal services is an indication of the progress achieved by nations. Moreover, the increasing number of post offices in a country is a civilizational phenomenon that reflects the culture and standard of living of that country. Therefore, the average number of post offices serving a particular population differs from one country to another depending on its economic and cultural circumstances. It is estimated that the number of post offices in the world is rated at one post office for every 7000 people. This average is one post office for every thousand people in some European countries, such as Norway, whereas it is one for every 300,000 people in some African countries such as the republic of Rwanda, for instance. In this respect, Kuwait is average; in 1990 there were two million inhabitants served by fifty post offices, which means an average of one post office for every 40,000 people.

Development of air mail

Among the most important postal developments in this century was the airmail service and its expansion. The period before the first world war witnessed some trials, among which was starting the airmail service between the two British cities Hindon and Windsor in 1911, on the occasion of crowning King George V, as well as the trips between Paris and Bordeaux in 1913. However, airmail services did not reach a reliable level until 1919, when regular flights between some European cities started and the first international air route between London and Paris was inaugurated. Routes between other

European cities followed.[25] Long distance air mail flights – specially across the Atlantic Ocean – were not regulated until 1924, though the first airmail flight crossed the ocean in 1920. In 1926 the Cairo-Karachi route was inaugurated, and it reached London later. In 1933 that route extended to Singapore and then to Australia in 1943. Airmail services across the north of the Atlantic Ocean were not regulated until 1939.[26]

Before that, the mail was transported across the Atlantic Ocean by steamships which took about a hundred hours from Europe to the American Continent. In 1930, the time was reduced to sixty-four hours with the new and relatively speedy steamships. In January 1936 crossing the Atlantic Ocean by air became reliable. The first French plane, transporting the mail between France and South America, crossed the Atlantic Ocean on 12 May 1930. Those flights were called MERMOZ flights, after the pilot. That service continued for some years until faced with great financial problems. From August 1933, Air France took over the responsibility of transporting the mail on that route. It started with one flight per month from France to Brazil on the huge 'flying steamship' LATECOERE 300. The plane crashed in the Atlantic Ocean on 10 February 1936, on its twenty-fourth flight on that route.[27] Other flights across that route increased due to the increasing demand on different airmail services, which in turn led to increasing the number of flights to one per week.

Foreign post offices and services rendered to other countries

Many European countries whose postal services were developed had post offices in some other countries, particularly those which were or had been subject to them, which reflected political authority and was an important source of income. Some of these countries issued special stamps for these colonies. For instance, Britain had hundreds of post offices around the world in its former colonies or countries under its mandate. As well, France and other European countries had post offices in their colonies all over the world, and many European

countries opened post offices in different countries in the Middle East, particularly during and after the rule of the Ottoman State. There was often a number of offices in the same country or city, each belonging to a different European country.

Britain had post offices in all the Gulf Emirates, including Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, Dubai and Qatar, in addition to its offices in Iran and Iraq. It also had many post offices in other Arab countries including Egypt and Palestine as well as in many Arab countries which were under the sovereignty of the Ottoman State.

As for France, it had post offices in Syria, Lebanon, Egypt (Alexandria and Port Said), as well as countries of North africa. Russia and some European countries, such as Italy, Austria and Germany, opened post offices in many Arab countries during the Ottoman rule. Many of those countries were running their postal services from their consulates in those Arab countries.

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Chapter Two

History of Correspondence and Postal Services in Kuwait

- A historical summary

- A brief historical background of European influence in the Gulf

- Kuwait as an independent commercial center in the Gulf area

- The first letter recorded as being issued from Kuwait

- Economic and political conflicts in the area and their influence on trade and communications, and the importance of Kuwait as a neutral and settled country

- Postal services in Kuwait at the end of the nineteenth century

- The suggestion to found a post office and a polyclinic in Kuwait in 1901

- The agreement to establish the first post office in Kuwait under the control of the Political Resident

Chapter Two

History of Correspondence and Postal Services in Kuwait

A historical summary

Since the early years of the reign of Sheikh Sabah I (1756-1762), Kuwait has been an important port in the north of the Arabian Gulf for trade coming from India and going to Syria, as well as an important station for passengers and commercial caravans crossing the desert on the way to Aleppo. The main users of that commercial route, which made the passage of the commercial caravans through Basrah unnecessary, were the Kuwaitis and the Dutch from the island of KHARJ in Iran. Commercial caravans coming from India on their way to Aleppo via Kuwait carried different kinds of goods from the East. Caravans from Kuwait to Aleppo consisted of about 5,000 camels led by a thousand men. The passage tariff ranged between thirty-five and forty piasters per camel loaded with a weight of 700 pounds. The trip from Kuwait to Aleppo used to take seventy days.[1]

In the fifty-year rule of Sheikh Abd-Allah al-Sabah, the second ruler of Kuwait, Kuwait's economic prosperity increased as did its importance as a commercial center. Sheikh Abd-Allah succeeded his father Sheikh Sabah in 1762. In 1765 the Danish traveller Carsten Niebuhr wrote that Kuwait owned 800 fishing and pearl-fishing boats. At that time the city was surrounded by a wall which the Kuwaitis built between 1765 and 1770 at the beginning of Sheikh Abd-Allah al-Sabah's rule to protect them against invaders. Once Kuwait's suit-

ability as a port for anchorage was accepted, the steamship "The Eagle," owned by the East India Company, anchored for the first time in the port of Kuwait in 1777.[2]

Due to the Persian occupation of al-Basrah in 1775, the importance of Kuwait as a commercial port in the Gulf increased. That led to establishing direct and mutual relationship between Kuwait and the East India Company. Consequently, Kuwait's importance as a commercial center led to its importance as a location for offering postal services from India to South Asia. Hence, the first center for postal service in Kuwait was established as a substitute for az-Zubayr in Iraq, which the East India Company used for this purpose before. As a result, the government of Kuwait appointed postmen for mail delivery to and from the factories of the East India Company in Basrah. That was during the rule of Sheikh Abd-Allah ben Sabah I. At that time postmen used camels for carrying letters from Kuwait to Syria, and the service was known then as *desert express*. The trip from Kuwait to Aleppo took from fourteen to twenty days. The first known and recorded postal trip from Kuwait to Aleppo was on 15 July 1775. That date was determined from one of the letters sent by the agents of East India Company at Boushahr in Persia to the company's board of directors in London via Kuwait. Kuwait continued to offer postal services for four years until the Persian occupation of Basrah came to an end in 1779; postal services then returned to be rendered from there.[3]

In 1792 disagreements between the Ottman authorities and the East India Company broke out, which led to a discontinuation of postal services by the East India Company from Basrah, which in turn led to returning those services to Kuwait in the following year (1793). Many of the letters issued at that time indicate that Kuwait was independent of Ottoman State and the provinces subject to it such as Iraq; they are still kept in postal museums and other specialized establishments. Among other important indications which confirm Kuwait's independence is what Bukingham, an English traveller wrote in 1816: "It seems that Koete [meaning Kuwait, but written as such] was

always a sovereign state and maintaining its entity and independence. Its people are known for their distinctive quality among the peoples of the area as the freest and most courageous."[4]

The postal service continued for only two years. The invasions, Kuwait was exposed to during that period led to the decision taken by the East India Company, after negotiating with the Ottoman authorities, to return postal services to Basrah on 27 August 1795.

During the Anglo-French war in the last decades of the eighteenth century, Kuwait became the center of attraction of the British East India Company and its French competitors. Fleets of the two countries would attack one another's ships and seize government mail. At that time, Kuwait benefited from that situation, as its steamships transported the mail coming from the British government of India and going to London without being inspected or taken by the French. Those ships used to transport the mail from India to Kuwait to be sent from there to Europe via Aleppo. At that time, Kuwait to be sent from there to Europe via Aleppo. At that time, Kuwait became the station for the English commercial steamships and its importance as a trade center increased day after day. In 1863 the British resident in the Gulf Colonel Pelly wrote that Kuwait "is a clean and economically active city. It has a main market and a good number of stone houses. It attracts Arab and Persian traders because of its just rule and free trade. It is considered one of the important trade centers because of its open-minded rulers and their wise policy. Kuwait is considered a refuge for the oppressed and the land of security, freedom, safety and peace."[5] The British political resident in the Gulf added: "I think that Kuwait is good to be a center for a telegraph station and a port for transporting coal, as well as an important junction for ships coming from all directions. I see that a prosperous future is expected for Kuwait as a principal port."

Palgrave, another traveller, wrote at the end of the nineteenth century that the "Kuwaitis are considered to be the most courageous and skilful among the Gulf people to enter the depths of the Gulf and Arabian Sea for pearl fishing, trading, and ship building. They are

distinguished by good manners and high trust in dealing with them. Ship building and pearl fishing are the two main sources for their living."[6] In fact, the ships they built were well-designed and highly reliable for long distance voyages. Kuwait had a fleet of 300 ships for pearl diving, and about cargo ships 200. They sailed in the autumn carrying dates from Basrah to India, continued with other goods to Mauritius, Zanzibar and South Arabia, and finally arrived in Kuwait with wood and other goods.[7]

A brief historical background of European influence in the Gulf

1- European political control in the Gulf and the role played by European trading companies in supporting it

On examining the situation in the Gulf area during the last four centuries, it is difficult to separate political from commercial circumstances. The area was a center of attraction to the imperialist countries of Europe, which were competing to open new markets for their trade, look for cheap raw materials for their industries, and reach new lands where they could impose their political and military control. Trading companies, established by those countries in areas under their control, played an important role in strengthening and widening that control, specially in areas with important strategic locations and rich natural resources.

Consequently, those companies had a great control over the governments of Europe and a tangible influence on its policy. Representatives and offices of those companies in the Gulf area, India, Iraq and other countries were granted diplomatic immunity by their countries, in appreciation of their role in achieving their interests. In fact, the objectives of the companies were exactly the same as those of their countries. Both were aiming at maintaining political, military, and commercial control, as well as safe means of transportation for easy and secure mail delivery between the capitals of those subject countries.

Portugal was the first European country to explore the route to India in 1498, with the help of the Arab traveller Ahmad Ibn Majid. The Portuguese established their influence in the Arabian Gulf at the beginning of the sixteenth century and remained influential till the seventeenth century, when their power began to weaken as they lost control over Bahrain in 1602, Hormuz in 1622 and Oman in 1651. At that time the Gulf was the center of conflict between the Portuguese and the Ottoman State. In the middle of the seventeenth century the political influence of Portugal came to an end, although their trading ships continued to anchor in the Gulf ports. Among the most important reasons for Portugal's decline in the Gulf was the solidarity of the two great European powers at that time, the British and the Dutch, who joined forces to weaken Portugal's commercial and political power. The campaign was led by the British East India and the Dutch East India Companies. The former was established by the British on 31 December 1600, whereas the latter was founded by the Dutch in 1602. The two of them launched a joint campaign against the Portuguese, and they succeeded in stripping them of power in the Gulf at the beginning of the seventeenth century.[8]

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, the British became the major power in the Arabian Gulf. They occupied the first position in trade with the Gulf. That led to opening many offices for the agents of the British East Indian Company in many of the Gulf countries to take care of their interests and supervise the routes of communications between India and Europe.

The mail of the trading agencies belonging to the East India Company in the Gulf reflected the objectives of their establishment. The first objective was the distribution of their goods with the aim of making profit. The second goal was to secure the mail between London and India and vice versa; that was the major objective behind the great concern of the company's agency in Basrah in particular.[9] At that time, the company realized that speedy mail delivery depended on either the Red Sea or the Arabian Gulf, which started from india,

continued via the Arabian Gulf to Kuwait or Basrah, then by land (the *Desert Express*) to Aleppo in Syria, and from there across Asia Minor and Europe, then by sea to Greece or Italy, and finally across the continent to England. Practically speaking, the second route was preferred over the former, because of the security of the desert route at that time. The only fear was of the Arab tribes, but the company appeased them by giving them money and gifts.[10] Through the course of time during and successive years of the eighteenth century, the desert express route proved to be a vital artery for the British company since the British Empire in India was established at the hands of the East India Company.[11]

It is worth mentioning that the employees of the East India Company at Basrah and the British consul in Aleppo, were in charge of running the postal land route, known as *"desert mail."*[12]

2- The history of postal communications across the Gulf

Trading factories belonging to the British East India Company in the Arabian Gulf depended on the company's steamships coming from India for its communications with the world. The British agencies in the various cities of the Gulf were responsible for taking care of the company's interests. Since the beginning of the eighteenth century, Basrah had had the advantage of direct communication – though not regular – with Europe via Aleppo. At the end of the eighteenth century, when it took a fortnight to communicate between Bombay and Basrah by means of the company's ships, a postal route on camels between Basrah and Aleppo was regulated under the control of the company's representative at Basrah. Another postal route on horse-back to Constantinople was added. At that time, the Gulf route was the fastest between Europe and India, as the British government used it freely during the Napoleoic wars. The British authorities in India, then, were informed about the Nile battle by means of Basrah.[13]

In 1839 the East India Company sent three river boats specially built for transporting the mail from Basrah to Baghdad. However, they did not last for long, as the camel mail resumed between Iraq and

Syria via Damascus and Beirut. Yet, this route did not increase Indian-European interests.

By the beginning of 1862, a relatively new service was introduced. It led to the advent of a new political and commercial epoch in the Gulf area. The British Minister of State for India affairs approved the establishment of a sea route for mail purposes between Bombay and the Gulf via Karachi. The ships belonged to the Navigation Company for British India ships. The company started with eight trips annually. In the same year the British Minister of State for India affairs also accepted an offer from the Euphrates and Tigris Navigation Company to run a ship monthly between Basrah and Baghdad where it connected with the ocean route coming from Bombay in return for 2,400 pounds a year.[14]

The mail service in the Gulf noticeably improved. The frequency of the trips increased to every fortnight in 1868, then every week in 1874.[15] In 1903 a contract was signed between the Navigation Company for British India ships and the British Minister of State for India affairs. The contract necessitated improving sea transportation, and enhancing mail procedures in the Gulf. The contract also required establishing two services under the names of "Line No. 11" and "Line No. 12." Line No. 11 was for the weekly transportation between Karachi and Basra via Gulf ports, whereas line No. 12 was an express line assigned to the weekly transportation between Karachi and Basrah via the main Gulf ports. Line No. 11 had stops in Karachi, Basni, Jawader, Muscat, Bander Abbas, Linga, Bahrain, Boushahr, Kuwait, al-Faw, al-Muhammarah and Basrah. The ships docked for at least three hours in each port. Line no. 12 had stops in Karachi, Muscat, Boushahr, al-Faw, al-Muhammarah and Basrah.

The annual sum offered by the British government to the company against the contract was 426,124 rupees.[16] According to the contract, the return trip to and from Karachi took twelve days by express transportation, or three weeks by slow transportation. In 1904 Kuwait was included in the express weekly service.

3- The establishment of Indian post offices in the Gulf

In the middle of the seventeenth century, mail delivery between India and the Gulf countries was primitive and unsatisfactory. Postage fees for some letters were pre-paid. However, most of them were either not charged at all or undercharged. No serious effort was taken to collect the actual postage fees. The mail was transported in wrappers from Bombay and Karachi to Basrah and other Gulf ports and delivered by agents of the British East India Company who also collected the outgoing mail.

Having felt the pressing need to establish a better postal system between India and the Gulf, and on the recommendations of the local political officials, the British government of India decided to establish such a system and open properly organized post offices. On 1 May 1864, post offices were opened in Muscat and Boushahr. On 1 April 1868 other offices were opened in Linga and Bander Abbas; on 1 January 1868 in Basrah and Baghdad; and on 12 April 1868 in Jawader. Other post offices were later opened: on 1 September 1880 in Gashik, on 1 August 1884 in Bahrain, and on 19 July 1892 in al-Muhammara.[17]

In 1901 in Kuwait, Sheikh Mubarak al-Sabah asked the British government to open an Indian post office, and he took it upon himself not to permit any other foreign country to open a post office in Kuwait. When a British political commissioner was appointed to Kuwait in 1904, he was accompanied by an assistant surgeon among whose responsibilities was that of the postal services. That was after an agreement had been reached with Sheikh Mubarak al-Sabah to open the office.[18]

Kuwait as an independent commercial center in the Gulf area

The period following the increasing power of Europe in the area – Britain and Holland in particular – witnessed the opening of many commercial offices and consulates for those countries in the various

cities of the Ottoman and the Persian States, the two major states in the area at that time. The main concern of those offices, as mentioned earlier, was developing and encouraging trade. Basra was considered the main Ottoman port through which commercial caravans passed in transit carrying commodities from India to Europe and conversely. Boushahr was one of the most important commercial ports on the Gulf and the main access of the Persian State.

By the beginning of the eighteenth century another port appeared, and that was the port of Kuwait. Its distinguished geographical location and independence of the Ottoman and Persian influences gave it increasing importance. That sort of independence had a great significance for a number of reasons:

– transit trade (via Kuwait) was not subject to the high taxes imposed by those countries,
– it was far from the military and political conflicts in those countries under the influence of Ottomans and Persians, and
– security and safety were enjoyed by the political, consular, and commercial offices of Europe in the area.

Kuwait, at that time, was distinguished by those advantages. As a result, Europe considered it an important substitute for other ports falling under the influence of the Ottoman and Persian states in times of crises.

Among the earliest evidence that Kuwait (or Qurain) was an independent port and not subject to political influences of the two major powers at that time was the letter sent from Kuwait by the representative of the Dutch East India Company in Basrah to a priest in Aleppo in 1750, as discussed below.

The first letter recorded as being issued from Kuwait

In his documentary book "The Origins of Kuwait," the Dutch historian B.J. Slot states that the first mention of Kuwait in the European documents was in 1750, when a political crisis in Holland took

place because of the Dutch East India Company. Kuwait (Al-Qurain' as named then) was mentioned in the documents and correspondence of the above-mentioned company.[19] The representative of the company in Basrah sent a letter from Kuwait on 4 March 1750 addressed to one of the Catholic priests in Aleppo, explaining to him his problem with the company which fired him. Slot mentioned that that letter was the first letter recorded as being issued from Kuwait.[20] Slot proves – as we will see – through that letter that Kuwait has been an independent emirate since the beginning of the eighteenth century. It was not subject to the influence of the Ottoman State or any other country in the region. Slot supports his book with maps drawn by European cartographers of different nationalities. In their maps, they referred to Kuwait as 'Kazma' and 'Al-Qurain.' Slot proves in more ways than one that Kuwait was subject to none but its rulers. He also confirms that the content and date of the letter prove that Kuwait enjoyed independence and was not under Ottoman sovereignty for a fairly long time before 1750.[21]

The letter to which Slot refers was sent because the general manager of the Dutch East India Company wanted to fire Kanter, the representative of the company in Basrah, and hire another repre-sentative in his place, as he was accused of embezzlement. When Kanter knew of the arrival of his substitute, he left for al-Qurain to escape from the power of the Ottoman State which could have arrested him to be extradited at the request of the Dutch East India Company. Kanter wrote a letter from Kuwait to one of the priests at Aleppo explaining the reasons for leaving Basrah for Kuwait. After that, Kanter left Kuwait with one of the caravans going to Aleppo – without passing by Basrah – on his way to Amsterdam. From Aleppo, he went to Turkey and from there to Amsterdam in Holland where it was difficult for the Dutch East India Company to arrest him as the law stipulates in that city.[22]

In his book Slot adds that Kanter's trip was an example of similar trips of those who escaped from the oppression of the Ottoman power to other countries not under its authority. He states that that incident

A page of the letter sent from Kuwait by the former representative of the Dutch East India Company in Basrah to a priest in Aleppo.

Source: The Origins of Kuwait - BJ. Slot 1991 - p. 74 (General State Archives of the Netherlands).

makes it clear that Kuwait then was not subject to the authority and laws of the Ottoman State. He adds that those who escaped from the oppression of the Ottomans and their aides often sought asylum in Kuwait to avoid being arrested and punished according to the laws ruling the Ottoman State and its domains. Kuwait was a refuge and a secure center for trade in case of any problems with the Ottoman government in Basrah.[23]

There are also other letters referring to the escape of Kanter from the Ottoman State to Kuwait. Polard, the Consul of Holland in Syria, sent a report from Aleppo to the ambassador of his country in Istanbul on 4 May 1750, telling him about the escape of Kanter form Basrah to "al-Qurain" and his stay there for a while, and his departure with one of the trading caravans for Aleppo headed without passing by Basra. That letter proves that there was a regular direct trading route from Kuwait to Syria which did not pass through Basrah.[24] Slot comes to the conclusion that Kuwait was an important port and trading center where caravans coming from the west headed directly to Aleppo without passing through other trading centers such as Basrah. This is also evidence that the port of Kuwait existed some time before that date.[25]

Economic and political conflicts in the area and their influence on trade and communications, and the importance of Kuwait as a neutral and settled country

The increase of the British influence in the Gulf in the middle of the seventeenth century followed the collapse of the influence of the Ottoman State in the area, and its being looked upon as the sick man of Europe. That period witnessed a constant conflict between the Britain and the Ottoman State on the areas of influence for each of them on the one hand, and a conflict inside the Ottoman State itself on the other, which affected it politically and economically. As this study aims at focusing on the role played by Kuwait as a trading passage and a communication route between Europe and India, it will focus on the circumstances that gave Kuwait that important role it played efficiently.

A picture of page of the letter sent by Polard the consul of Holland to Syria to the ambassador of his country to Istanbul, informing him of the escape of Kaner from Basrah to Kuwait and his stay there waiting for the departure to Aleppo with one of the trading caravans.

Source: The Origins of Kuwait, BJ. Slot 1991 - p. 78 (General State Archives of the Netherlands).

There were three conflicts that Iraq – as a part of the Ottoman Empire – witnessed at that time, and another conflict between France and Britain, which led to the outstanding role of Kuwait as an independent, neutral and settled country and a reliable center for international communications and trading offices for some European countries. Those conflicts or events are:

1- The Persian blockade and occupation of Basrah from 1775 to 1779

2- The Anglo-French wars from 1778 to 1790

3- The crisis between the representatives of the British government at Basrah and the Ottoman authorities between 1791 and 1795

4- The dispute that took place between the British Resident in Baghdad and the Ottoman Pasha of Baghdad in 1821-1822

Following is a summary of those events and the important role Kuwait played then.

1- The Persian blockade and occupation of Basrah from 1775 to 1779

In 1773 the relationship between the Ottoman State and Persia reached a crisis due to some political differences between the two parties. As a result of the decision taken by the British East India Company to transfer its activity from Boushahr to Basrah, the trade at Boushahr deteriorated whereas it prospered at Basrah. Consequently, the relations between the two states, as well as between Kareem Khan, the ruler of Persia, and the Pasha of Baghdad, grew tenser. At that time the ruler of Persia faced internal difficulties in his country, and that led him to attack Basrah in March 1775. The blockade of Basrah continued for thirteen months after which the city surrendered in the middle of April 1776.

The effect of the blockade and occupation of Basrah on Kuwait

The blockade and occupation of Basrah by Persia from 1775 to 1779 had a great effect on the trading conditions in Kuwait. That led to the establishment of direct relations between the representatives of the British East India company in the Gulf and Kuwait. As well,

Kuwait became a central station for trading caravans from Basrah to Aleppo during the period of blockade and occupation. The bad relation between the Persians and the British at that time also led to unloading the goods of the East India Company going from india to Aleppo in Kuwait instead of Boushahr and Basrah, and that resulted in flourishing economical conditions in Kuwait.[26] As well, the shipping of goods via Kuwait solved the problem facing the British company with respect to marketing the Indian commodities in the Middle East after the occupation of Basrah. This was revealed in a letter from the British consul to Aleppo on 11 June 1776 to Lutush the agent of the company at Basrah. The latter sent that letter to the company board of directors in London. It confirmed that the Indian commodities were still marketable, and if al-Qurain (Kuwait) continued to be neutral, the caravans could travel to it and carry goods from there to Aleppo in case of war in Basrah. The letter stressed the distinguished location of Kuwait and the importance of its being independent for the traders' interest.[27] In November 1777 the British company's ship 'Al-Nisr' (the eagle) paid a visit to Kuwait. A report written about Kuwait at that time said that the port was good for anchorage, the city was fenced and secure, and it received caravans. The report added that if the port of Boushahr would be closed, the company's ships going to Basrah could take their pilots from Kuwait.[28]

Thus as a result of the sound policy of Sheikh Abd-Allah al-Sabah (the second ruler of Kuwait) to maintain the neutrality of his country, Kuwait continued to flourish. His good relations with the British East India Company, the major European trading power in the Gulf, continued to be cordial.

Transportation of the mail via Kuwait instead of az-Zubayr

The East India Company started sending its mail coming from India and going to Britain via Kuwait instead of az-Zubayr due to the blockade of Basrah. Although Persia occupied az-Zubayr in 1778, i.e., only two years after occupying Basra, the British desert mail of the British East India Company was sent from Kuwait since the middle of

1775. "Lorimer" in "Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf" says that the recorded history of the British-Kuwaiti relations started in 1775, when the British mail coming from the Gulf to Aleppo started to be sent from Kuwait instead of az-Zubayr due to the Persian occupation of Basrah.

That desert route had a special importance to the British East India Company for two reasons. Firstly, it was the mail route to and from India. Secondly, it served trading purposes. It was the first reason that gave Kuwait that importance from the point of view of the British agency at Basrah. Only four months of the Persian blockade of Basrah in 1775 had passed when the British letters coming with the desert mail were delivered in Kuwait. The British Agency at Basrah used to employ people of the desert express mail at az-Zubayr, but after the Persian blockade, they chose Kuwait for this job.[29]

However, the mail in Kuwait was not regular initially. That might be due to the fact that the company did not have any representatives in Kuwait. Hence, it was suggested to appoint a resident representative in Kuwait for this job, i.e., for mail delivery to and from that port. Since nobody was fit from this job at Basrah in July 1776, Lutush, the agent at Basrah, charged Lieutenant Tops, captain of the ship "Al-Mukheefa," with that job. The desert mail continued to be sent on this route throughout the period of the Persian occupation of Basrah.[30]

The distance between Kuwait and Basrah used to be covered in three days, whereas ships needed a longer period to cover the distance between the mouth of Shatt al-Arab and Basrah. Hence, Kuwait was very useful for the desert mail. As well, it facilitated the transportation of Indian goods to the markets of Syria and countries of the Near East and Europe. However, the establishment of a British agency there did not take place until 1793, i.e. fifteen years after that date, when the British Trading Agency moved from Basrah to Kuwait.[31]

2- The Anglo-French wars and conflicts from 1778 to 1798

Wars between Britain and France were almost continuous during the last decades of the eighteenth century. This led the two countries

to vie with each other regarding their interests and fleets. The French sent a strong fleet to the Gulf to intercept the mail of the British East India Company and attack the British ships. Therefore, the British company started sending its mail with the Arabian ships. Kuwait benefited from this. Besides transporting mail, it transported people. Kuwait became a station for the mail carriers passing through the Arabian Gulf on their way to the desert route, Aleppo, and then Europe.[32] During that period, the relationship between Sheikh Abd-Allah al-Sabah and the representatives of the British East India Company was firmly established, as the interest was mutual between the two parties. The company relied on Kuwait for its mail delivery and the Shaikh benefited a lot from the trading transportation.[33]

Moreover, Samuel Mansity, head of the British agency at Basrah, played a major role in strengthening the relations between Britain and Kuwait because of his good personal relations with the Sheikh as well as the Kuwaiti merchants. The trading agency at Basrah started to use their ships from time to time to transport the company's mail to India to avoid the French fleet which used to intercept the British ships during the last decade of the eighteenth century. After France and Britain declared war, the Gulf area witnessed remarkable French activity. The French increased their activity in India and the Indian Ocean. As well, they used the land route to India across the Syrian desert and the Arabian Gulf. The French also tried to do their best to stop the British mail to India by making the Gulf an unsuitable route for the British to use. Therefore, French missions were sent to the different countries on the Gulf in an attempt to win their favor. A French fleet was also sent to the Indian Sea and the Gulf for police actions in the area.[34] At the same time the French sent a number of letters through the desert to Basrah, and they attempted to transport others to India in Arabian ships. Manisty sent two letters about the French plans to the confidential committee of The British East India Company in London. The first letter was sent from Kuwait on 23 August 1795, and the second from Basrah on 20 November 1796. Manisty benefited from the friendship that was firmly established between him and Sheikh Abd-Allah al-Sabah in terminating the

French plans to use the Kuwaiti ships for transporting their messengers and letters. The main reason behind using Arabian ships – particularly the Kuwaiti ones – could have been that neither of the two parties (i.e. the British and the French) had regular postal services in the Gulf region. They had to use the Arabian ships whose pilots were characterized as remarkably honest. That was why the British and the French resorted to using Arabian ships so as to avoid each other and maintain the confidentiality of their own important information in the best way possible.[35]

The French and the British did not intercept the Arabian ships at all for many reasons. Among those reasons was the good number of those ships in the Gulf, their wish not to worsen their relations with the Sheikhs of the Gulf, and the fact that the Arabian ships in the Gulf were armed. This was indicated in a letter sent by Manisty from Kuwait to the confidential committee in London on 17 January 1795 in which he wrote that the Kuwaiti ships were well prepared for fighting.[36] It is worth mentioning that most of the British post at that time travelled to India via the Gulf, as the Indian Ocean was always exposed to danger due to the existence of the French ships there.

The Anglo-French conflict and rivalry in the Gulf, as well as their attempts to seize each other's mail continued until the end of the eighteenth century, when the British policy succeeded in winning the favor of the Sheikhs of the Gulf. Besides, when the French occupied Egypt in 1798, their mail in the Gulf – as well as their messengers – disappeared for a long time, and they hardly existed in the Gulf any longer.[37]

3- The crisis between the representatives of the British government in Basrah and the Ottoman authorities between 1791 and 1795

In 1791 a problem arose between the British Resident in Basrah and the Ottoman authorities. It led to the relocation of the British Residency from Basrah to Kuwait in 1793. In March 1791 Manisty, the British Resident in Basrah, wanted to mediate for one of the christian citizens who was accused of killing a jew. This mediation led the

governor not to enforce the normal penalty. Therefore, the Jewish community in Basrah forwarded threats to the British Resident. The case developed and the matter was submitted to the Ottoman Pasha of Baghdad. The British Resident asked him to punish those who threatened him, eventhough their leaders apologized to him in the presence of the governor of Basrah. The case remained postponed for about two years, which led the British Resident to withdraw – as a protest – from Basrah to Kuwait on 30 April 1793. He took with him his assistant, Hartford Jones. Hence, the Ottoman Pasha wrote to the British ruler in Bombay to complain of Manisty's conduct and to ask him to summon him to India and appoint a substitute for him. The problem was submitted to the British Viceroy in India, and from him to the board of directors of the East India Company in London. The latter did not give instructions until April 1795. They criticized Manisty's and Jone's conduct, and instructed that they be transferred from Basrah. However, under new circumstances Manisty returned to his job in the Residency at Basrah in August 1795.[38]

The relocation of the British Residency from Basrah to Kuwait 1793 - 1795

Manisty and his two assistants Hartford Jones and Lewis Rinaud left Basrah on 30 April 1793. On May 5, they arrived in Kuwait where they stayed until August 1795. On 18 July 1793 Manisty wrote a letter to the confidential committee of the British East India Company in London, explaining the advantages of moving the British Residency to Kuwait. Among the reasons he mentioned was that Kuwait had been successfully used as a center for the mail of the East India Company during the Persian occupation of Basrah between 1775 and 1779. The letter also stated that Sheikh Abd-Allah al-Sabah had very good relations with the British at that time. He was generous to them when they arrived in Kuwait. Besides, the expenses of establishing the agency in Kuwait would be less than its expenses in Basra. Moreover, Hartford Jones was familiar with Kuwait City, as he went there in 1790 seeking medical treatment when his health worsened due to the bad weather of Basrah.[39]

Among the reasons that led Manisty to choose Kuwait was that its port was suitable for anchorage, and consequently the company's ships could unload their cargos there. Before leaving for Kuwait, Manisty disclosed his intentions to the government in Bombay, the British ambassador to Istanbul, and the headquarters of the company in London.

Transferring the mail routes from Basrah to Kuwait as a result of the British Residency's relocation there

As soon as Manisty declared his plans to move to Kuwait, the mail of the East India Company from India to Europe via Aleppo was transferred to Kuwait instead of Basrah. The first lot was sent to Kuwait on 19 March 1793, i.e. before the arrival of the officials of the agency.[(40)]

Manisty wrote the first letter from Kuwait to his assistant Hartfod Jones on 7 May 1793. In it he asked him to go to Boushahr and carry important letters to the Bombay government from the British ambassador to Istanbul.[(41)] Manisty also sent letters from Kuwait to the governor in Basrah and Smith, the British Resident at Boushahr on 6 December 1793, asking the captains of the British ships to unload their goods in Kuwait instead of Basrah whenever that was possible. At that time the negotiations between the Pasha of Baghdad and Manisty with regard to the return of the agency to Basra were still in process. The first ship heading for Kuwait was called "Laurel" and was piloted by captain Alexander Fugo. It arrived at Failaka island on 18 July 1793. From there its captain contacted Manisty for further instructions.[(42)]

The agency remained in Kuwait until August 1795. It stayed in Kuwait for two years and four months, during which the negotiations between the Ottoman Pasha and Manisty went on, until an agreement was reached, according to which the Ottoman Pasha accepted all the British provisions. The constant attacks of some tribes on Kuwait at that time affected the decision to return the agency to Basra, as the people in charge were afraid that the company's goods might be stolen by those tribes.[(43)]

On 27 August 1795 Manisty left Kuwait on board of an Ottoman ship heading for Basrah and arrived at its port on 2 September. On 4 September Manisty entered Basrah after his prosperous stay in Kuwait which made the Ottoman Pasha assent to the British demands. From the viewpoint of the Sheikh of Kuwait, the existence of the British agency in Kuwait gave it great importance and increased its economic development. Kuwait benefited much from the goods unloaded there as well as from the company's mail carried by the express desert mail. Manisty's personal relations with the Sheikh of Kuwait during that period strengthened, as did his relations with the Kuwaiti merchants.[44]

It is important to confirm that Manisty's and his assistants' choice of Kuwait as a center for the British trading agency is conclusive evidence that it was not subject to Ottoman sovereignty.[2] This is also confirmed by what the traveller Buckingham wrote in 1816. In his book *Travels in Assyria* he said that "the port which is next to Al-Qateef on this coast and which is considered important is Al-Qurain, as named by the British cartographers though known among the Arabs as Kuwait only. It seemed that it has always been independent and its people are known among the Gulf peoples for their freedom and bravery.[46]

4- The dispute that took place between the British Resident in Baghdad and the Ottoman Pasha of Baghdad in 1821-1822

Due to the differences between the British political representative and the Ottoman Pasha of Baghdad as well as between his representative and governor of the city, the whole of the British Agency moved from Basrah to Kuwait again between 15 December 1821 and 19 April 1822. It seems that this time the agency moved to an island, probably Failaka Island of Kuwait.[47]

The move was due to the unstable situations that prevailed in Iraq during the conflict between its governor Abd-Allah Pasha, who took power from 1813 to 1817 and Said Pasha, when instructions were issued from the capital of the Ottoman State to expel Abd-Allah Pasha and nominate Dawoud Pasha instead of him. Based on instructions

from the government of Bombay and the government of India, Rich – the political representative in Baghdad – was neutral. That led to worsening the British relations with Dawoud Pasha. The differences between captain Taylor, who was in charge of the British Trading Agency in Basrah, and the governor of Basrah worsened the situation even more.

Due to those differences, Dawoud Pasha stopped the actions stipulated by the treaties with the British with regard to the trading facilities granted to the British and Europeans trading in the territories of the Ottoman State. Moreover, he doubled the taxes imposed on them, which led Rich to order captain Taylor to leave Basrah and close the trading agency there. That was in November 1820. Captain Taylor left for al-Muhammarah from where he observed the events. Due to the decision taken by Rich, the forces of Dawoud Pasha besieged the British Residency in Baghdad on 25 March 1821. Consequently, Rich declared that he would leave Baghdad and that the Residency would be closed. Hence, Dawoud Pasha sent some of his soldiers to arrest Rich, who left Baghdad heading for Basrah and then Boushahr, at which he arrived on 15 May 1821. There he fell ill and headed for Shiraz, where he died a short while later from Cholera on 5 October 1821. As for Taylor, he moved from al-Muhammarah to Kuwait or an island in Kuwait – as reported by the company – on 15 December 1821. It seems that it was Failaka Island, which was known to the company's ships since the third quarter of the eighteenth century.[47] However, there is nothing to confirm that as the records of the East India Company kept at the library of the commonwealth (formerly India) and the British Archieves do not refer to Failaka Island.[48]

Alfinistone, the ruler of India, sent a letter to Lord Strangford, the British Ambassador to Constantinople, asking him to mediate and solve the problem. In consequence, the governor of Baghdad surrendered to the British demands which were in twelve items, as he saw their trading agency moving from Basrah to Kuwait.[49]

According to this agreement, Captain Taylor left Kuwait with his establishment on 19 April 1822. He arrived at Basrah on 1 May 1822,

and was received by the governor who presented him with a pedigreed horse that had been sent by Dawoud Pasha to be presented to him on his arrival.[50]

Postal services in Kuwait at the end of the nineteenth century

In the past, the nature of most of the Kuwait's work depended greatly on travelling and being far away from their homeland for months. They travelled to distant countries such as India, East Africa as well as other countries like the Gulf emirates and Persia. This led to a fairly active movement of correspondence between those Kuwaitis and their families in Kuwait. As there was no official mail at that time as is currently recognized, many of the outgoing and incoming letters were carried to and from Kuwait with the travellers who provided this service for their acquaintenances and friends. Al-Mizyid family, one of the Kuwaiti families, used to transport the mail to and from Kuwait via Basra. Two members of that family did that job alternately by means of mules. A bag was situated in the house of that family for this sake. It took them two days to go between Kuwait and Basra. Mail service continued as such until 1904 when the British Residency House was opened and took the responsibility of the postal service in Kuwait.[51]

The suggestion to found   a post office and a polyclinic in Kuwait in 1901

To maintain the political entity of Kuwait against outside attacks and greed, Sheikh Mubarak al-Sabah signed a protectorate treaty with Britain in 1899. This treaty led to the confirmation of the independence and self-rule of Kuwait. At that time Kuwait depended on trade, pearl-fishing, and ship-building. Also, there were many craftsmen for the simple needs of the inhabitants. The treaty led to increased economic activity as well as an increase in the number of foreigners in Kuwait, which in turn resulted in an increase in the amount of correspondence with the outside world.

In July 1901, the British India Navigation Company opened an agency in Kuwait. In November of the same year, Sheikh Mubarak suggested a British post office be established in Kuwait. However, since a post office could not be established but as a part of a British political establishment, the idea was postponed. The British viewpoint then was that time was not ripe to move the British political representative to Kuwait, who was a journalist at that time.[52]

The idea of establishing regular postal services in Kuwait had been under investigation by the British India government since 1902 due to the increasing role of Kuwait in international trade, its geographic location, and its importance as a bridge between India and countries of the Middle East. The India government – under Britain then – adopted the idea and suggested to the British Minister of State for India affairs that a post office be opened in Kuwait under the responsibility of one of the employees in the India Health Mission in Kuwait.[53]

Naturally, the idea behind that was to facilitate correspondence between the foreign communities and their relatives in Kuwait. However, the idea was continually postponed in anticipation of the establishment of a regular sea route between India and Kuwait.

On 28 November 1903 Lord Carzon, the British Viceroy of India, paid a two-day visit to Kuwait. In his visit he confirmed the friendly relations between the two countries and the readiness of Britain to protect Kuwait. Sheikh Mubarak renewed his request that a British post office be opened in Kuwait. Britain tentatively agreed provided that no other country be permitted to establish another post office. Britain's decision was not only to improve the postal communication with Kuwait, but also to offer medical service and upgrade British political representation with it.[54]

The agreement to establish the first post office in Kuwait under the control of the political Resident

On 19 February 1904 the British government agreed to establish a post office in Kuwait, and decided to annex it to the office of the

British Political Resident. On 28 February 1904 Sheikh Mubarak also agreed that he would not permit any other country to open a post office in Kuwait.[55]

Following is the wording of the agreement signed by Sheikh Mubarak al-Sabah:

"A commitment from the Sheikh of Kuwait not to permit a non-British post office to be established in Kuwait"
28 February 1904

Since the British government agreed – according to my wish and for the interest of the merchants – to establish a post office in Kuwait, I – on my part – agree not to permit any other government to establish a post office here. Accordingly, I write this commitment on my own behalf and on behalf of my successors.

(Stamp of Sheikh Mubarak al-Sabah)
Kuwait
28 February 1904[56]

On 24 June 1904 the British government gave its orders to send a political representative to Kuwait. Colonel Knox, the first British Political Resident in Kuwait, arrived on 5 August 1904. He was accompanied by an assistant surgeon and another assistant to supervise the opening of a post office in Kuwait and take charge of it.[57]

The subsequent official correspondence with the Residency shows clearly that the mail stationery (such as forms and postmarks) had been sent with the assistant in charge of the post when coming to prepare for the opeing of the post office in Kuwait, which was a branch of the India post office.[58] However, despite all those preparations, the office was not opened.

The period between 1904 and 1914 witnessed the Political Resident Officer's undertaking of the administration of Postal affairs, though the post office was not officially opened at that time. The outgoing and incoming mail increased a lot, which led to the office

employees being busy. The incoming mail was delivered to the people in person, whereas the outgoing mail was put in a post box hung at the entrance of the Residency or handed to the employee concerned. The incoming letters were postmarked by means of the India post office at Boushahr. There is no evidence that those letters were sent to Kuwait except for the address written on them. The outgoing letters from Kuwait were also postmarked at that time by means of the same post office, and the only evidence of them being issued from Kuwait was the name of the sender and his address, if any. The postmark, which was kept at the Residency, was not used as it was not yet official.[59]

Colonel Knox did his best to convince his government to open a post office in Kuwait as soon as possible and the British Political Resident in the Gulf supported him. However, his attempts did not succeed due to the objection of the British India government and its insistence that the costs were too high for that post office to be opened.

In 1909 Captain Shakespeare was appointed to the position of political Resident in Kuwait after Colonel Knox. Captain Shakespeare did his best as well to convince his government to open a post office in Kuwait. He exerted pressure on the India government and the political Resident at Boushahr to open that office. In a letter dated 30 May 1910 to the political Resident at Boushahr, captain Shakespeare tried to convince him to reconsider opening a post office in Kuwait, and made it clear that it was urgent to open that office due to the great number of outgoing letters and money orders from Kuwait. He also mentioned that the political Residency itself spent much of its time for mail services including mail delivery and collection by boat from the steamships. In his letter he also mentioned that the assistant in charge of the post was still charging his salary (20 rupees per month) from the Residency budget. In addition, his chief clerk spent most of his time for the mail service follow-up. Shakespeare also mentioned that the money orders sent from Kuwait by means of Boushahr post office reached the sum of 4350 rupees. The number of parcels received by the office was 470. The number of registered letters was 740, and that

of the ordinary letters was 7310. He also said that all the money orders and registered letters were sent by the employees in the political Residency, as these services were not rendered to the public.[60] The public used to buy postage stamps from Boushahr or India by asking people going there to do this service for them. As well, most of the letters were sent by land or with travellers leaving Kuwait for India by ship.

In 1912 Shakespeare tried once more to suggest the idea, after postal services in Kuwait steadily increased for two years. In a letter he sent in March 1912, he said that the sale of postage stamps came to 500 rupees a year, though a good number of people were still buying stamps from Boushahr and India. He said that the number of parcels increased to 1813 a year, and the registered letters reached 2306, whereas the incoming letters were 12000 per year. He also mentioned that most of the people dealt with the Residency as a post office. A special room was allotted for this service. A red box was hung on the outside wall for depositing letters. All those services gave the impression that there was a post office, particularly that by then the Residency had been offering these postal services for seven years.[61]

In May 1913 Shakespeare wrote another letter to the British India government, asking for help to remove the greatest obstacle to the development and prosperity of Kuwait's port, i.e., the absence of a post office, which Kuwait needed badly. On 13 July 1913 the British India government sent that letter to the British Ministry of Foreign Affairs, suggesting that an India post office be opened in Kuwait, with fees like those charged in its post offices in Bahrain and Mascat.[62]

On 21 January 1915 the India post office in Kuwait was opened, while Shakespeare was on a formal duty to meet with King Abdul-Aziz al-Saud in the region between Kuwait and Braidah for making rough plans for a treaty between Britain and King Abdul-Aziz. On 24 January 1915 and after completing this treaty, Shakespeare was killed while fitting out a gun for the army of King Abdul-Aziz against the forces of Ben Rasheed. Soon after that, Sheikh Mubarak al-Sabah, who was his close friend, also died.[63] Their wish to open a post office in Kuwait was finally achieved a short while before their deaths.
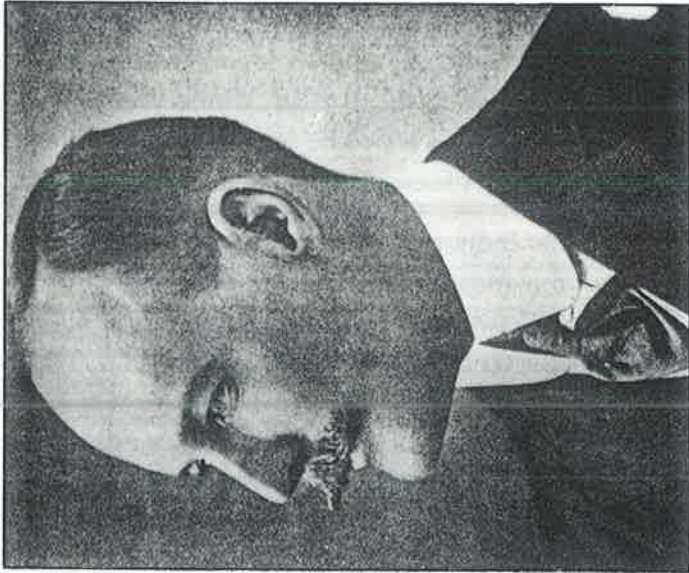
Captain Shakespeare
The British Political Resident in
Kuwait, between 1909 and 1915

Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah

Their dream to open a post office in Kuwait was realized in January 1915 a short while before their deaths.

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(48) Ibid, p. 178.
(49) Ibid, p. 177.
(50) The Gulf Guide (Dalal Al-Khaleej) - p. 1329 (See Abu Hakima. - p. 177).
(51) From a TV interview with the late Sheikh Yousuf Ben Eesa al-Qana'i, interviewed by Seif Marzouq al-Shamlan on Kuwait Television in 1966.
(52) The Gulf Guide - The Historical Section - G.G. Lorimer - p. 1554.
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(54) Kuwait in the Arabian Gulf Guide (in Arabic) - G.G. Lorimer - compiled and commented on by Khalid Saud Al-Zaid - p. 167. (op. cit.)
(55) The Postal Agencies in Eastern Arabia and the Gulf, Neil Donaldson - 1975 - p. 94.
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(57) The Postal Agencies in Eastern Arabia and the Gulf, Neil Donaldson - 1975 - p. 95. (op. cit.)
(58) Ibid, p. 95.
(59) The sources state that there is a letter with that postmark dated 1914 (See Donaldson - p. 102.
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Chapter Three

The Indian Postal Administration in Kuwait

– Opening the first official post office

– Quality of the seals used

– Quality of the postage stamps used

– The first attempt to specify postage stamps for Kuwait

– The period during which India postage stamps were specified for Kuwait (1923-1947)

– The early stages of postal services in Kuwait and their development

– Airmail

– The post and Graf Zeppelin airships

– The first Kuwaitis who worked for the post

– Post of Kuwait Oil Company (PKOC)

Chapter Three

The India Postal Administration in Kuwait

Opening the first official post office

On 21 January 1915, the first post office in Kuwait was officially opened. It was located in the same building with the British political commissioner. That building in al-Sharq suburb was rented by Colonel Kox in August 1904, and was later known as Dickson's house (currently Om Saud's House), named after the wife of the British political commissioner in Kuwait nominated in 1929.

When that office was opened, letters going abroad from Kuwait were stamped with a specific postmark for Kuwait, the same that was brought when the British Commissioner's office opened in 1904; it remained without use for eleven years. Thus, the postmark of the India post office in Boushahr was no longer used for letters to and from Kuwait. The postmark specified for Kuwait carried the French spelling (KOWEIT). A great quantity of India stamps were brought to be used for postage. Those stamps carried the picture of King George V of Britain and Emperor of India then. As well, stamps carrying the picture of his predecessor King Edward VII were brought for the same purpose.

That office was used by an employee in the building from 1904 until the official post operated in 1915 until 1929, when Colonel Dickson, who was nominated as the British commissioner in Kuwait, made use of the building as his residence. It now stands opposite the buildings of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Dickson rented another house, which consisted of four rooms, to be used as a post office

instead of the previous one. The landlord was Sheikha Um (mother of) Muhammad al-Sabah (Sheikh Mubarak al-Sabah's brother). The office continued to operate until 1941.

Quality of the seals used

Postal seals are used to register the name of the city from which the letter is sent, the date and time of dispatch, and the post office to which it is delivered. Postal seals were used in Kuwait for the first time in 1915, the same year the post office was opened. Postmarks were in Latin only. Kuwait was spelt "Koweit" as in French (refer to the picture for types of early postmarks). Similar seals were also used for telegrams.

In 1922 the English spelling "Kuwait" was adopted and has since been officially used. The officials in the British commissioner's office decided that this spelling was closer to the Arabic pronunciation of the word, and consequently correct. Different spellings were used such as KOETE, KOWEYT, KOWEIT and finally KUWAIT.

The building which housed the British commissioner in 1904, later Colonel Dickson's house and the center where the postal services in Kuwait started from 1904 to 1929 (June 1991 photograph)

The postmarks (seals) used in the first post office in Kuwait, with the French spelling "Koweit," used until 1922.

1- Postmarks spelt in French[1]

| 1- The postmark with the date only | 2- The postmark with the date and time | 3- Another type of postmark |

2- An envelope postmarked in French[2]

This letter was sent from Kuwait to India on 29 October 1916; it was handwritten by Colonel Hamilton, the British commissioner then.

3- Postmarks in English spelling

It is interesting to note that the India post office issued a post-mark in 1946 with the word "Kuwait," incorrectly spelt (KUWATT). It was the last postmark issued when the India post office was operating in Kuwait. That postmark continued to be used until 1948 when the British post assumed responsibility for the post in Kuwait.[3]

The last postmark issued when the India post department was in Kuwait. Notice the incorrect spelling (KUWATT)

British stamps postmarked with the wrong seal
(From the author's collection)

The India Post department also issued other postmarks, one of which was for telegrams, another for postage due, a third for censorship during World War II, and others for registered mail.

Telegram postmarks were issued in 1919 when the telegraph line between Mousul and Basrah was opened to the public after World War I, as it was originally for military purposes. Telegram fees at that time were paid by purchasing stamps which were stuck to the back of the telegram form and postmarked with the special telegram seal.[4]

1- The telegram postmark in 1919
(in French spelling)

2- The telegram postmark in English
spelling in the early 1920s
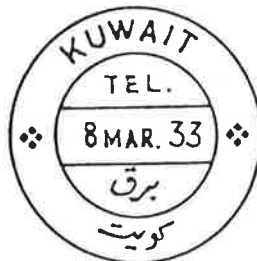
3- The telegram postmark used in the early 1930s with two Arabic words meaning Telegraph and Kuwait

Source: The Postal Agencies in Eastern Arabia and the Gulf, Neil Donaldson - 1975 - pp. 106, 118.

The India post office also used a special postmark for censorship during World War II. It was used for the first time in February 1942.

PASSED BY CENSOR
KUWAIT
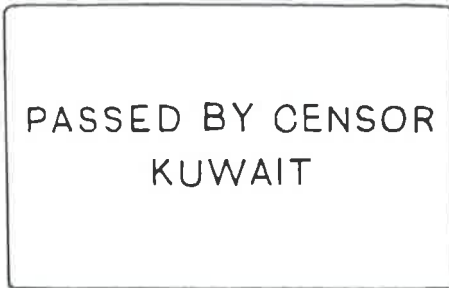
The special postmark for censorship

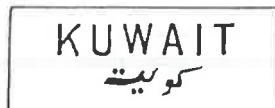**Source:** The Postal Agencies in Eastern Arabia and the Gulf, Neil Donaldson - 1975 - pp. 106 and118.

As for registered mail, a small sticker was used first in 1915. On this sticker was the letter "R" and the French spelling "Koweit" (No. 1). From 1923 to 1937, numbered cards without the name of Kuwait were used for registered mail; they were postmarked with a small seal bearing the word "Kuwait" in English and Arabic (No. 2). Then a bigger and clearer postmark was used from 1926 to 1941 (No. 3). A temporary postmark for registered mail was also used from 4 July to September 1941 (No. 4). It was temporarily prepared when two Iraqi employees stole the postmarks and left for Iraq.
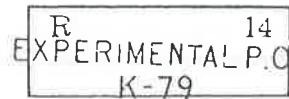
1- The first sticker used for registered mail

R
KOWEIT

KUWAIT
كويت

2- The postmark used in 1923

KUWAIT
كويت

3- The (developed) postmark used for registered mail

R   14
EXPERIMENTAL P.O
K-79

4- The temporary postmark used between 4 July and September 1941.

The postmarks used for registered mail between 1915 and 1941.

Source: The Postal Agencies in Eastern Arabia and the Gulf, Neil Donaldson - 1975 - pp. 106 and 118.

The India post office also used two special postmarks for due postage. One was used before 1941 with the word "Kuwait" in Arabic and English, and the second was used after 1941 with "Kuwait" in English only.

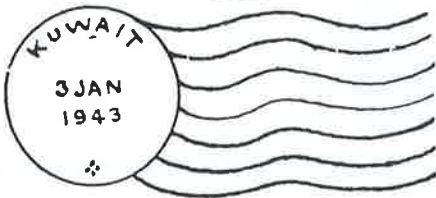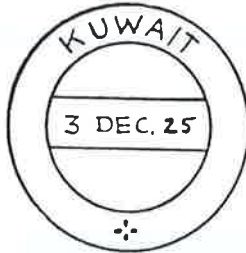Postmarks used for postage due
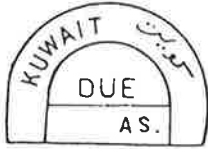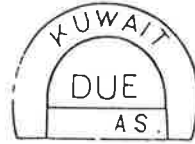
1- used before 1941   2- used from 1941
"AS" is the abbreviation of ANNAS, and the space before it is for writing the postage due.

Development of the postmarks used for outgoing mail in the India post office in Kuwait from 1915 to 1949
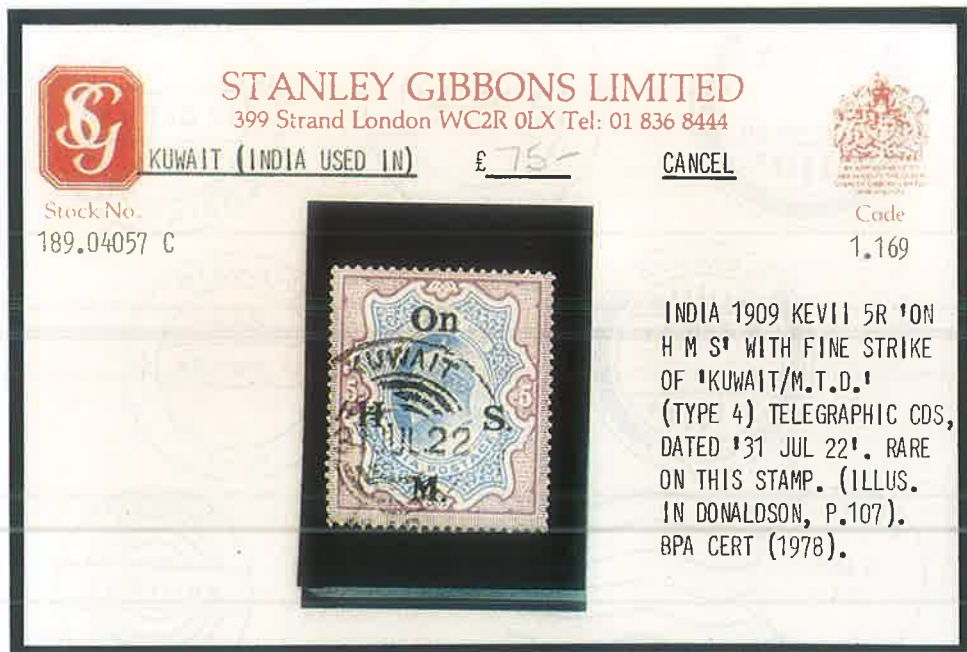

Source: Billig's Philatelic Handbook - Vol. 38 Asia, Part I: The Middle East, p. 69.

Quality of the postage stamps used

The use of postage stamps in Kuwait started with the appointment of the British commissioner for Kuwait in August 1904. The India stamps used bore the picture of King Edward VII and they were sold only to the employees of the office whose mail was sent to their countries via Boushahr in Iran. The office was supplied with a limited number of postage stamps for internal use. The situation continued as such until the official post office was opened on 21 January 1915.

The stamps used when the India post office in Kuwait was opened in 1915 and even before then, were the same stamps used in India. There was no difference but for the postmark used to stamp them – with the word KOWEIT – to show the country of origin and the date.

Some India postage stamps used in Kuwait
(Before printing the word 'Kuwait' on them)

STANLEY GIBBONS LIMITED
399 Strand London WC2R 0LX Tel: 01 836 8444

KUWAIT (INDIA USED IN)   £ 75-   CANCEL

Stock No.
189.04057 C

Code
1.169

INDIA 1909 KEVII 5R 'ON H M S' WITH FINE STRIKE OF 'KUWAIT/M.T.D.' (TYPE 4) TELEGRAPHIC CDS, DATED '31 JUL 22'. RARE ON THIS STAMP. (ILLUS. IN DONALDSON, P.107). BPA CERT (1978).

1- An India postage stamp used in Kuwait in 1922 (with the image of King Edward VII - issued in 1909 - in the value of five rupees (From the author's collection)

Most of the postage stamps used at that time in Kuwait were of the following denominations: half anna, one anna, one rupee, and five rupees. That was the currency used then.[5] Stamps worth ten rupees and fifteen rupees were used for Telegrams.[6] Telegraph service in Kuwait during World War I was for military purposes. It was extended to civilians in 1919.

2- India stamps used in Kuwait in 1922 (with the image of King George V - issued in 1911 (From the author's collection)

The first attempt to specify postage stamps for Kuwait

India stamps were used in Kuwait until 1923. In that year, it was decided to print "Kuwait" on the India stamps to be used in Kuwait. The world KOWEIT was printed on twelve groups of ordinary India stamps. The group contained twenty-seven postage stamps, of which fourteen were ordinary and thirteen were official. All of them had the

picture of King George V (denominations were from half anna to fifteen rupees).

That group, however, was rejected by the British due to the French spelling of the word Kuwait. They changed "KOWEIT" to "KUWAIT," which became the official spelling.

The collection of fourteen postage stamps with the French spelling 'KOWEIT' which was abolished and not used. (From the author's collection)

On the 1 April 1923 the first collection of postage stamps with "Kuwait" printed on India stamps was issued and circulated for public use. Thereby, Kuwait had special stamps bearing its name. The British company De La Rue, which was specialized in that type of business, undertook to print the word "Kuwait" on the stamps.

As for the twelve collections with the French spelling KOWEIT, they were rejected and not circulated. The British Royal Museum for

Post has four complete collections of those cancelled stamps. The other eight collections (the ordinary and the official) are circulated among philatelists, and they are sometimes for sale in well-known auctions. The last price the collection was sold for was 19,000 Sterling Pounds in 1990.[7]

The period during which India postage stamps were specified for Kuwait (1923 - 1947)

India stamps with "Kuwait" were used from 1923 to 1948,[8] after which British stamps were used instead. During that period five ordinary collections were issued, in addition to two collections for official use. The first collection, which consisted of fifteen stamps, was issued on 1 April 1923.

The first collection of stamps bearing the name of Kuwait, issued on 1 April 1923, in the denominations of half anna to ten rupees (From the author's collection)

In 1929 the second collection bearing the same pictures of the first one was issued. It included an additional stamp in the denomination of fifteen rupees. This collection can be distinguished form the first one by the watermarks on them. The former had a watermark of one big star, whereas the latter had more than one smaller star.[9]

However, it is not easy to see that mark; it must be viewed from the wrong side against a dark background under a spotlight.

A multi-star watermark
(The second collection)

A watermark with one star
(The first collection)

In February 1933 the third collection was issued. It was the airmail collection. It carried the picture of the plane Hercules. That collection comprised three stamps in the value of two, three and four annas. A supplementary air mail stamp in the value of six annas was issued in 1934.

The first airmail collection issued in Kuwait. (From the author's collection)

Those collections bore the image of King George V of Britain and Emperor of India at that time. Each denomination of those stamps had a different color and design to be easily distinguished form one another.

In 1936 the fourth collection was issued bearing the picture of King George VI who acceded to the throne on 11 December 1936 and became the emperor of India. The first India collection bearing his picture was issued in 1937. These stamps were also used in Kuwait after having the word "Kuwait" printed on them. That collection contained thirteen stamps of different denominations ranging between half anna and fifteen rupees. The images on the stamps were from the Indian environment, such as fields, an oxen-drawn carriage, a mail train, and a cargo trailer.

The last India collection of postage stamps used in Kuwait, issued in 1945 and bearing views from the Indian environment besides the picture of King George VI of Britain and Emperor of India. (From the author's collection)

The fifth and sixth collections of India stamps used in Kuwait were issued in 1945. They comprised 13 stamps each. They continued to be used until 1 April 1948.

It is worth mentioning that when King George V died on 5 January 1936, King Edward VIII succeeded him on 20 of the same month. However, he ruled only for a few months and then abdicated on 10 December 1936 due to family problems. No India stamps bearing his picture were circulated, although Britain issued some which were used for a short time there. In Kuwait, no such stamps were used since India did not print them.

There were two official collections issued during the period when India stamps were used. The first was issued between 1923 and 1924, comprising fourteen stamps in denominations from half anna to fifteen rupees. The second collection was issued between 1929 and 1933, and comprised eleven stamps in denominations from one anna to fifteen rupees. All those stamps had the word "Kuwait" printed on them, in addition to the word (service) which means "For official use." Those stamps were for the use of the British Residency.

The early stages of postal services in kuwait and their development

As mentioned above, the British Commissioner's office in Kuwait was considered as the unofficial post office, from which the incoming mail was delivered to the people, and the outgoing mail handed to one of the employees there. At first, the office sold stamps to employees only. The public used to buy stamps from India and Boushahr by means of their relatives and friends who went there. This unofficial service continued for about eleven years from 1904 to 1915, when the office was officially opened in January 1915.

In 1923, the brothers Norman and Gerlad Nirm started to operate overland mail between Baghdad and Haifa. The mail was transported in trucks across the desert to Haifa, and from there by train to Port

Said, Egypt, then to different countries. Kuwait benefited from this route, as the mail was transported from Kuwait to Basrah, and from there to Baghdad, then Haifa, and from there to its final destination. There were additional postage fees of three annas until 1929: A sticker on which was printed "OVERLAND MAIL" was put on the envelopes sent across this route. This route started from Baghdad across Falouga, al-Ramadi, Al-Rutbah, Damar, Damascus and Haifa. A lot of letters were sent to different countries from Kuwait across this route.[10] At first, the mail was exchanged between Kuwait and Basrah by means of a steam boat belonging to the British Residency in Kuwait. In 1927 the mail was transported by land between Kuwait and Basrah via al-Mitla'a and Safwan. Hamid al-Naqeeb was hired to transport the mail daily for a fee of 350 rupees per month.
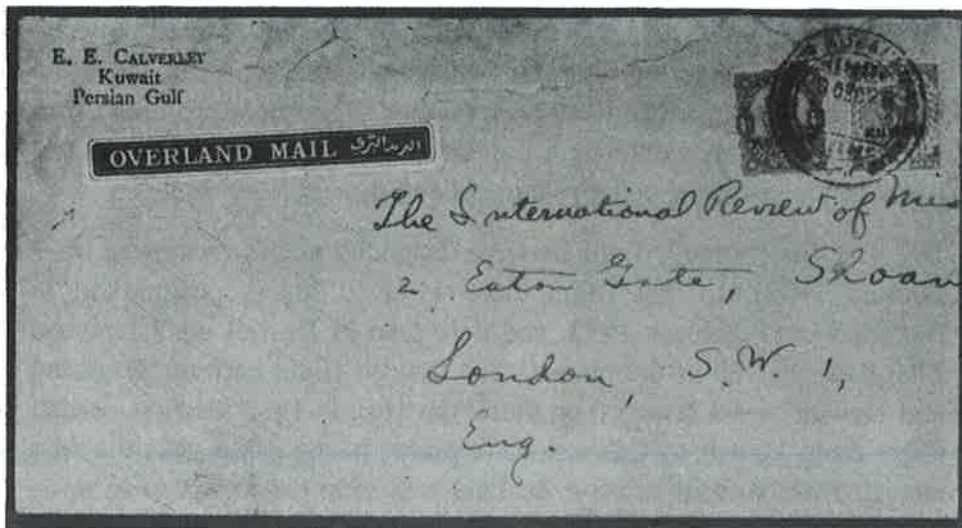
A letter posted from Kuwait to Basrah, Baghdad, Haifa and from there to London.
Source: Ibid - p. 114

Airmail

An airmail route between Baghdad and Cairo was opened when the British Royal Airlines started on 1 January 1927. Many letters were transported from Kuwait to different countries via this route. The

outgoing mail from Kuwait was postmarked in English (BASRAH - CAIRO / AIR MAIL). The mail was transported from Kuwait to Basrah and vice versa by means of a boat belonging to the office of The British political commissioner in Kuwait.[11] The British political commissioner in Kuwait (Colonel Moore at that time) had opened land route for transporting airmail from Kuwait to Basrah and vice versa; it passed by al-Mitla'a and Safwan, and from there to Baghdad, then to Cairo by the British Royal Airlines. From Cairo the mail was transported to other countries.[12]

It is noteworthy that Iraq at that time was under British rule, and Egypt was also occupied by Britain.

In April 1929 the British Royal Airlines opened an airmail route from Basrah to Karachi. In December 1932 Kuwait became one of the most important stations on that route, which transported mail between Karachi and London via Sharjah, Bahrain and Basrah. From 1933 the airmail to and from Kuwait was regular. The plane coming from Bagdad or Basrah would land outside Kuwait's wall at al-Shi'b (Al Birai'si) gate for mail delivery and collection.

The first airmail, flight between Baghdad and Kuwait was on 7 January 1993. On that flight there were 53 letters postmarked in Baghdad on 4 January 1933, and delivered in Kuwait on 7 January. That date, as well as the phrase, "the first air flight between Baghdad and Kuwait" were stamped on them. On 16 July 1933 the first airmail flight from kuwait to Calcutta took place. In the same year the first airmail from Kuwait to New Zealand was sent; the letters were post-marked in Kuwait on 31 March 1933 and delivered in New Zealand on 31 May, i.e. two months later.

The process of transporting airmail from Kuwait faced a number of problems, the most important of which was the weather. In cases of storms or rain, the location where the plane used to land was closed. As a result, the mail was transported by land to Basrah, and from there by plane to different destinations.[13]

By the end of 1937 the flights of the British Royal Airlines to Kuwait were discontinued, which forced the post office to resume mail transportation by land to Basrah, and from there by airmail to the required destinations.

Postage fees collected for airmail form Kuwait to India and Britain from 1932 to 1939 increased from seven annas to sixteen and twenty annas. Postage fees for registered mail were three annas.[14]

During World War II, the surface mail between Kuwait and Basrah stopped, due to the revolution of Rasheed Aali al-Kilani in Iraq in 1941. That forced the India post office in Kuwait to send the mail to Bahrain to be delivered to the other countries.[15] As for the mail sent by the Europeans in Kuwait, the British political commissioner in Kuwait used to collect it and send it by diplomatic pouch to London, where it was posted to the required destinations. Letters at that time were subject to censorship. A sticker had to be put on them, or they had to be postmarked by the censorship center in Bahrain, Bombay or Karachi. Most of the letters at that time had a combination of India stamps without the word "Kuwait" printed on them, besides the stamps specified for Kuwait, due to the lack of such stamps at that time. As for the Kuwait-Basrah mail route, it was re-opened in the beginning of 1942.

It is worth mentioning here that the post office moved in early May 1941 to the house of Jashanmal, an Indian family, for two weeks or so. That house was located behind their shop in the north of al-Safat square. In the end of May 1941 the post office moved to the vicinity of the Cables and Wireless Ltd., which was the agent of the India post office in Kuwait for some time. The office was located in the south of al-Safat square (near the current Municipality building). In February 1942 the post office moved to the first floor of the booth located at the entrance of the money exchange market, which was built by Sheikh Mubarak al-Sabah in the early days of his rule. The building had an outside staircase which the employees and the public used to reach the post office. As of this writing, the building is still there. It is one of

Letters issued from Kuwait with India stamps on them. (Notice the absence of the word KUWAIT. However, the Kuwaiti postmark indicated its being issued from Kuwait. Notice the dates 25/11/1941 and 10/12/1942. (From the author's collection)

Two envelopes with a number of India stamps, some of which were specified for Kuwait and two of which were not. The first envelope was sent to Beirut, whereas the lower to New York. The two letters were sent from Kuwait in the early 1940s.

(From the author's collection)

Samples of the letters posted from Kuwait to the Kuwaiti merchants in India during the 1940s. Letters were delivered to them by means of the Kuwaiti permanent offices in Bombay and other Indian cities. (From the author's collection)

Other samples of envelopes sent from Kuwait to India in the early 1940s. On them are the India postage stamps without the word KUWAIT printed on them, due to the lack of postage stamps specified for Kuwait during World War II. (From the author's collection)

Kuwait's important ancient buildings that deserves preservation and maintenance.

The post and Graf Zeppelin's airships

The name Zeppelin has been correlated with flight since the beginning of this century. Zeppelin was a German officer who was born in Baden in 1838. He was the first to make airships. He operated and flew the first airship in Saint Paul in the American state of Minnesota, when he was an officer in the Union army during the American Civil war (1861-1865). He retired in 1891 to devote himself to making heavy airships. The first aircraft of that kind took off on 2 July 1900 from the German city Friedrichshafen. It was named after him, and was called "LZ-1." These airships played an important role in World War I. They also achieved great success in the field of commercial transportation across the Atlantic ocean. Different types of these airships were made, the most famous of which was Graf Zeppelin in 1928 and Hindenburg which took off for the first time in 1936. Graf Zeppelin was the first airship to fly across the ocean for air services. That airship flew 590 times – of which 144 flights were across the ocean – before it stopped in 1937. It covered one million miles.[16]

The Zeppelin transported mail for the first time in August 1931 and made more flights in September and October. In 1932 the same airship made nine flights across the Atlantic Ocean, during which it transported the mail from Friederichshafen in Germany to Riceef in Brazil. The mail was first transported from the different countries of Europe to that city in Germany, and from there it was flown to South America. This continued for several years until 1937, when Hindenburg airship engulfed in flames as it approached its moorings at Lakehurst, New Jersey, on 6 May 1937.[17]

Letters transported on Zeppelin's airships are considered rare and highly valued by philatelists. Envelopes postmarked with Zeppelin's seal were sent from different countries via that route. A number of those letters were from Arab countries, including Kuwait.
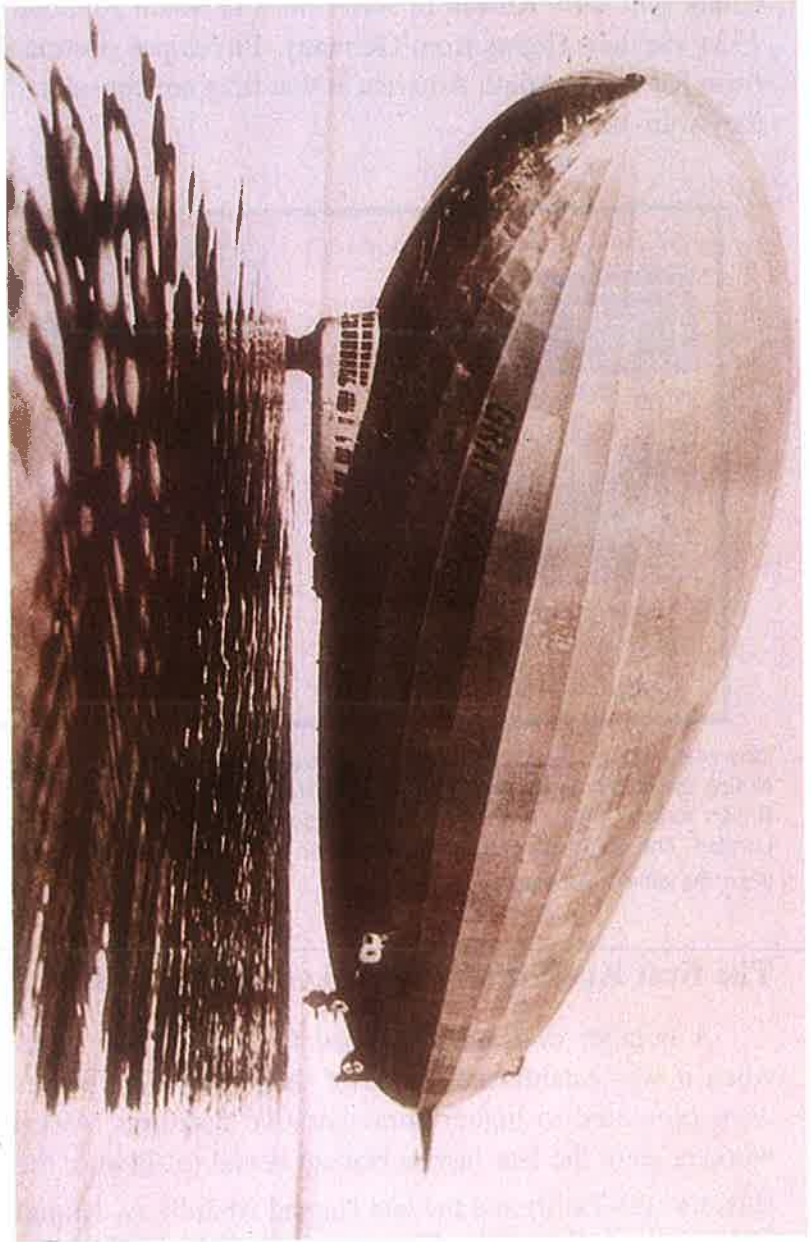
Picture of the airship Graf Zeppelin

It is known that Graf Zeppelin's airships transported a number of letters sent from Kuwait to some cities in South America in 1933 and 1934 via their flights from Germany. Envelopes postmarked and sent from Kuwait to South America at that time are considered very rare as they were very few.

One of the letters posted from Kuwait to Brazil in July 1933 via Zeppelin from Berlin. Notice the sticker in the upper left corner. Notice also the postmark of London on the British stamp, which indicates that the letter was sent from Germany to Brazil via London. The postmark of Berlin can be seen on the envelope as well.
(From the author's collection)

The first Kuwaitis who worked for the post

A number of Kuwaitis joined the staff of the India post office when it was established. Some of them started as postmen and they were promoted to higher administrative positions. Among those old workers were the late Jassim Hassan Abdal (al-Bosta), the late Khalaf Hussein (al-Tailji) and the late Hamad Abdulla Al-Humaidi (Al-Tail). They joined the post office between 1915 and 1919. It is worth mentioning that the three of them acquires their surnames from their

Two letters posted in October 1934 from Kuwait to Brazil on the zeppelin.

(From the author's collection)

jobs. Kuwait at that time was small with few inhabitants and most Kuwaitis knew one another and many of them were named after their professions. The words Al-Tailji and Al-Tail were derived from "telegram" and al-Bosta from "post".

The number of employees in the office in 1919 was five to six; there was one in charge of the office, one clerk, one stamp salesman, and two postmen (distributors) who were Khalaf al-Telegy and Jassim al-Bosta.

Office hours were from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. and from 12 noon to 5 p.m. Mail delivery was completed daily. In the early 1920s, postmen had special blue uniforms with the words "Post and Telegraphy" written on them. They were also supplied with a bicycle and a hat. The two postmen cooperated and exchanged mail and telegram delivery. Most letters came from Bombay and Basrah, whereas telegrams came from everywhere. There were about thirty telegrams daily, most of which were for the merchants, and some of which were for the consul and members of the ruling dynasty. A receipt had to be signed on telegram delivery. Khalaf Al-Tailji used to read the telegrams for the persons concerned, as most of them did not know English. Khalaf had learned English during his work with his Indian colleagues.

At first, the postman and the telegram distributor did their job on foot. It was a tiring work, particularly in summer. As well, cold winter and rains caused them a lot of problems. Therefore, the post office supplied them with bicycles, a blue uniform and a hat to protect them from the sun. They were known among the people, as they used to cover fifteen to twenty kilometers daily. However, the hat caused them some problems with the children in particular, who never saw anybody wearing a hat before. They would run after the postman on his bicycle clapping their hands and singing folk songs.

Among the early Kuwaitis who worked for the post office was Hamad Abd-Allah Al-Humaidi, whose job was to fix the telegraph posts and wires extending from Kuwait to Basrah.

Khalaf Hussein Al-Tailji , the first
Kuwaiti to work for the post office

Jassim Hassan Abdal (al-Bosta)

Hamad Abd-Allah Al-Humaidi, one
of the early Kuwaitis who worked
for the India post office in Kuwait
repairing telegraph posts.

Children chasing a postman on his bicycle, clapping their hands and singing.

Post of Kuwait Oil Company (KOC)

In the 1940s the main office of Kuwait Oil Company was located in Kuwait City behind the current general post office on Fahad al-Salem street. The other offices of the company were located across Kuwait (Shuwaikh, Ahmadi, Al-Magwa'a, Burqan, Fahaheel, etc.). Administrative and financial offices, besides a special division for the post, were within the head office in the city. The postal division had a number of employees who were responsible for the company's employees' official mail delivery.

Kuwait Oil Company started to run its own post office in 1946, when its production and exportation of oil expanded. Consequently, the number of employees increased and its offices and centers spread all over Kuwait. The company's post office was separate from the India post office which managed the postal affairs in Kuwait and represented the British government. The company's post office moved to Ahmadi in the end of the 1940s. On 1 May 1950 the office followed the British post office which took responsibility of postal affairs in Kuwait on 1 April 1948. However, it continued to be run by the KOC on behalf of the British post. A special postmark for Ahmadi post office was made and used on 2 August 1950. The company continued to run its post office even after 1959 when the Kuwaiti post department took over, and until 30 April 1965 when the Ministry of Post, Telegraph and Telephone took over the responsibility.[18]
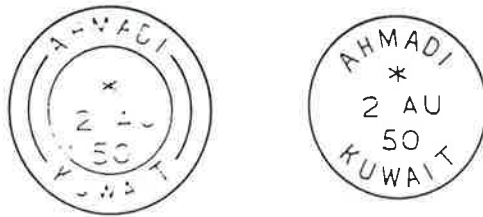
The postmark of al-Ahmadi Post Office, which was run by the KOC

On the first of August 1953, a new post office was opened at al-Ahmadi Oil Terminal. It followed the Ahmadi Post Office, and was also run and supervised by the KOC on behalf of the British post office. That office continued to operate until 17 December 1961, when it was closed after the opening of a nearby post office in al-Fahaheel following the Kuwaiti post department. A special postmark was also made for this office, but it was used for registered mail and parcels only.[19]

The postmark of al-Ahmadi Oil Terminal post office

Most of the employees at the post office of the company were Indians. Some Kuwaitis worked there as well. Among those Kuwaitis were Dawood Sulayman al-Jassim and Khalil Isma'il al-Saleh. The office had two main divisions: sorting and delivery. Its responsibility was restricted to running the postal affairs of the company and its employees. Letters sent to the company from America and Britain – whether by airmail or surface mail, – were put in special bags carrying the name of the company and sealed with wax. Those bags were delivered to the main office in Kuwait. As for the outgoing mail, it was collected and given to the company's post office, which in turn gave to the India post office to be posted abroad. The company's office was provided with all the required facilities. Besides, its operation was efficient, perfect and speedy.

Incoming mail from other countries to the company went the company's office via the India post office located at the booth.

Khalil Isma'il, one of the first Kuwaitis who worked for the KOC post office in 1946. He was also one of the first employees who worked for the Kuwaiti post office when it opened in 1958.

Dawood Sulaiyman al-Jassim who worked for the KOC post office in 1946.

The KOC post office continued to operate until the end of the 1940s. When the company's work expanded, its main office moved from Kuwait to al-Ahmadi to be close to the company's main activities, i.e., oil extraction, distillation, and exportation. The office was developed and expanded. The number of post office boxes increased. Khalil Isma'il al-Saleh was promoted to be the chief postman and two more postmen were appointed to assist him. When the company's post office moved to al-Ahmadi, home delivery service started.

References of Chapter Three

(1) The Postal Agencies in Eastern Arabia and the Gulf, Neil Donaldson - 1975 p. 104.

(2) Source: Stanely Gibbons Stamp Catalouge 1992 - p. 569.

(3) The Postal Agencies in Eastern Arabia and the Gulf, Neil Donaldson - 1975 p. 133.

(4) Ibid. p. 105

(5) Kuwait used the Indian currency from about the middle of the nineteenth century. That continued until before independence, when the Kuwaiti dinar was circulated in 1961. Before the British influence, Kuwait used various currencies from Austria, Oman, Iran and Turkey, among others. All those currencies were accepted as there was no local currency. Besides, Kuwait was an important center for trade in the Gulf, and most of the Kuwaitis traded in and traveled to neighboring countries.

(6) Stanley Gibbons Stamp Catalogue - Part I "British Commonwealth" 1992 Edition - p. 5689.

(7) Stanley Gibbons Stamp Catalogue - Commonwealth 1992.

(8) The Pakistani Post department assumed responsibility for postal services in Kuwait for one year (1947-1948). It continued to use the Indian stamps until the British post department came in April 1948 and started using the British stamps specified for Kuwait.

(9) In fact, this collection was issued on a number of stages between 1929 and 1937.

(10) The Postal Agencies in Eastern Arabia and the Gulf, Neil Donaldson - 1975 p. 115.

(11) The Postal Agencies in Eastern Arabia and the Gulf, Neil Donaldson - 1975 p. 115.

(12) Ibid - p. 125.

(13) Ibid - p. 119.

(14) Ibid - p. 122.

(15) During that period the postmark of Bahrain was put on the outgoing mail from Kuwait to India, as it passed by it.

(16) Stamp Magazine (A United Newspaper Publication) Volume 58 - No. 10 - London, UK October 1992, p. 111.

(17) The Postal Agencies in Eastern Arabia and the Gulf, Neil Donaldson - 1975 p. 122.

(18) The Postal Agencies in Eastern Arabia and the Gulf, Neil Donaldson - 1975 p. 175.

(19) Ibid - p. 175.

Chapter Four

The British Postal Administration in Kuwait
(1948 - 1958)

- Introduction: The transition period
- A brief historical review of the activities and work of the British Post Office in Kuwait
- Workers in the British Post Office in Kuwait
- The beginning of branch openings for the post
- The postal issuances during the period of the British Post
- The period of lack of stamps specified for the use in Kuwait
- The issuance of aerogramme for use in Kuwait
- Kuwaitis who worked in the British post office
- Memories of some of the first Kuwaiti employees in the British post office
- The mail of the British forces in Kuwait in 1961

Chapter Four

The British Postal Administration in Kuwait (1948 - 1958)

Introduction: The transition period

Before the independence of India, the India post office followed the mail district of the city of Karachi which was affiliated to Pakistan after its independence and separation from India in August 1947. Therefore the supervision of the mail district of Karachi over the Kuwaiti mail continued and Pakistan became responsible for the post office that used to belong to India, as of 10 November 1947. The use of India stamps printed with the word "Kuwait' continued. The Pakistan mail continued its administration of the mail in Kuwait until 1 April 1948, which was when the British assumed responsibility. With the beginning of the British mail handling the administration of the Kuwaiti mail, the use of British stamps specifically made for use in Kuwait was started. The value of the stamps was added in India currency below the word "Kuwait" in English because eventhough value of British stamps was printed on them in British currency, Kuwait was still using the India currency.

A brief historical review of the activities and work of the British Post Office in Kuwait

When the British took over the administration of postal services in Kuwait, the location of the post office was in a booth at the entrance of the money-exchange market (presently in Mubarakiya

area), and there were no branches. The number of employees did not exceed about fifteen. It is to be mentioned that at the top of the entrance of the post office was a small sign, painted in white, which had the phrase "Dak Khana" printed on it. That meant "post office" in urdu, one of the main languages in India. There was a small post box in front of the desk close to the stairs that led to the post office on the first floor of the building. Citizens came to the first floor to buy stamps and stick them on the letters which were placed in the box. The letters were collected from the box by the end of the day or when the box was full, and put in a special white bag which was closed and weighed before sending it to Basrah on its way to other countries. The mail bags were sent with the first car heading to Basrah where the mail was sorted and sent to the different countries. Letters going to the east were sent from Basrah to Bombay while those to the west were sent to Baghdad. Basrah was chosen because it was the closest big city to Kuwait which had an office that followed the British mail and was prepared with the capabilities and facilities necessary for the various postal services required in a manner better than Kuwait. Basrah was also chosen due to its being a chief location for the British post office in the area, especially after the submission of Iraq to Britain after World War I, and the supervision of Iraqi postal services to Britain since 1914.[1]

The number of cars heading to Basra from Kuwait in the forties was very small. One car, a "Morris" (box) type, used to leave every three or four days to carry passengers. The number of letters was very scanty due to the small population and the absence of large foreign communities, in addition to the fact that trading with other countries was still very limited.

As for the incoming letters, they arrived in a big bag sealed with lead inside of which was another smaller bag with the registered mail which was also sealed with lead. The bag was delivered to the office in return for a receipt; the mail was sorted and distributed the same day.

Workers in the British Post Office in Kuwait

At the end of the forties, the post office staff included a few Indians and Pakistanis in addition to a few Kuwaitis who used to work primarily in distribution. A Pakistani named Raja Mohammed Khan, who came to Kuwait in 1946 as a telegraph clerk, was assigned responsibility for the office. This was during the transition period when the Pakistani mail was responsible between the periods of India and that of the British.

The British mail administration used to pay great attention to its offices abroad, including its Gulf offices which included that in Kuwait. Bahrain represented the major location for the British post office in the area. There, the stamps, the envelopes specific for registered mail and other stationery supplies were sent to other branches. The salaries for the employees were sent from Bahrain. The money reached the post office in Kuwait in a bag specially sent for the mail with a list of the salaries. It was then distributed by the manager according to the list approved by the Bahrain post office. Most of the mail employees – especially in the second half of the fifties – worked extra hours as a result of the revival in economic and commercial activities in Kuwait and an increase in the number of letters exchanged between it and other countries due to the increase in the number of foreigners working in Kuwait. The major office in Bahrain was under the management and supervision of a manager responsible for all the branches in the Gulf area. The manager used to visit those branches, including that of Kuwait, twice a year to check the working circumstances and closely watch how the work was carried on the problems it faced. The manager of the British post office in the Gulf, in the period between the end of the forties to the middle of the fifties, was an Irishman called Lushmer. He used to visit the post office in Kuwait with his assistance, Lee, where they stayed for about a week to observe the status in the office and to meet with the supervisors to find out their needs and suggestions, and to solve any problems, if any.

The beginning of branch openings for the post

The location of the British-run post office was in the Sheikh Mubarak al-Sabah's booth at the entrance of the money exchange market. The number of workers was about ten to fifteen, mainly Pakistanis, Irish, and Indians. The British post remained in this place until it was transferred to the customs area on the coast on February 1952. The work continued there until 14 February 1962, after which it was closed permanently.[2] From 1950 on, the British mail expanded by opening branches in some areas. On 1 May 1950, a post office in al-Ahmadi city was opened and officially followed the British mail. This office worked unofficially since 1946 for the service of Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) employees, and was run by the same company, offering the various postal services for its employees. The company continued to manage al-Ahmadi post office on behalf of the British post office until the Kuwaiti management took over in 1959; however, it asked the Kuwait Oil Company to continue the management of the office. On 30 April 1965, the Ministry of Mail, Telegraph and Telephone assumed responsibility for this office.[3]

On the 1 August 1953, a second post office was opened at al-Ahmadi Oil Terminal which was also managed by the Kuwait Oil Company. On December 1961, the office was closed by the Kuwaiti Ministry of Mail.[4] The last two offices opened during the period of British supervision were the post office of Mubarakiya Street and that of Jewan. The former was opened on 7 April, while the latter was on 14 April 1954. Hence, by the time the Kuwaiti postal management took over, there were five working post offices: the Customs area, al-Ahmadi city, al-Ahmadi Oil Terminal, Mubarakiya, and al-Jewan.

The British post office prepared postmarks for every branch opened. The first British postmark for that office was used at the end of 1948, seven months after taking over the responsibility from the Pakistani mail. The India postmarks were used during that period.

Types of postmarks of the British post office in Kuwait (The head post office)
Source: The Postal Agencies in Eastern Arabia and the Gulf, Neil Donaldson - p. 166.

Different postmarks were prepared for different branches such as al-Ahmadi and others.

The postal issuance during the period of the British Post

The first collection of British stamps used in Kuwait bore the picture of King George VI and the emblem of the United Kingdom. That collection included eleven stamps, with values from a half anna to ten rupees. They were issued on 1 April 1948.

Some of the postmarks used by the British mail in the different areas of Kuwait
Source: The Postal Agencies in Eastern Arabia and the Gulf, Neil Donaldson - pp. 160 - 176.

Ten other collections of British stamps were prepared for use in Kuwait during the period of the British supervision of postal services in Kuwait. Among them were regular collections and memorial ones. The latter included the collection of the silver anniversary of the royal marriage in 1948, and the Olympics collection, also in 1948. The

The first collection of British stamps issued for use in Kuwait, with the picture of King George VI and the emblem of the United Kingdom. (From the author's collection)

collection of the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the Universal Postal Union was issued in 1949. Those memorial collections were issued during the reign of King George VI which extended until 6 February 1952.

The collection of the 25th anniversary of the royal marriage ((King George VI and Queen Elizabeth), issued on 26 April 1948. (From the author's collection)

1948

1949

1950-51

Watermarked Crown and Large G VI R
1951

Other collections issued during the reign of King George VI for use in Kuwait. They included the collection of the Olympic games (1948), and the 75th anniversary of establishing the Universal Postal Union (1949). (From the author's collection)

A few British collections prepared for use in Kuwait during the reign of Queen Elizabeth II, among which is the collection issued on the occasion of the coronation of Elizabeth II, two regular collections, and a collection of British castles.

In 1950 the last collection carrying the picture of King George VI was issued. It consisted of nine stamps. During the reign of Queen Elizabeth II, which started in February 1952, five collections were issued which had the picture of the new Queen and word "Kuwait" printed on it, in addition to the value in India currency. Four of those collections were regular and one was memorial; they were issued on 3 June 1953, on the occasion of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II.

It is to be noted that the first Queen Elizabeth collection was in old India currency which divided the rupee into several divisions.[5]

The last British collection issued for use in Kuwait and representing naya paisa values.
(From the author's collection)

A picture of two envelopes used in Kuwait bearing stamps of the silver jubilee of the British Scouts prepared for use in other Gulf countries. Note the difference between stamps prepared for use in Kuwait and those for other Gulf countries (in the lower envelope): those for use in Kuwait had the world "Kuwait" printed in addition to the value, whereas the others had the value only. (From the author's collection)

The last collection, which was issued between 1957 and 1958, was in the new Indian value which made possible the division of the rupee into 100 units, each called the naya paisa.

In 1957 a collection consisting of three stamps was prepared for the occasion of the silver jubilee of the British Scouts, for use in the Arabian Gulf countries. The names of those countries were printed on them. Those stamps were prepared for Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Dubai and Kuwait. However, the stamps for Kuwait were withdrawn and not used because of the disturbed political conditions that prevailed in the region after the tripartite attack on Egypt in 1956. Those stamps were used in Kuwait between 10 August 1957 and 27 March 1958. They are considered very rare as very few of them were used in Kuwait.[6]

The period of lack of stamps specified for use in Kuwait

The period of British mail supervision witnessed a lack of stamps specified for use in Kuwait several times, which necessitated the selling of alternative stamps by the office. The alternative stamps were obtained from Bahrain; they were British stamps specified for use in other Gulf countries such as Oman, Qatar, and Dubai. stamps specified for those countries had only the value in India currency printed on them. This recurred many times in the early fifties.

The issuance of aerogrammes for use in Kuwait

The British mail department issued several aerogrammes in Kuwait at the end of the forties and fifties. They were the aerogrammes used in Britain after having the word "Kuwait," and the value in English currency printed on them. The first aerogrammes bore the picture of King George VI, whereas the later ones bore that of Queen Elizabeth II. The value printed on them was in India currency (anna). One aerogrammes cost six annas. After changing the India currency from the anna to the naya paisa (NP), the value was printed in the new India currency of forty NP.

-132-

The aerogramme issued in the forties for use in Kuwait picturing King George VI.
(From the author's collection)

The aerogramme issued in 1953 for use in Kuwait on the occasion of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. (From the author's collection)

An aerogramme issued in 1953 for use in Kuwait, printed with the value of six annas.
(From the author's collection)

An aerogramme issued after Indian currency was changed from the anna to the naya
paisa. The value printed on the aerogramme is in the new currency (40 NP)
(From the author's collection)

Kuwaitis who worked in the British post office

A considerable number of Kuwaitis worked in the British post office in Kuwait since its establishment in April 1948. Some of them used to work in the India office before that time, and transferred to the British mail when the latter assumed responsibility. The total number of employees in the British post office one year after its establishment was about fifteen, seven of whom were Kuwaitis who worked to seal, sort, and deliver mail. Kuwait was divided into four postal areas during the period of the India post office to facilitate delivery. That division continued when the British assumed responsibility. Later on, those areas were expanded.

Memories of some of the first Kuwaiti employees in the British post office

The number of Kuwaiti employees who worked in the British post office in Kuwait, sometimes reached more than eight. The office highly depended upon them due to their knowledge of the country and the different places in it, the names and addresses of the merchants and the Kuwaiti families and other important information concerning the mail.

One of the first Kuwaitis who worked in the British post office, Abdul-Samad al-Mahmeed, has related many stories, events and memories of that important period that witnessed financial, social and political developments due to the discovery of oil and the increase in the country's income which led to prosperity in all fields. He relates that when he was appointed in the sealing department, all mail work was manual. In the sealing department, he collected the letters from the mail box which was fixed to the wall close to the stairs that led to the post office and he piled the letters on a rectangular rubber mat placed on the floor. He would seal the letters and pass them to another employee who would carry them to the sorting department.

A photograph taken in 1949 of the employees of the British post office in Kuwait at its location in the booth located at the entrance of the money exchange market. Amongst them can be seen a considerable number of Kuwaiti youths.

Source of the photograph: Ali Abbas Khaja

The employees of the British post office in Kuwait in 1949 as they stand on the stairs of the booth.

Source of the photograph: The Postal Agencies in Eastern Arabia and the Gulf, Neil Donaldson - p. 164.
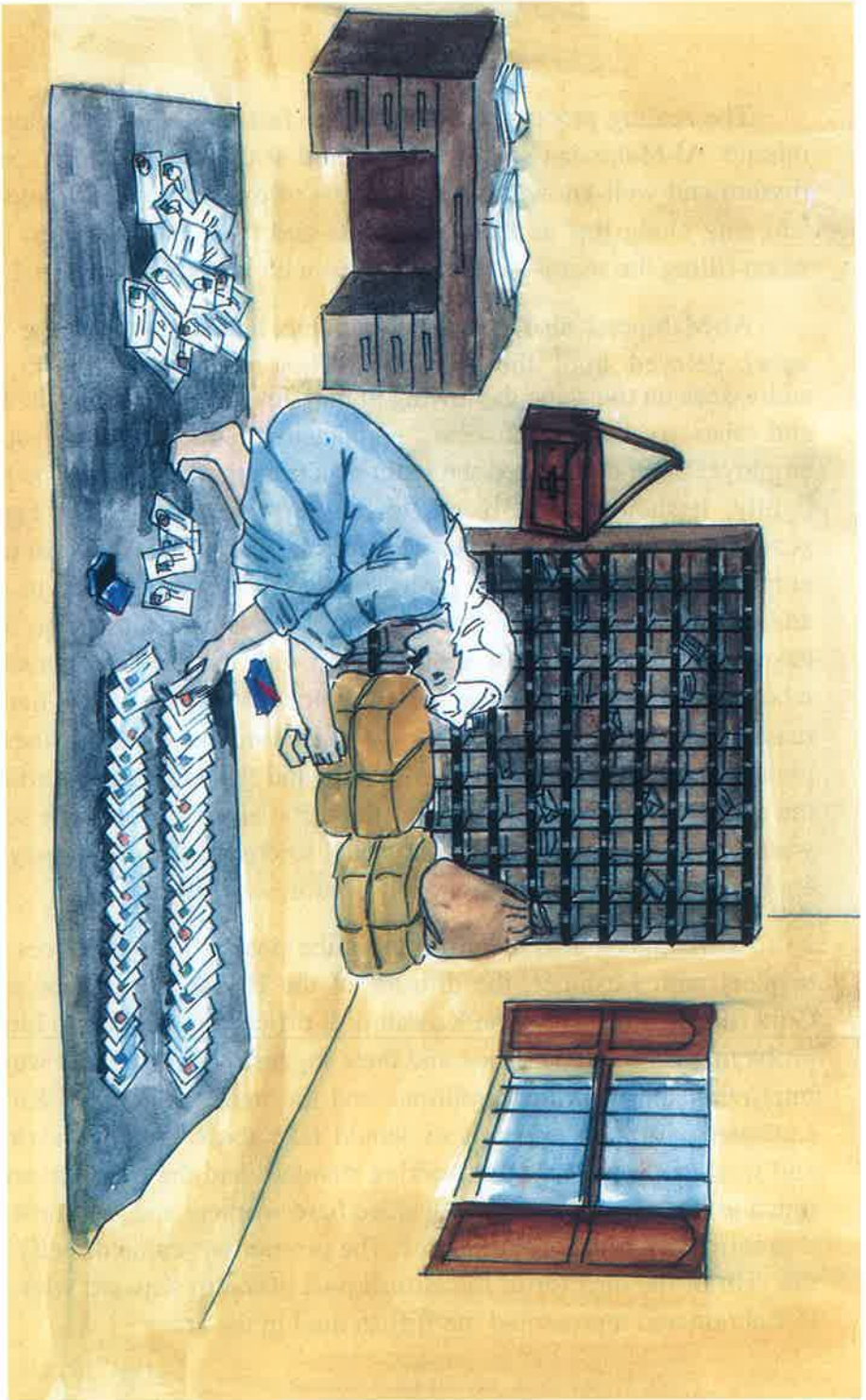
An employee of the British Post Office in Kuwait while sealing the outgoing letters.

The sealing process was done at the fast rate of 40-50 letters per minute. Al-Mahmeed said that he should seal the letters to a specific rhythm and well-known music. The rest of the employees would clap and sing along just as the shipwrights and their caulkers used to do when filling the seams or joints of ships with waterproof material.

Al-Mahmeed also mentions that the letters at that time were never delayed until the next day. They were delivered to their addressees on the same day owing to the importance given to the letter and also to the seriousness, competence and reliability of the employees. He considered the letter as a trust that should not be taken lightly; it should be delivered to the person concerned by hand if possible so that it would not reach irresponsible hands. The post office employees used to go to great lengths to deliver letters to their addressees by any means, even if it involved asking those who might have some relationship or acquaintance with the required person, or who carried the same or a similar name. When they lost hope in reaching the addressee, the address was crossed out with two lines, the phrase "Unknown Address" was written and the letter was returned to the country from which it came. If the name and address of the sender were not written, the letter was opened to ensure that no money was enclosed, then it was sent to the incinerator.

Al-Mahmeed also mentioned that the post office employees used to meet with Lushmer, the director of the British post office in the Gulf, during his visit to the Kuwait post office, and explain to him the problems faced by the office and their suggestions as regards ways of improving the working conditions and the mail facilities in Kuwait. Lushmer and other supervisors would take these opinions seriously and work on improving the working standard and the mail services as much as possible. They also rewarded hard workers and recommended promotions and increased salaries. The promotions came directly after the visit of the director of the British post office to Kuwait, who lived in Bahrain and represented the British mail in the area.

Al-Mahmeed described the working conditions in the mail during that period as disciplined, orderly, and serious, and that the employees' work was appreciated. Each and every employee worked faithfully and seriously and carried out his work efficiently which led to regulation of the work and comfort of the employees on one hand, and winning of the citizens' trust and confidence on the other hand. The citizens were always confident that what they received from abroad – be it a letter, a package or a valuable item – was in the safe hands of those careful to deliver it to them as soon as possible. He added that the post office employee used to work in any department he was asked to work in. He was filled with enthusiasm and will to give. Everyone used to work extra hours if asked to. The office policy was based on giving responsibility and leadership to the one who was capable of it. The responsibility in any department was not given to anyone until he was trained, prepared and qualified, which ensured that he was capable of carrying the responsibility handed to him and completing the work required of him. In addition, promotions and leading positions as well as increases in salaries were only given to those who deserved them and according to their achievements and seriousness at work and distinguished performance. Therefore, everyone worked comfortably and confidently, placing in considera-tion all those points that did not involve favoritism and personal rela-tions.

Al-Mahmeed also mentioned that when the amount of work increased greatly in the beginning of the fifties, the employees worked continuously, day and night, without boredom. As well, he mentioned that by the end of 1951, the British mail department in Kuwait decided to move to another location due to the increasing work. After a long search, they decided to move to one of the wooden structures (known as shabrah) in the customs area. That was in February 1952.

After moving to the new location, the offices belonging to each department were expanded, and the place was prepared with different facilities and equipment to meet the requirements of the massive

expansion in communications between Kuwait and other countries. A place was specified for registered mail and another for regular mail, and pigeon-holes were assigned for the outgoing letters for each country. A big bag was hung behind each sector to catch the mail from the box. Before sending the mail bag, it was weighed and a special card with the name of the country and the weight stated was stuck on it. In order to facilitate the sorting process, bamboo carts with wheels brought from London were used to empty the letters prior to sorting them. In addition, a Morris truck was bought to transport the mail to the airport.

After a while, 250 post office boxes imported from Britain were installed. At the beginning, there wasn't a great demand for those boxes. Merchants and other citizens were urged to rent post boxes, but they were not enthusiastic to the idea especially that the postman delivered their letters daily without delay and without any charges. In addition, the number of incoming letters was not great at that time. When the postman suggested that they rent boxes, the merchants would reply that they felt optimistic when they saw him every day and that they wished he would bring them the letters. They would say, "As long as he is there, there is no need to rent post boxes." And so most of the boxes remained unrented in the first year, while the postmen went daily to the markets to deliver the letters. Circumstances, however, changed later on due to increase both in the commercial activity and in the number of incoming letters. Al-Mahmeed remembered that the four postmen used to carry on with their work day and night, especially after market expansion and an increase in the number of commercial offices, which received hundreds of letters and parcels daily. That led to their exhaustion, since they carried the letters in large bags and pulled them in the markets to the fronts of the shops for delivery. This forced them to ask the British post office to increase the number of postmen or find some other solution. The British post office, at one time, agreed to hire porters to carry the mail and accompany the postmen. The porters' salaries were paid by the British post

office which paid one rupee per day for the porter in return for carrying the mail in his basket. Some time later, the office provided the four postmen with bicycles. The bicycles were large and green with a big basket to put the mail bags in. That was in 1955. The postmen at that time were Abdul-Samad al-Mahmeed, Ali Abbas Khaja, Hussein Ali Hussein, and Ghuloum Mohammed Hussein Khaja. In the same year a special uniform for postmen was distributed, consisting of khaki pants, a shirt, a head cloth and a headband. The mail logo was of small brass piece with the three-letter acronym "GPO" which stood for "General Post Office;" it was pinned to the headband. The postman used to wear that uniform when delivering the mail.

The provision of the postmen with bicycles and uniforms took place after the mail services expanded to the areas far away from the city, such as al-Sharq and Dasman where some stores and shops were opened.

With the unprecedented expansion of incoming mail, and as a result of the revival of the financial circumstances in the country in the second half of the fifties, the external correspondence became amongst the merchants' most important daily chores. They used to send their representatives every day to the post office to buy stamps, register letters, and so forth. This led to the importance of renting mail boxes to receive the registered letters and continuously follow up their external communications with the outside world. The result was a sudden rise in the number of merchants willing to rent post boxes. Al-Mahmeed related that the boxes which were at first empty, were rented at a very fast rate and the situation became the reverse of what it was a short while before. Merchants would come to rent post boxes but could not get them because they became insufficient which forced the British post office to get 250 more. But those new boxes were instantly rented which forced the post office to install 200 more locally made boxes to meet the increasing demand for them.

The porter with his basket (Hammali Bou Jella) carrying the letters and walking behind the postman who delivered them to the shops in the old market.

A picture of the British mail logo worn by the British mail postmen in Kuwait.

In the period that followed the installation of the post boxes, and as a result of a change in the amount and nature of postal services, the British post office increased the number of employees considerably to sort and register letters. As well, three stores for the parcel department were rented next to the customs post office after the number of parcels coming from abroad increased. In the same period, the money order department also experienced extraordinary activity due to an increase in the number of foreigners and their wish to send money orders to their countries, especially that there was an insufficient number of banks at that time. In addition, the issuing of checks at that time was a long and complicated process. The National Bank of Kuwait, and the British Bank of the Middle East (now the Bank of Kuwait and the Middle East) were the only banks. Sending money abroad via banks necessitated standing in lines for hours, which encouraged most of the foreigners working in Kuwait – most of whom were Indians then – to send their money to their countries via money orders which were sent by registered mail. The orders reached the office in bundles of 100 forms each. The values that were available ranged from one rupee to 100 rupees. The official in charge of the money orders department would write the name of the beneficiary on the order since a typewriter was not available in the post office at that time. Many of the workers in Kuwait would send banknotes to their families in their countries without the fear of any risk.

Al-Mahmeed recalled that in some instances, some precious valuables, such as watches and jewellery, would be mailed to agents in Kuwait without being touched by anybody or being exposed to theft or damage. Once, the post office received a middle-sized can from Iran for one of the merchants. When opened, it was found to be filled with Iranian coins and it was safely delivered to its owner.

As for philately, Al-Mahmeed said that it was not common at that time. Several foreigners used to buy stamps and stick them in special albums. Some merchants and citizens also used to buy stamps for their collections. Some merchants sent their correspondents to buy stamps that were issued every once in a while. There was no interest – as is the case nowadays – in sealing the stamp with the day of issuance. Some philatelists used to ask for the date of issuance to be stamped on the stamps after placing them in the album specialized for stamp collection. Most of those who came to buy stamps were from Adan who worked for Kuwaiti merchants.

Ali Khaja worked in the British post office between 1949 and 1958; he recalls that the post office in the booth had a few wooden post boxes which did not have keys. Addressed letters would be put in the boxes, whereas registered mail would be delivered by hand against a receipt. Khaja remembers some post box numbers and their renters in the forties and fifties. Amongst the numbers that he remembers was box number one which was specified for the late Sheikh Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah, the ruler of Kuwait then. When he died the box was specified for the late Sheikh Abd Allah al-Salem al-Sabah. Box number two was specified for the British Consulate. Amongst the boxes the renters of which he remembers are:

Box number (3) for the Secretariat of the Kuwait Government (the late Abd-Allah Mulla Saleh).
Box number (4) for the Department of Education.
Box number (5) for the Department of Public Health.
Box number (6) for the Department of Courts.

Box number (8) for the Department of Public Works.
Box number (9) for the Department of Finance
Box number (10) for the Municipality of Kuwait.
Box number (11) for the Department of the Interior.
Box number (14) for the Customs Department.
Box number (16) for the (sea) port.
Box number (17) for the airport.
Box number (18) for the water distilling station.

Khaja also remembers that the post office regularly received bags from India carrying Indian currency, which was the official currency circulated in Kuwait at that time. Between six and eight bags arrived once fortnightly. They were blue in color and each weighed about 50 kgs. Khaja would count the rupees in every bundle, and would register their numbers prior to their delivery to the British Bank of the Middle East which was the only bank in Kuwait until 1952. The representative of the British Bank would go to the post office to receive the bags of currency. The British Bank of the Middle East used to send the worn out banknotes to the post office. They were put in bundles inside bags that were sealed with red wax and sent back to India by registered mail.

Another old employee, Ghuloum Mohammed Khaja, recalls that a common scene in the early fifties was the crowding of many citizens, who were new to the field of trade, in front of the post office to correspond with foreign companies in India, Hong Kong and other countries in order to get samples of merchandise. Those people, mostly youths, would gather early in the morning (before the office hours started) outside the post office, waiting to receive letters they were expecting. When the post office opened, they also used to crowd together at the counter asking for their letters. The sealing and distribution employees would ask them to wait so that they could seal the letters with the date of arrival before handing them over.

The big establishments such as Kuwait Oil Company and the American Hospital used to send their representatives to receive the mail from the post office. The Kuwait Oil Company representative would arrive by the company car to receive the mail from the office and at the same time hand in the letters sent by the employees of the company to their families abroad. The representative of the American Hospital also visited the post office frequently to receive letters for employees at the hospital. Khaja recalls that the representative of the American Hospital would distribute presents and candy to the mail employees at Christmas. The British post office did not have its own car until 1952. Later on, it bought a car to receive incoming mail from the airport and hand in outgoing mail, and to deliver incoming mail to employees of Kuwait Oil Company in al-Ahmadi and receive their mail to be sent to their families abroad.

Abd-Allah al-Humeidi, another former employee of the British post office, describes his work in the sealing department in 1949 and says that among his earliest chores every morning was changing the date on the rubberstamp. It was not like the modern stamp where the date is changed by moving a little gear specific for the day or month. The old stamp was circular and the sealing parts were made of iron and surrounded by a plastic frame, while its handle was made of wood. The rubber stamp was disassembled every day and the iron numbers or letters removed and placed in a wooden box. The new numbers and letters were then put on a scrap of paper to check its accuracy before official use.

Al-Humeidi recalls that the sealing process used to be for the outgoing letters only to invalidate the stamps and state the date of issuance from the post office. Incoming letters were not sealed. However, in 1951 or so it was decided that incoming mail should be sealed to state the date of receipt by the post office, so that the office was not to blame to delaying letters delivery. The same postman was used to stamp the incoming as well as the outgoing mail. However, a postmark was specified for stamping the incoming mail to be distin-

guished from the outgoing mail. Al-Humeidi recalls that the letter-sealing process was done on one of the tables rather than on the floor. A large piece of rubber used to be placed on the table to absorb the noise and avoid disturbing the other people in the office. Al-Humeidi also recalls that after finishing the letter-sealing process, the employee's palms and clothes would be stained with ink.

Al-Humeidi remembers that the surface mail would reach them in large bags in amounts big enough to fill a big truck. This created a problem that placed the employees in a state of semi-emergency. The bags would be opened and emptied on the roofs of the neighboring stores. All the office employees would sort them after official working hours before delivering them. Al-Humeidi recalls that the odors of spices and different types of merchandise coming from India and other countries would fill the air in the office and on the roof which would cause disturbance and discomfort for the employees. The arrival of such large loads of letters and parcels created a lot of activity in the market among the shop keepers and import and export office owners who would gather around the office, on the stairs leading to it, and at the counter inside to inquire about their letters. Al-Humeidi recalls that most letters used to reach the offices in the "merchants' market." With the increase in the commercial and financial activities in the country and the growing foreign communities, the process of mail delivery expanded to reach the "New Street," other markets, coffee shops and other places. The mail delivery process was restricted to the shops in the different markets, whereas there was no home-delivery service except in a very limited quantity, eg. the consul's residence, Dasman Palace, al-Shi'b Palace, and a few other places. As for incoming telegraphs, the office manager would receive them from the people who usually wrote them in Arabic. The manager would translate them and write them on the telegraph form. Most people would not write the telegram on the form because they did not know English.

To the staff of the British Postal Agency, Kuwait

On the 1st February, 1959, the Kuwait Post Office formally assumes the management of the external postal services in Kuwait, and thus completes the transfer to the State of responsibility for the Kuwait postal services. At the same time the work of the British Postal Agency at Kuwait will come to an end.

I should like to take the opportunity to send you my personal thanks for your services in the British Postal Agency at Kuwait, and of expressing my appreciation of the contribution which you have made to the success of its operations through a period of changing conditions and ever increasing traffic.

I am confident that you will continue to display the same qualities of zeal and loyalty during your service with the Kuwait Post Office.

Please accept my best wishes for the future.

A. Wolstencroft

(A. WOLSTENCROFT)
DIRECTOR OF POSTAL SERVICES

A copy of the circular that was issued by the British post office in Kuwait in January 1958 to inform its employees of ending its job in Kuwait and transferring the responsibility of the mail services to Kuwaiti mail department.

Philately started to spread. A number of philatelists would come to the post office to take stamps for various countries form the office employees who would get them after emptying the bags, as many stamps would fall of the envelopes and parcels. Buying stamps from the post office for collection was very limited. Most collectors would prefer to collect used stamps which they would obtain for free, and which would attract them due to their beautiful colors and scenery of various parts of the world such as India, Japan, Hong Kong and others.

The mail of the British forces in Kuwait in 1961

On 19 June 1961 the independence of Kuwait was declared through an agreement signed by the late Sheikh Abd-Allah al-Salem al-Sabah on behalf of Kuwait and the political commissioner in the gulf on behalf of Britain.

Two weeks later, the ruler of Iraq, Abdul Kareem Qasem claimed that Kuwait is a part of Basrah and consequently should return to the mother country. As Kuwait was still involved with Britain in a protectorate agreement against any foreign attack, it was thus forced to ask Britain on 30 June 1961 to put into effect the articles of the agreement to protect the independence of Kuwait. Britain called its forces to Kuwait and they were centered on the northern borders and other areas, until the forces of the Arab League replaced them. The British forces withdrew from Kuwait before the end of October 1961.

The British forces brought three field post offices in the first few days of July. One of them was transferred from Bahrain, while the other two were from Kenya. Those two countries were considered then to be among the most important military centers that Britain depended upon in the Arabian Gulf and east Africa. They had military bases and British forces were ready to facing any emergency. Each of those field post offices was characterized by a specific number. The Bahrain office carried the number 941. The other two offices of Kenya had the numbers 1039 and 1040 (see the picture below). One of those

A picture of the seal used by the British forces in Kuwait, 1961.

offices was placed in Kuwait airport and the second in al-Jahra camp, while the third was placed in the Industrial school (now College of Technical Studies) in al-Shuwaikh.[7]
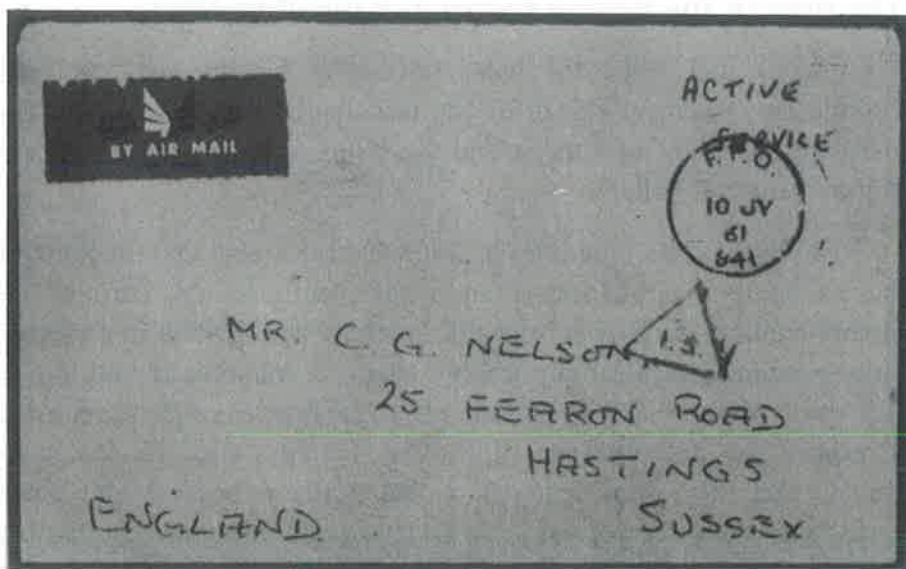
A photograph of a letter - without a stamp, dated 10 July 1961 - sent by one of the members of the British forces in Kuwait to Britain.
Source: The Postal Agencies in Eastern Arabia and the Gulf, Neil Donaldson - p. 184.

The British forces entered a state of "maximum alert since the first day in Kuwait until 10 June 1961. During that period. the mail services were offered for those forces free of charge. By the end of that period postal fees were equivalent to three English pence per letter.[8] The letters sent from the British forces centers in Kuwait in

the period 2-10 June 1961, marked with the ACTIVE SERVICE seal and with no postage stamps were very rare, as the members of the British forces were very busy accommodating and building military centers, which did not give them much time to send letters. The period after that date witnessed pre-paid postage fees with British stamps. Those were less rare and more commonly available than those which preceded them.

References of Chapter Four

(1) Stanley Gibbons Stamp Catalogue - Commonwealth, Part I, 1992 Edition p. 521.

(2) A short while after the Kuwaiti management tool over the responsibility of the post (in 1958), this office was reserved for parcel post only.

(3) The Postal Agencies in Eastern Arabia and the Gulf, Neil Donaldson - p. 170.

(4) Ibid - p. 175. The Kuwaiti Mail Department opened a new branch in Fahaheel on 19 July 1958 to offer mail services in this area and areas around it, including al-Ahmadi oil terminal.

(5) The rupee was worth sixteen annas, the anna was worth four paisas, and the paisa was worth four ardies; therefore, the rupee was worth sixty-four paisas or 192 ardies.

(6) The Postal Agencies in Eastern Arabia and the Gulf, Neil Donaldson - op. cit. p. 177.

(7) The Postal Agencies in Eastern Arabia and the Gulf, Neil Donaldson - op. cit. p. 184.

(8) Ibid - p. 184.

Chapter Five

The Establishment of the
Kuwaiti Mail Department

- The first attempts to issue local stamps
- Taking over the mail service responsibility by the Kuwaiti mail department
- Taking over the full mail service responsibility by the Kuwaiti mail department
- The first postal issuances
- Expansion of the work and activities of the mail department
- Development and diversity of the mail services after the establishment of the Kuwaiti mail department
- Kuwaiti issuances and their properties

Chapter Five

The Establishment of the
Kuwaiti Mail Department

The first attempts to issue local stamps

Attempts to issue local Kuwaiti stamps date back to 1947. Indeed, memorial stamps were issued in February 1947, 1948, 1949 and 1950, respectively in the memory of the late Sheikh Ahmed al-Jaber al-Sabah's accession to power. Those stamps did not have a particular value. Besides, they were not used to collect mail fees, even though they were stuck on the outgoing letters beside the British stamps.

The idea to issue those stamps started at the end of 1946, when the 26th anniversary of the late Sheikh Ahmed al-Jaber al-Sabah's accession to power was approaching. The idea was presented to Sheikh Ahmed al-Jaber by Ezzat Mohammed Ja'far, who relates that after carefully studying the idea and making sure of its low cost, Sheikh Ahmed al-Jaber agreed to it and ordered a follow-up of its execution. Thus Ezzat Ja'far communicated the concerned authorities in Egypt to print the stamps. Mohammed Refa't, an outstanding official in the Egyptian government then, helped for the execution of the idea and facilitated it. He made arrangements with the government press in Egypt, which asked for a photograph of the late Sheikh Ahmed al-Jaber al-Sabah and the dates to be put on the stamp. The cost of printing the first memorial stamp in 1947 was very low, which encouraged its reprinting for the next three consecutive years. The

Ezzat Ja'far who presented the idea of the memorial stamp to the late Sheikh Ahmed al-Jaber al-Sabah and supervised its printing in Cairo.

same photograph was printed on the stamps of 1947, 1848, and 1949, but a more recent photo was used for the stamp of 1950. Some of these issuances were printed on sheets each comprising 20 stamps while some others were placed in booklets.

The stamps were circulated to the public as souvenirs. The remaining quantities were handed over to the British post office in Kuwait and the employees were asked to stick them on the outgoing letters next to the British stamps. Some philatelists sealed some envelopes that carried those memorial stamps in addition to the British stamps specified for Kuwait.

There was a mistake in the dates on all those issues except that of 1948. The dates printed on those stamps were 1339 AH and 1920 AD,

Pictures of stamps issued on sheets and those issued in booklets.

whereas the correct dates of Sheikh Ahmed al-Jaber al-Sabah's accession to power were 1340 AH and 1921 AD.

There were also some postage revenue stamps issued in the same period of the forties. They were used to collect government fees and they were in denominations of one rupee, three rupees, four rupees and others. They also carried the picture of the late Sheikh Ahmed al-Jaber al-Sabah.
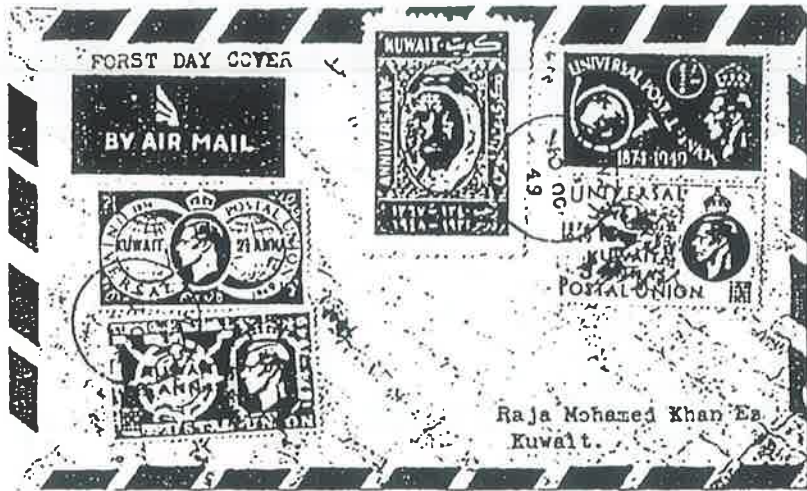
A memorial aerogramme stamped with the date of 10 October 1949, and carrying the memorial stamp with the picture of Sheikh Ahmed al-Jaber al-Sabah next to the British stamps specified for Kuwait.

Taking over the mail service responsibility by the Kuwaiti mail department

The preparatory steps

By the end of 1956, the Kuwaiti government started preparing for taking over the responsibility of managing the mail services. The first step taken was to choose a few Kuwaitis to be trained for the job. The

The memorial stamps issued by the Kuwaiti government in 1947, 1948, 1949 and 1950.

A picture of Postage revenue stamps that were issued in the forties to collect government fees.

first two chosen were Abd-Allah Mulla Yousuf al-Eid, who used to work in the Treasury Department (now Ministry of Finance), and Khalil Isma'il Saleh, who used to work for "U Bank Company Limited," which was a British engineering consultant company that designed, built and ran water distillation stations and electricity generators for the Kuwaiti government. An agreement was reached between the British post office and the Treasury Department to train those young men in the mail services for a limited period. As previously mentioned, the British post office was located in the customs area. Abd-Allah al-Eid was trained in the administrative works, while Khalil Isma'il was trained in the technical works. Abd-Allah al-Eid joined the British post office in October 1956 as mail supervisor, while Khalil Isma'il joined the office in July 1957 as mail distribution inspector. The two of them remained working for the British mail until the 1 February 1958 when the national post office was opened.

On 1 February 1958, the Kuwaiti government started the first step towards the establishment of national administration to take over the responsibility of the mail services in the country. On that day a post office controlled by the Kuwaiti government was opened close to the building of the Treasury Department located at al-Safat square. The office was in charge of local mail services only.

Abd-Allah Yousuf al-Eid recalls how he was chosen as the first employee to work in the national post office. He says that during his work as an accountant in the Treasury Department in October 1956, Heider al-Shihaby – the then deputy director general of the Treasury Department – called to see him. He headed to his office and found two British men with him: Lushmer, the general manager of the British post offices which were widespread in the Gulf countries, and Harry McGuiness, the manager of the British post office in Kuwait. After inquiring about the nature of his work in the Treasury Department, they asked him to visit them on the following day in the British post office located in the customs area. When he went there, he learned that

The first location of the Kuwaiti mail department that was opened on 1 February 1958 was in the eastern part of al-Safat square (the present location of al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait).

Source of the picture: The Kuwaiti magazine "Al-Be'thah" (The Mission) issued by the Kuwait Hostel in Cairo, April 1958, p. 6.
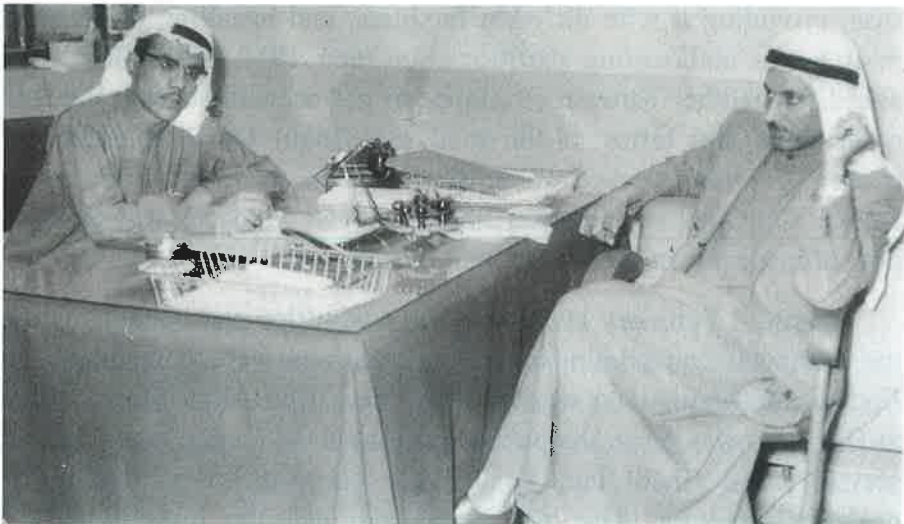
A photograph taken of Abd-Allah Mulla Yousuf al-Eid (Right) and Khalil Isma'il al-Saleh at the office of the latter in the location of the old post office at Safat a short while after its opening in February 1958.

the Treasury Department assigned him to the British post office for the remaining period of work in that office until the responsibility of the mail services was handed over to the Kuwaiti mail department that was to be established. The aim of assigning this post to him in the British post office was to train him in the mail works and prepare the Kuwaiti mail department to take over the responsibility. He started his work in the previously mentioned office in October 1956 in the post of mail supervisor and he became acquainted with the different mail works and facilities that should be available to offer the mail services at the required standard.

During the same period a location was allocated for the post office which was to be established in a building next to the location of the Treasury Department located at al-Safat Square; Abd-Allah al-Eid was asked to prepare and supervise its provision with the facilities and tools required before its opening. He was to learn about the mail works on one hand and prepare for the Kuwaiti mail department on the other. He supervised the process of distributing the different mail divisions inside the new building, and allocating a site for each division, providing it with different facilities, and installing the counter, mail boxes and sorting partitions. In June 1957 Abd-Allah al-Eid asked for another Kuwaiti employee to get acquainted with the technical skills and terms of the mail. So Khalil Ismail al-Saleh was chosen. He had worked about six years in the post office of the Kuwait Oil Company between 1946 and 1953. Al-Saleh was given the post of inspector in the British mail in June 1957.

On the 1 February 1958 the Safat post office was opened after all the technical and administrative preparations were completed. The first two Kuwaitis who worked there were Abd Allah Mulla Yousuf al-Eid, who was given the post of postmaster in charge of the internal services, and Khalil Isma'il al-Saleh who was given the post of delivery inspector. The office was assigned the responsibility of managing local mail services only. Other people were employed to be in charge of the different mail services. As for the British post office

and its branches, the regular work, which was mainly concerned with foreign mail services, was carried on.

A photograph taken in 1958 of the counter employees in the old Safat post office. The public is seen on the other side of the window.

The new mail department was annexed to the telegraph department, which had been taken over earlier by the government of Kuwait, in addition to the telephone services. The three services were placed under one department called Post, Telegraph and Telephone Department. The head of department was the late Sheikh Fahad al-Salem al-Sabah.[1] Khalid Abdul-Latif al-Abdul-Razzaq was the director general of Post, Telegraph and Telephone. Before that he was the manager of Telegraph and Wireless department.

The celebration of opening the Kuwaiti mail department in February 1958, which was attended by the late Sheikh Fahd al-Salem al-Sabah who was the head of the Post, Telegraph and Telephone Department. He can be seen in the photograph listening to an explanation by Khalil Isma'il al-Saleh. Also seen in the photograph is the president of the Gulf listening to Abd-Allah Mulla Yousuf al-Eid. On the extreme left of the photograph is McGuiness, manager of the British post office. He was given the post of an expert in the Kuwaiti mail department.

Another photograph of the inauguration of the Kuwaiti mail department. In the photograph is the president of the Gulf listening to an explanation by Fathi Gheith, the expert in the department of telegraph and telephone then. As well, McGuiness and Abd-Allah al-Eid can be seen in the photograph.

A photograph of most of the employees in the Kuwaiti mail department in January 1958 in the old Safat post office. In the first row from the right are Khalil al-Saleh (standing), Lushmer, mcGuiness (the manager of the British post office in Kuwait), Khalid al-Abdul-Razzaq (director general of Post, Telegraph and Telephone), Abdul-Razzaq al-Anjari (deputy director general of Post, Telegraph and Telephone), and the representative of the British Consulate in Kuwait, and Abd-Allah al-Eid (standing). Most of the other people in the photograph are newly employed postmen in the department.

The first three stamps issued by the Department of Post, Telegraph and Telephone on 1 February 1958 in the denominations of five, ten and forty NPs. They have the picture of the late Sheikh Abd-Allah al-Salem al-Sabah.

(From the author's collection)

On the same day the office was opened, the first Kuwaiti stamps were issued. They were three and bore the picture of Sheikh Abd-Allah al-Salem al-Sabah. There denominations were five, ten and forty NPs (the new India currency at that time). The five and ten NP stamps were specified for local use while the forty NP stamp was for registered mail. This office also sold the British stamps specified for Kuwait which continued to be used for foreign mail. The five post offices under the British Post continued their work as usual in addition to selling the new local stamps to the public as well as receiving the local mail from them, which they would hand over to the Kuwaiti post office for delivery. The Kuwaiti mail department issued its own "collection seals," which had the word "Kuwait" printed on them in Arabic and English. These seals were used for the first time in February 1958 in Safat for sealing the local mail. They were used in a limited way to mark some outgoing letters from Kuwait.[2]

After opening, the Kuwaiti mail department employed several Kuwaiti youths who were graduates of intermediate school or who had some knowledge of English. As well, some Kuwaitis who worked for the British Bank for the Middle East and the National Bank of Kuwait were employed due to their knowledge of the English language. Khalid al-Abdul-Razzaq, the director general of the mail department, decided to send three Kuwaitis to Britain to learn English and get acquainted with the mail works with the ultimate aim of handing them the responsibilities of the different divisions in the new department. The three persons were Ibrahim al-Abdul-Razzaq, Marzouq Mohammed al-Marzouq and Abdul-Latif al-Sa'ad. They spent approximately one year in Britain after which they returned to Kuwait in 1959. Marzouq al-Marzouq was assigned the post of deputy director general for the mail, Ibrahim al-Abdul-Razzaq was supervisor of the local mail services, and Abdul-Latif al-Sa'ad was supervisor of the foreign mail services. In 1959, after the death of Sheikh Fahad al-Salem al-Sabah, Sheikh Khalid Abd-Allah al-Salem al-Sabah was

assigned as postmaster general. The situation remained as such until the nomenclature was changed from departments to ministries after Kuwait's independence and Sheikh Mubarak Abd-Allah al-Ahmad al-Sabah was appointed as the first Minister of Mail, Telegraph and Telephone in the first ministry established after independence on 17 January 1962.

Among the steps taken by the new mail department after its establishment, was the expansion of distribution in the different areas inside and outside Kuwait City. In 1958, new branches were opened, two of which were inside Kuwait City (al-Sharq and al-Mirqab offices), one in Salmiyah, and another in Hawalli. an office was also opened in Fahaheel and another in the airport. Postmarks were specified for each of these branches. The department also started building a new location for the post office on al-Jahra street (which was called Fahad al-Salem street). It was named the General Post Office.
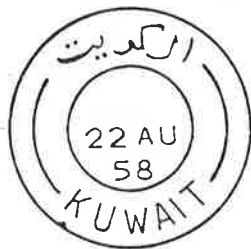
The postmarks that were issued by the mail department at the beginning of its work in the early 1958.

Taking over the full mail service responsibility by the Kuwaiti mail department

By the end of Saturday, 31 January 1959, the use of British stamps prepared for the use in Kuwait, was discontinued. They were no longer used to pay the fees of letter delivery. On the following day, the Kuwaiti government, represented by the mail department, assumed responsibility for managing the post offices and related services.

Previous local stamps became good for external use, and the General Post Office was opened in al-Qiblah (a part of Fahad al-Salem street) to house the offices of the postmaster general, the director general, and the department employees on the second storey of the building. The first storey was allotted to the rest of the employees and clerks and the registration division, whereas the ground storey was specified for mail services. As for the previous British post office in the customs area, it was called the "Sief post office" after it went under the control of Kuwaiti mail department. Whoever desired to transfer from the British mail to the Kuwaiti mail department could do so. Amongst those who joined the Kuwaiti mail department were McGuiness – the manager of the British office who was appointed as an expert, and Abdul-Rahman Qureishi, a Pakistani who was appointed as a postmaster in charge of the external mail services. The mail department increased the number of mail boxes and bought several cars for mail transportation and motorcycles for mail-delivery since its services were distributed all over Kuwait.

The first postal issuances

On 1 February 1959, the first day for the Kuwaiti mail department to take over the full postal postal services, the first complete set of national stamps was issued. It consisted of thirteen stamps in denominations of five NP to ten rupees. They carried pictures of

One of the mail cars in the early sixties (photographed by Abdul-Aziz Shishtery, the treasurer of the old Safat post office).

Sheikh Abd-Allah al-Salem al-Sabah and some of the different landmarks of Kuwait, among which were Shuwaikh High School, Safat Square, the Kuwaiti boom (a boat), the petrol pipelines, the electricity generating station in Shuwaikh, and a general view of Kuwait City. The famous British company De La Rue, which was specialized in this type of printing, printed this set. In addition, the British postmarks were withdrawn and exchanged for Kuwaiti Post Department postmarks, to be used officially in postmarking outgoing mail.

In the first few years after its establishment, the mail department continued issuing sets of various stamps that illustrated the landmarks and important events of Kuwait. These stamps carried the India currency which was in use in Kuwait at that time and continued to be used until the beginning of 1961. Among the first issuances was that of 25 February 1960, on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the accession of Sheikh Abd-Allah al-Salem al-Sabah. These stamps carried his picture along with the flag of Kuwait, and the value in the Indian naya naisa was printed.

The first Kuwaiti set of stamps issued after the Kuwaiti Post Department assumed responsibility of mail services. This set was issued on 1 February 1959. It comprised thirteen stamps on which the value in India currency was printed. (this currency was still used in Kuwait then).

On 1 April 1961, the first Kuwaiti set of stamps was issued in the value of the dinar. That was after the discontinuation of dealing with the Indian rupee. These stamps were not very different from the set issued in 1958, except for the type of currency written on them.

Expansion of the work and activities of the mail department

When the Kuwaiti mail department took over the responsibility of postal services, the work was very limited. However, by the beginning of the sixties, it vastly multiplied. As a result of the expansion of the

An envelope postmarked on the first day of the issuance of the postmark. On it is the set that was issued on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the accession of Sheikh Abd-Allah al-Salem al-Sabah. (Notice the value printed on the stamps in naya paisa).

economic activity in the country, there was a great increase in the population. Consequently, commercial and residential areas expanded, which in turn led to a massive demographic expansion that required an increasing demand for the different types of services amongst which were the mail services. Therefore, the mail department was among those departments that were profoundly, directly and rapidly influenced by that increase. This required opening new branches in the different commercial and residential areas, which in turn required increasing the number of employees and equipment. The number of employees increased from fifty or so in 1958 to 350 by the end of

The first set issued in the national currency - the dinar. They were very similar to the preceding set except for the currency printed on the stamps.

1961. In addition, the number of post offices increased to twelve, while the number of post boxes increased from about 1000 to 4000. In order to parallel this massive quantitative change, a machine for post-marking the letters was bought. It postmarked and dated 1500 letters per minute. Letter collection from the boxes all over Kuwait was done at half hour intervals in the major offices, and three times a day in the suburbs. The department continued to open between two and five branches yearly until the number of post offices reached thirty-eight and covered all areas of Kuwait in the middle of 1972.

Moreover, the activities of the mail department expanded in the following years in an unprecedented way. The number of branches reached more than fifty by the middle of the eighties, while the number of rented boxes reached 92,600. As for the number of incoming letters and parcels reached more than 250,000 a day. This represented a heavy load to which the mail department was not accustomed. However, it faced such massive load of work with a lot of determination and ability which made it become amongst the most efficient and competent post departments in the world during the two decades that followed, as certified by specialized international organizations. This was obvious through its many achievements, excellent services, and speedy performance.

Development and diversity of the mail services in the phases that followed the establishment of the Kuwaiti mail department

Among the activities of the Kuwaiti mail department, in addition to stamp issuance, was to issue different mail materials for the public's use and to facilitate mail services. Among these materials were stamp booklets, aerogrammes, registration envelopes and stamp machines.

Stamp booklets

Some post offices in different countries issue stamps in booklets to be sold to the public. These booklets contain a specific number of stamps in denominations commonly used to save time and be at hand when needed. The first of these booklets in Kuwait was issued on 1 February 1959, when the first set of regular stamps was issued. The value of the booklet was 4 rupees and 80 naya paisas (4.80 rupees). The booklet contained twelve stamps worth five NP each and six stamps for each value of ten, fifteen, twenty, and twenty-five NP. All these stamps carried the picture of Sheikh Abd-Allah al-Salem al-

Sabah. On 20 November 1960, a similar booklet was issued, having the same stamps, although the 25 NP stamp had a different color. The third and last booklet was issued in 1966. Its value was 300 fils and had thirty stamps in five denominations: one, four, ten, fifteen and twenty fils (six stamps each).

Aerogrammes

At the time of its establishment, as well as in the sixties and seventies, the Kuwaiti mail department issued several aerograms which were ready for use and paid for in advance. The sender had to write the message on it, fold it, seal it, and place it in a mail box, without the needing to go to a post office to buy the required stamps. The price of these aerogrammes included the postage fees. The first

A stamp booklet that was issued by the new mail department on 1 February 1959, with the picture of Sheikh Abd-Allah al-Salem al-Sabah. (From the author's collection).

The booklet issued in 1966 (From the author's collection)

aerogramme was issued in 1959, and carried the picture of the Kuwaiti boom (boat) and the value in naya paisa (40 NP). As for the aerogramme that followed, they had the value printed in fils after the issuance of the national currency. The value of the aerogramme ranged between twelve fils for those posted to the Arab countries to twenty-five fils to the rest of the world. Later, the price was raised to 80 fils in the seventies. Some aerogrammes were sold without a stamp for two fils; the stamp would be stuck on it when it was to be sent.

The Kuwaiti mail department made use of these aerogrammes to print pictures of the different landmarks of Kuwait, with the aim of displaying the civilized aspect of Kuwait to the different parts of the world. Among those was Kuwait University, Kuwait towers, the man-made island in al-Ahmadi, the water distillation station and the antiquities of Failaka Island.

A picture of the aerogrammes issued in the early seventies. (Notice the value in NP on the upper letter) (From the author's collection)
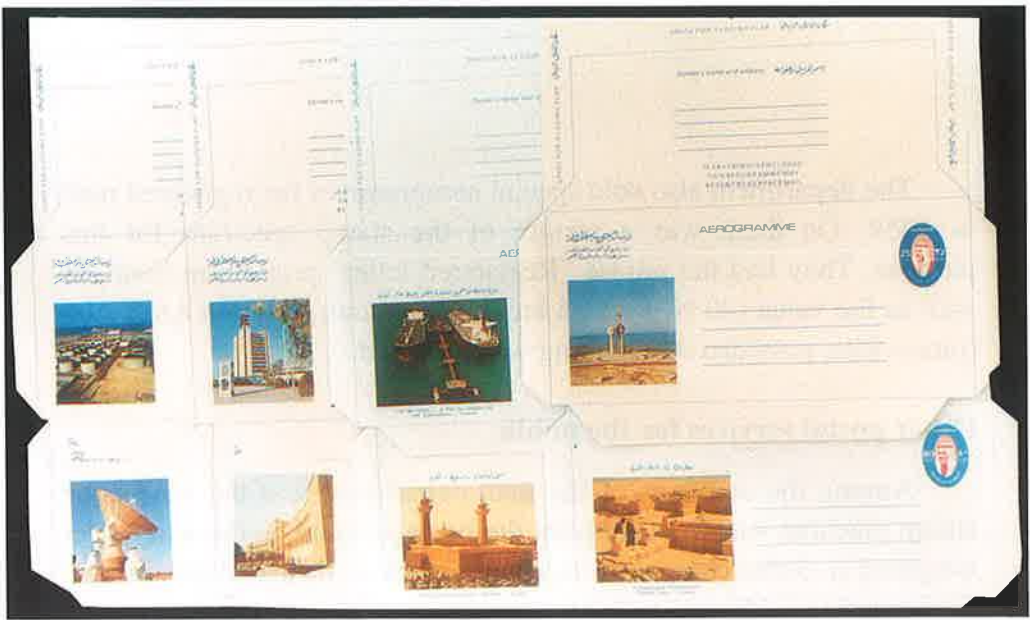
A picture of the aerogrammes issued in the seventies, displaying some landmarks of Kuwait (From the author's collection)

A picture of the registered letter that was sold at the post office, with the stamps specified for that purpose. (From the author's collection)

The department also sold special aerogrammes for registered mail in 1959. On them was a picture of the stamp specified for this purpose. They had the phrase "Registered letter" printed on them, as well as the value (40 NP) which included the transportation and registration fees, provided that nothing was enclosed.

Other postal services for the public

Among the activities of the mail department was the use of the stamp machine which would print the postage value on the letter after weighing it. Some companies and banks often made use of this service by arranging with the mail department to transport this machine to their offices to be used there to save time.

Among the procedures adopted by the mail department to facilitate the process of collecting postage fees, was to place a machine called the "franking machine" in the major post offices. This machine would release small pieces of paper on which was printed a specific value after in coins were placed in the right slot. The postage value printed on the small paper ranged form five fils to KD 9.995 as required. The buyer had to deposit the desired value and press a button, and the machine would release the stamp called the "frama stamp." Moreover, in the first half of 1990, the mail department sold "coil stamps." Those were stamps in three denominations that could be bought from the coil stamp machine. Any number of stamps required, in any value, could be bought. They came out of the machine in the form of a tape which was perforated on two sides. These stamps had a picture of the Kuwaiti boom.

The mail department also issued two sets of "postage due" stamps, the first in October 1963, which consisted of six stamps in denominations of one to twenty-five fils, and the second in April 1965 which consisted of 5 stamps in denominations of four to 100 fils. "Postage due" stamps were issued with the aim of collecting postage fees due on undercharged incoming letters from the addressee.
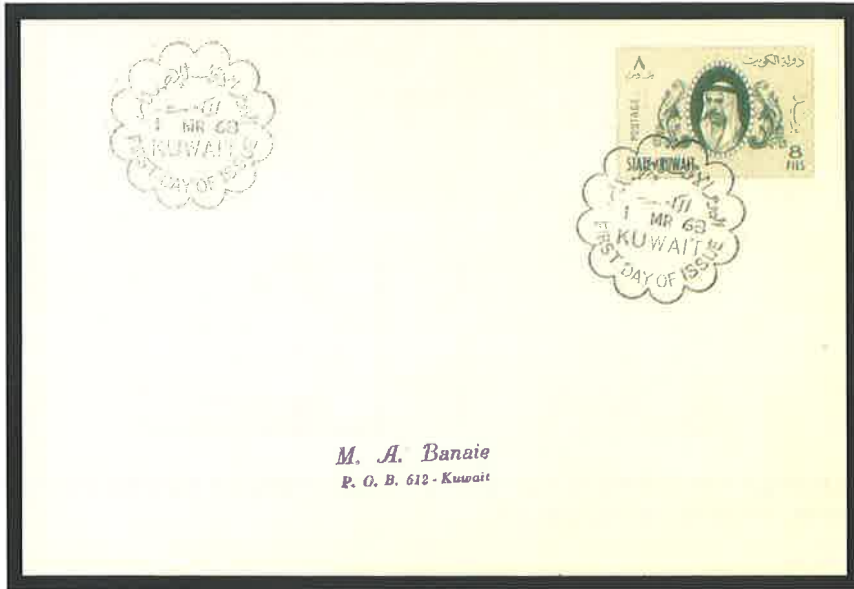
In 1968 the mail department offered envelopes with stamps to its customers who sometimes preferred to buy pre-paid envelopes instead of envelopes and stamps. (From the author's collection)
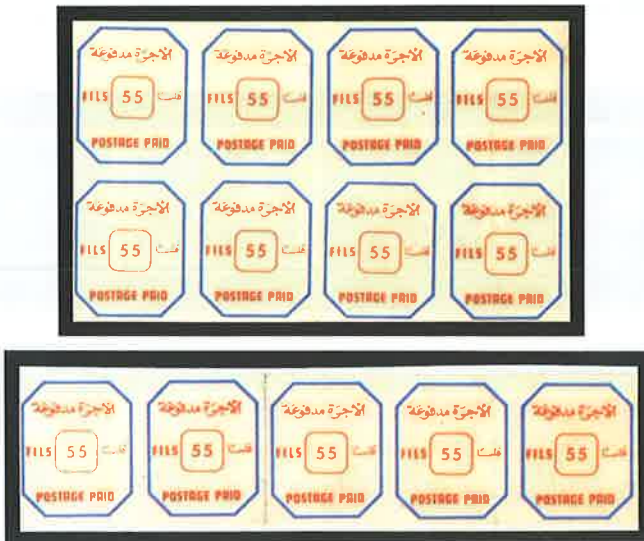
Small stickers on which was printed a specific value to be stuck on the aerogrammes. They could also be used instead of stamps. (From the author's collection)
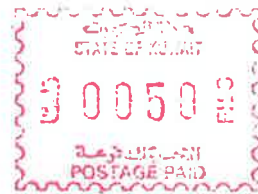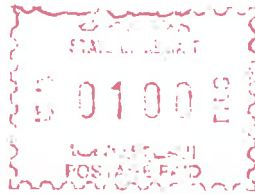
The postage fees printed on small pieces of paper jutting out from the frama stamp machine. (From the author's collection)

COIL STAMPS

The two sets of "postage due" stamps issued in 1963 and 1965.
(From the author's collection)

The postage fees and the postmarks as stamped on an envelope by means of the stamp machine.

Office of stamp collection philatelists

Among the advanced steps taken by the mail department in Kuwait was the opening of an office – annexed to the Safat post office – for philatelists. This office would play an important role to acquaint the world with Kuwait and its role and position in the international community. Through this type of activity, a country gains universal recognition through the spread of as many stamps as possible to collectors in different countries. These postage stamps are among the best messengers of a country. They carry its name to different places on earth and display its landmarks, culture, activities, and roles to the whole world. These stamps also have a role in every aspect of international cooperation which aims to bring nations closer together and foster international understanding. In fact, this small-sized stamp has a significant role in developing and fortifying social, cultural, economic and political relationships between peoples of the world.

The stamp collectors' office helps philatelists both in and out of Kuwait. At the beginning of every year, the mail department issues a list of the stamps that will be issued in that year, their dates of issuance, and occasions. A detailed bulletin is also issued a few weeks prior to every stamp issuance. It is circulated among collectors to notify them of dates of issuance and details of the stamps with regard to measurements, printing, designs, the number of stamps issued and their denominations. Usually those bulletins were posted to the registered philatelists. Moreover, the office would provide the service of the "first day postmarking" of the envelopes on the first day of a stamp issuance. The office provided all these services to the registered philatelists outside Kuwait, too.

The office occasionally publishes booklets of different Kuwaiti issuances. The booklets include a picture of each stamp, its date of issuance, and the occasion of its issuance. In addition, the office also sells memorial stamps to the United Nations.
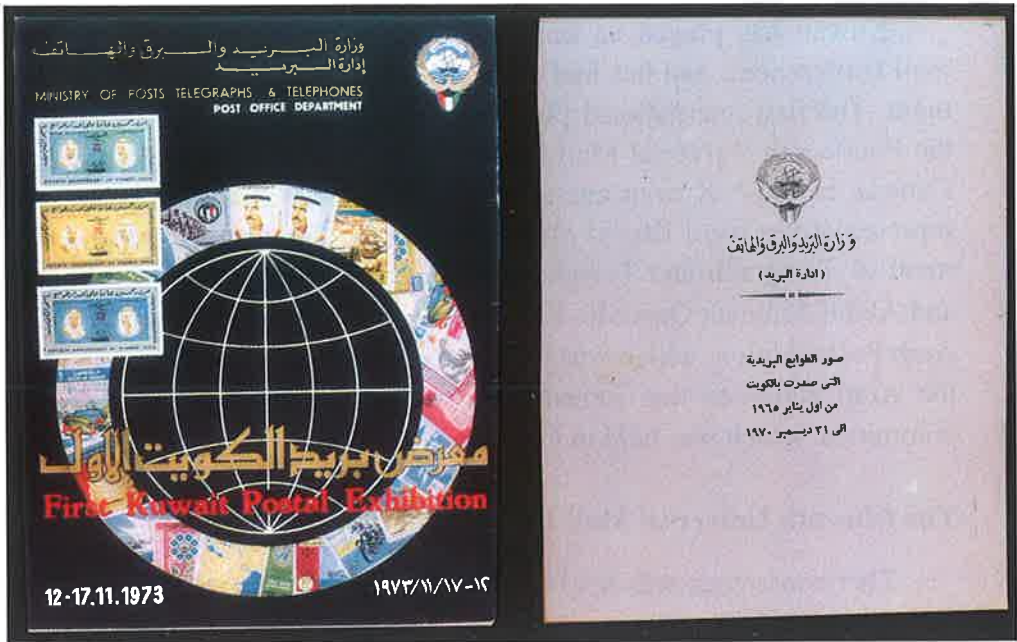
Some booklets issued by the post department to get interested people acquainted with the stamp issuances of Kuwait.

International relations

The relationship between the Kuwaiti mail department and the other departments around the world has steadily developed. There has always been interest to join international mail conferences and meetings, to improve levels of performance, to increase the standard of mail services, to learn from the experiences of others, and to become acquainted with the latest methods and technology used in this field. Therefore, among the first steps taken in the years following the establishment of the Kuwaiti mail department was the joining of Kuwait to the Universal Postal Union in February 1960, and to the Arab Postal Union in June 1961. Kuwait has also been an active member in the Gulf Post Authority that was founded in 1977.

Kuwait has played an important role in Arab and international mail conferences, and has had distinguished contributions in many of them. The first international post conference attended by Kuwait was the Fourteenth Universal Mail Conference, which was held in Ottawa, Canada, in 1957. Kuwait attended that conference as an observer. Its representatives were Khalid al-Abdul-Razzaq, director of the Department of Telegraph and Telephone at that time, Mohammed Shawkat and Abdul-Rahman Qureishi. Kuwait also joined the conference of the Arab Postal Union, which was held in Riyadh in 1960, and was one of the Arab countries that joined the meetings of the Arab executive committee, which was held in Cairo in March 1962.

The fifteenth Universal Mail Union conference

That conference was held in Vienna, Austria, from 28 May to 10 July 1964. Kuwait was one of the thirteen Arab countries that joined the conference.[3] The Kuwaiti delegation consisted of Ibrahim Yousuf al-Abdul-Razzaq (head of the delegation), Anton Yousuf Kaf'eity (head of the international mail relations office), Nazmi Omar Rasas (head of the division of foreign mail accounting), Abdul-Mohsen Taqi Mozaffar (head of the central statistics division), and Dr. Sayed Mohammed Hosni (the ministry of Foreign Affairs legal expert). That was the first international mail conference Kuwait attended as full member in the Universal Postal Union (UPU).

Delegates of Arab Arab countries often discussed matters among themselves during the conference so as to unite points of view with the aim of achieving some privileges. One hundred and twenty-two countries participated in that conference, and there were more than 1150 suggestions to be discussed and agreed upon by the members.

That conference had great importance due to the long interval between it and the previous conference in 1957, the importance and large number of agenda that were put forward for discussion, and the

increase in the number of countries that were members in the Universal Postal Union. The main aim of that conference was to totally reconsider the agreements of the Universal Postal Union and to solve financial problems over which there were disagreements between the countries.

As a host country, Austria showed great care for the conference. The Austrian government reserved the largest hall in the grand historical Habsburg palace for the opening session that was attended by the President and the VIPs of the country. This conference lasted for two months, during which 140 sessions were held day and night.

The Kuwaiti delegation to the fifteenth Universal Postal Union Conference, which was held in Vienna in 1964. From the right can be seen Abdul-Mohsen Taqi Mozaffar, Nazmi Omar Rasas, Anton yousuf Kaf'eity, Ibrahim Yousuf al-Abdul-Razzaqq, and Dr. Sayed Mohammed Hosni.

The Kuwaiti delegation was one of the most active Arab delegations that participated in the conference. It was well prepared for the conference before leaving for Vienna. Thus, all the previous decisions of the Union were revised, and the international post agreement was studied with the aim of finding the best ways to make full use of them. The Kuwaiti delegation also played a constructive and active role in the conference by following the sessions, introducing suggestions, and executing the tasks that were given to it, despite Kuwait being a novice to that kind of conference. After every meeting, the Kuwaiti delegates would write down the subjects that were discussed, and write a summary of the decisions that were taken. It is worth mentioning that the means of communication were not as efficient as they are today. In addition, modern methods of recording and note-taking that are used in conferences nowadays, had not yet been used. Therefore, most of the work was done by the participants, and they had to record and take notes of all the discussions that took place.

For Kuwait, that conference was a new experience, of which the participants made use in terms of increasing their experience, getting acquainted with many of the people who were responsible for the mail services in the Arab and foreign countries, and discussing methods of improving these services as well as the problems facing them with the aim of finding solutions. Also the name of Kuwait was displayed to the world, which was important, especially that Kuwait had only recently become independent at that time. In that conference, Kuwait was chosen from twenty-seven countries to be a member in the executive council. Besides, it was elected among three Arab countries to be a member of the consultant committee of the Universal Postal Union.

Other achievements in the international field

Kuwait played a distinguished role in the Universal Postal conferences that followed. It had lots of contributions which led to its being

chosen, in the mid-seventies, as the head of the airmail committee of the Universal Postal Union which was located in the city of Bern, Switzerland. The committee included twenty-five countries, among which were Germany, Belgium and Italy, in addition to the countries of eastern Europe, Egypt and Lebanon. Kuwait was renamed as head of the committee for two consecutive terms, i.e. eight years. The committee aimed at exchanging experiences and information, offering solutions to the problems that emerge between countries, and researching methods of developing airmail service between the country members.

The high standard of achievements of the Kuwaiti postal department at that time earned the appreciation and admiration of the Universal Postal Union. As far as that organization was concerned, Kuwait was one of the best countries in the world with respect to post performance and development. As the Union's reports stated, that was due to its perfect and speedy performance, as well as the accurate auditing of postal accounts with the other countries, which was handled by the accounting department of the Kuwaiti Post. It was one of the jobs of the Union to look at those accounts and evaluate them. During the sixties and seventies, Kuwait was awarded several prizes and medals from this organization as it was considered advanced in the field of postal services. In fact, this was due to the faithfulness of the early workers, whether Kuwaitis or expatriates, their distinguished efficiency, punctuality, speed, and sense of responsibility.

Introduction of modern systems and mechanization in the different mail divisions

As far as advancements in the mail services are concerned, the postal department witnessed several changes that increased the speed of performance in many divisions. In the postmarking division, for instance, a machine was introduced to replace the manual postmark

A photograph of Abd-Allah al-Eid, heading the meeting of the Universal Air Mail Committee in Bern, Switzerland in 1982. On his left is the head of the Egyptian delegation.

which became useless in the handling of hundreds of thousands of letters daily. in this way, millions of incoming and outgoing letters could reach their destinations easily and smoothly. Also, in the early eighties, the sorting division experienced the introduction of mechanization, the main aim of which was to minimize time, effort and costs. Sorting machines which read the address prior to sending them to the required country, were introduced. In that machine were 200 pigeonholes, each one of which was specified for one country. The machine would release each letter to the hole specified for the country to which it was to be sent. As well, it would reject unstamped or undercharged letters and transfer them to a special slot.[4] Among the other qualitative steps the mail experienced at a late period, was the introduction of the postal code to facilitate and expedite mail delivery.

A photograph of Abd-Allah al-Eid in the 1975 conference of the Universal Postal Union in Bogota, Columbia. On the left is the president of the republic of Columbia shaking hands with Anwer Bakir, head of the Egyptian delegation and head of the Arab Postal Union at that time.

The Kuwaiti mail department was active with respect to attending the mail conferences for the Gulf countries. The Kuwaiti delegation to the consultant session of the Gulf Postal Organization held in Abha, Saudi Arabia in May 1981, can be seen. Ibrahim al-Abdul-Razzaq, the former assistant undersecretary for mail services, and Abd-Allah al-Eid are pictured; around them are the representatives of the Gulf countries.

-193-

The Kuwaiti stamp issuance and their characteristics

Since its establishment, the Kuwaiti postal department has given special attention to stamp issuances, owing to the importance of such issuances in displaying the position of Kuwait among the countries of the world. The postal department has given special attention to the stamp design so that it reflects the history and environment of Kuwait. In addition, care has also been given to the national, international and religious occasions. Though the issuances were very limited in the early years, it has become the main concern of the department since 1958. From 1960 to 1963, seventeen sets were issued, amongst which were several collections issued on national occasions such as the tenth anniversary of the accession of Sheikh Abd-Allah al-Salem al-Sabah, the golden jubilee of the Mubarakiyah school (issued in 1962), the bicentenary of the death of Sheikh Sabah I (issued in 1962), and the first anniversary of the "National Day," the day on which Kuwait gained its independence (issued on 19 June 1962). Another set was issued on 29 October 1963, on the occasion of declaring the constitution. As for the national occasions at that period, the issuances included the occasion of the fourth conference of the Arab Telecommunications Union (11 January 1962), the Arab League (22 March 1962) and the Arab School Games Tournament (8 November 1963). In addition, some issuances were of international concern, such as the universal campaign for fighting hunger, Education Day, the battle against malaria, the fifteenth anniversary of the declaration of human rights (10 December 1963), and so on.

The postal department continued its activity in that field to cover many of the occasions through which the pioneering role of Kuwait and its active contributions to international fields of cooperation were displayed. Between 1958 and 1990 about 325 different sets of more than 1100 stamps were issued.

This period of time can be divided into three phases:

The first phase (1958 - 1965): during the rule of Sheikh Abd-Allah al-Salem al-Sabah,

The second phase (1965 - 1977): during the rule of Sheikh Sabah al-Salem al-Sabah,

The third phase (1978 - 1990)

The first phase (1958-1965)

During this period, thirty-eight sets were issued. Amongst them was the first regular set,[5] which carried the price in naya paisa, as well as the set similar to it that carried the price in fils and dinar. Two sets of "postage due" stamps were also issued. This type of stamp covers the postage fees that are undercharged or are not paid at all. Usually these fees are collected by the post office in the country of destination from the addressee. The first set of "postage due" stamps was issued on 19 October 1963. It consisted of six stamps (valued at one to twenty-five fils), featuring arabesques of an oriental taste. The second set was issued on April 1965. It consisted of five stamps valued at four to 100 fils with different ornamentation.

Among the distinctive sets of the first phase was the regular set, which consisted of nineteen stamps bearing the picture of Sheikh Abd-Allah al-Salem al-Sabah. Its denominations ranged from one fils to one dinar. Several sets were also issued to represent public occasions, as the population census in 1965, Mother's Day, and the tenth anniversary of the Arab Postal Union.

This period also witnessed the issuance of the only triangular stamps in the history of Kuwait. They were issued on the occasion of the third anniversary of the National Day (19 June 1964). That was the last set carrying that date, after which the stamps for this occasion were issued on the 25 February, starting in 1965, when it was decided to celebrate the National Day on that date.

The set issued on the occasion of the golden jubilee of al-Mubarakiya School (15/4/1962), and the memorial set for the first anniversary of the National Day (19/6/1962). (Envelopes are postmarked "FIRST DAY OF ISSUE")

Some sets that were issued on different occasions: The bicentenary of Sabah I (1962), the third anniversary of the National Day (1964), Mother's Day (1965), and Population census (1965).

The set issued in October 1963 on the occasion of declaring the Constitution

The set of the Arab Postal Union for Telecommunications (1962), the week of the Arab League (1962) and the tenth anniversary of the Arab Postal Union (1964)

The first Arab School Games Tournament (1963)

The second phase (1965-1977)

This phase was rich in issuances and events. One hundred and forty-six sets were issued consisting of 474 stamps representing several different occasions. The first of these sets was issued on December 1965 and carried the picture of an eagle. It was a regular set composed of eight stamps of different values. In February 1966, the first regular set that carried the picture of Sheikh Sabah al-Salem al-Sabah, the new Amir, was issued. It included of eight stamps. This was followed by three other regular sets that carried his picture. They were issued on the following dates: 5 October 1969, 22 December 1975, and 1 June 1977. Each set was of a different design. A regular

set was also issued on 25 August 1968; it carried the picture of the old museum of Kuwait located near Dasman Palace.

Among the most prominent stamps issued during that period were two circular stamps, issued on 15 June 1970. They had the picture of Sheikh Sabah al-Salem al-Sabah. A memorial card which featured the same picture was issued with them.

The first regular postage stamp set issued on first February 1966. It carried the picture of the late Sheikh Salim Sabah Al-Salim

It is noteworthy that the issuances of that period covered many different national, political, social and economic occasions. To summarize, some of those occasions can be mentioned to show the importance that they had, and also to show the rule a stamp can play to reflect them and carry them outside the country's borders and across the oceans. One of the principal purposes of the postage stamp is to get the world acquainted with the country, its history, its landmarks, its achievements, and its position on various world issues.
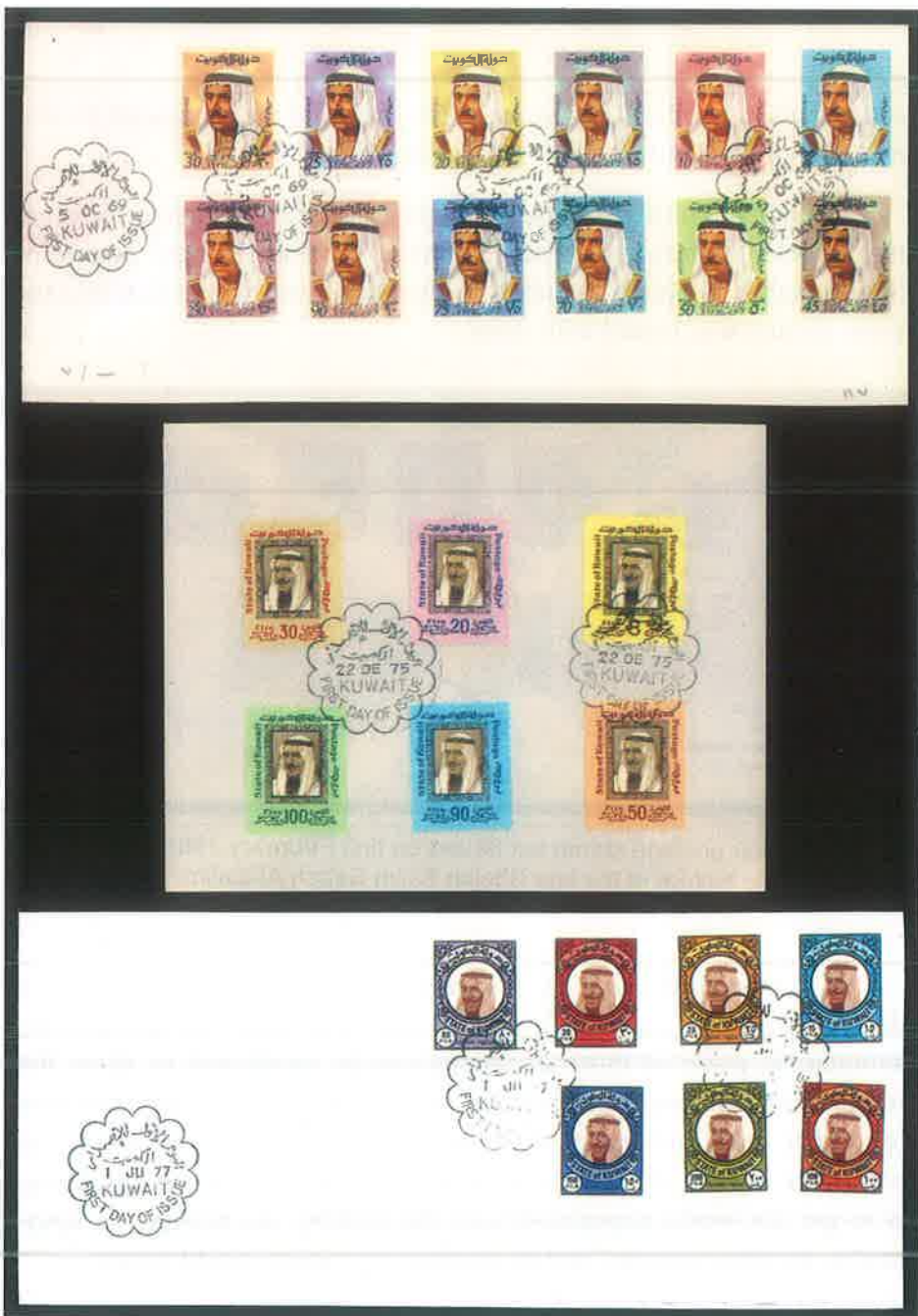
Three regular sets issued in 1969, 1975, and 1977. They carried the picture of Sheikh Sabah al-Salem al-Sabah, (They are postmarked with THE FIRST DAY OF ISSUE).

The circular stamps and the memorial card that was issued with them on 15 June 1970.

1- National occasions and local issuances

As previously mentioned, the second phase was rich in national occasions and important political, social, and economic events which required the issuance of memorial postage stamps.

Some issuances were repeated almost annually, such as the issuances on the occasion of the National Day, Mother's Day, Traffic Day, and Education Day. The issuances that displayed some of the

important events that took place during that period are summarized below.

Economic and political occasions and events

– The twenty-year anniversary of the first oil shipment form Kuwait - June 1966

– The appointment of His Highness the Crown Prince - December 1966

– The inauguration of the chemical fertilizer plant - February 1967

– The thirteenth anniversary of the discovery of oil in the great Burqan field - February 1967

– The inauguration of the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry building - November 1968

– The inauguration of Shuaiba refinery - November 1968

– The inauguration of the Hilton Hotel - February 1969

– The artificial island for loading crude oil - August 1970

– The Kuwaiti Fund for Arab Economic Development - October 1970.

– The first graduation of the National Guard - October 1970

Scientific and social occasions and events

– The Blood Bank Day - May 1966

– The inauguration of Kuwait University - November 1966

– The scout movement in Kuwait - December 1966

– The Kuwait Museum building - August 1968

– The inauguration of Kuwait earth station for satellite communications - December 1969

– The old Kuwaiti sail boats - February 1970

– The population census - 1970

– The inauguration of the telecommunications center - February 1972

– Ruins of Failaka Island - December 1972

Some of the issuances that represent economic and political occasions of importance: the twenty-year anniversary of the first oil shipment in 1946, the appointment of His Highness the Crown Prince and the inaugurations of the chemical fertilizer plant and the Shuaiba refinery.

Sets of stamps issued on different social and scientific occasions, such as the inaugurations of Kuwait University, Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research and the telecommunications center, the tenth anniversary of the Kuwaiti Red Crescent Association, besides the set of old Kuwaiti ships.

– The fiftieth anniversary of stamps issue - November 1973

– Birds of Kuwait and tools for hunting them - December 1973

– The inauguration of the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research - April 1974

– The tenth anniversary of the Kuwaiti Red Crescent Association - May 1976

– The Kuwaiti popular plays - January 1977

– Kuwait Towers - February 1977

– Children's drawings - October 1977

A set issued in 1973 on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the issuance of Kuwaiti stamps (An envelope postmarked as FIRST DAY OF ISSUE)

Among the distinctive sets issued in 1973 was a set of birds of Kuwait and the tools for hunting them.

The variation in these issuances reflects the important role played by postage stamps in representing these events and occasions and spreading them all over the world via the letters on which they are stuck and which travel across continents. Another benefit depicting these occasions on stamps is to remember and record these events in history for the coming generations' awareness of their forefathers' achievements.

2- Arab and regional events

As was its policy always, Kuwait cared for the events and developments taking place in the Arab world. This was clear through the

active contributions of Kuwait to all the Arab and regional fields. The postal issuances reflected that interest and the pioneering role and contributions of Kuwait whether political, economic, or social. Among those postal issuances are:

Economic and political occasions and events

– The conference on industrial development in the Arab countries - March 1966

– The Arab cause week - March 1967

Some sets issued on Arab economic and political occasions: conference on industrial development in the Arab countries (March 1966), the Arab cause week (March 1967), the anniversary of the massacre of Deir Yassin (April 1968), and silver jubilee of the Arab League (March 1970).

- The conference of the Arab chambers of commerce, industry, and agriculture - November 1968
- The anniversary of the massacre of Deir Yassin - April 1968
- Palestine Day - May 1968
- The universal week for Palestinian refugees - December 1969
- The Palestinian commdandos - March 1970
- The silver jubilee of the Arab League - March 1970

Cultural and social occasions and events
- The fifth Arab Medical Conference - April 1966
- The first Arab Cities Organization conference - March 1967
- Arab week for saving the ruins of "al-Nuba" - April 1967

Issuances on different national and social occasions include the Arab Medical Conference (April 1966), the first Arab Cities Organization conference (March 1967), and the fourth Congress of the Arab Veterinary Union in Kuwait (February 1974).

- The passing of 1400 years on the revelation of the Holy Qur'an - December 1968
- The third tournament of the Arabian Gulf Football Cup - March 1974
- The twenty-fifth anniversary of the Arab Postal Union - April 1977

World occasions and events

As well, Kuwait increased its activity with respect to its contributions in the international field. The following postal issuances clearly reflected this activity in that period:

- Freedom from Hunger Campaign - February 1966
- World Health Day - April 1968
- United Nations Day - October 1966
- The twentieth Anniversary of the UNESCO - November 1966
- Tourism International Year - June 1967
- Eradication of Illiteracy - September 1967
- Human Rights International Year - June 1968
- The fiftieth Anniversary of the International Labour Organization - June 1969
- Education International Year - January 1970
- The Red Crescent and Cross International Day - May 1970
- The twenty-fifth Anniversary of the United Nations Organization - June 1970
- Telecommunications International Day - May 1971
- Combat Racism International Year - June 1971
- Olympic Games - Munich - September 1972
- The Centenary of the Universal Postal Union - May 1974
- The International Year of the Woman - June 1975
- The First Phone Call Centenary - March 1976
- Olympic Games - Montreal - July 1976
- Nonaligned Nations Summit Conference - Colombo - August 1976

A few sets issued on different international occasions: Freedom from Hunger Campaign (February 1966), World Health Day (April 1968), United Nations Day (October 1966), Combat Racism International Year (June 1971), and The First Phone Call Centenary (March 1976).

The third phase (1978 - 1990)

This phase spans thirteen years from the rule of His Highness Sheikh Jaber al-Ahmad al-Sabah to the vicious Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990. It is known that this period witnessed many events and developments in all fields at the local, Arab, and inter-

national levels. The multi-interests of the State of Kuwait in that period were reflected in miscellaneous postal issuances. In that period about 140 sets were issued, which covered almost all the local and foreign interests and occasions. These sets fall into three categories: local, Arab, and international.

National occasions and local interests
– The National Day of Kuwait - 25 February
– The new Information Centre - December 1978
– Children's Drawings - April 1979
– Kuwait Kindergarten's twenty-fifth anniversary -September 1979
– Kuwait Airways Corporation's (KAC) twenty-fifth anniversary - December 1979
– Kuwait Municipality's fiftieth Anniversary - May 1980
– The Future of Kuwait in children's eyes -May 1980
– Kuwaiti Dentists' Association first conference - March 1981
– Kuwait Television's twentieth anniversary - December 1981
– The Science and Natural History Museum's tenth anniversary - July 1982
– The opening of new health establishments - February 1984
– The Silver Jubilee of "al-Arabi" magazine - March 1984
– The Science Club's tenth anniversary - August 1984
– The Golden Jubilee of Kuwait Oil Company - December 1984
– The Golden Jubilee of the Central Library - May 1985
– Applying the civil information system - October 1985
– Art of "Sadu" - November 1986
– The housing project of Qurain - October 1987
– The tenth Anniversary of the Public Establishment of Ports - November 1987
– Kuwaiti Teachers' Society - July 1988

The gegular set of stamps issued in June 1978

The set issued on the seventeenth anniversary of the National Day (1978)

– Kuwaiti Dentists' Association fifth conference - March 1989

– The Silver Jubilee of the Kuwaiti Journalists Association - June 1989

– Greenery week - October 1989

– The fifth Anniversary of Gulf Establishment for Investment - November 1989

– The Orphan Supporting project - December 1989

– The Kuwaiti Police Department's fiftieth anniversary - December 1989

Some sets issued in from 1978 to 1990 in memory of a number of national occasions: Kuwait Municipality fiftieth Anniversary, the Golden Jubilee of Kuwait Oil Company, the Golden Jubilee of the Central Library, the Silver Jubilee of "Al-Arabi" magazine, Kuwait Television's twentieth anniversary, and others.

Arab and Islamic occasions and interests

– "Hajj" (pilgrimage) - issued almost annually

– Arab Ministers of Agriculture - March 1979

– The fifteenth Hegira Century - November 1980

– Millenary of Ibn Sina's birth date - December 1980

– The first Islamic Medical Conference in Kuwait - January 1981

– Arab Pharmacist's Day - April 1982

– The United Arab Navigation Company's sixth anniversary - September 1982

– Arab Palm Tree Day - September 1982

– International day of cooperating with the Palestinian People - November 1983

– The establishment of the Kuwaiti village of "Hanan" in the Sudan - May 1984

– Arab Youth Day - July 1984

– The Cooperation Council of Arab Gulf Countries' fifth session in Kuwait - November 1984

– The first Arab Gulf Week for Social Work - March 1985

– The fifth Islamic Summit Conference - Kuwait - January 1987

– Jerusalem is Arabian - June 1987

– Arab Housing Day - October 1988

– The eighteenth Arab Engineering Conference - February 1989

– The tenth Anniversary of the Arab Council for Medical Specialties - May 1989

– The first Anniversary of the Declaration of the State of Palestine - November 1989

Some issuances on different religious occasions: Passing of 1400 years on the revelation of the Holy Qur'an, Hajj (pilgrimage), and the fifteenth Hegira Century.

International occasions and interests

– Combat of Smallpox - April 1987

– The tenth Anniversary of Telecommunications International Day - May 1978

– International anti-apartheid year - November 1978

– Declaration of Human Rights thirteenth Anniversary - December 1978

– International year of The Child - January 1979

– Environment Universal Day - June 1979

– International Education Office fiftieth Anniversary - July 1979

- Olympic Games - Moscow - July 1980
- Handicapped International Year - January 1981
- Food International Day - October 1981
- International Scout Movement, seventy-fifth Anniversary - March 1982
- World Cup Football Finals - Spain - June 1982
- Universal Heritage Agreement for the Protection of Common Mankind Heritage - July 1983
- International Organization for Civil Aviation, fortieth Anniversary - June 1984
- Olympic Games - Los Anglos - July 1984
- Youth International Day - January 1985
- International Program for Developing Communications - March 1985
- OPEC Organization's Silver Jubilee - September 1985
- International Year for Peace - June 1986
- International Navy Day - September 1987
- International Day for Volunteering - December 1988
- Meteorology International Day - March 1990

The stamp issues which carried the picture of His Highness the Emir were limited. The most prominent of these sets was issued on the seventeenth anniversary of the National Day, which was issued on 25 February 1978. The only regular set that carried his picture was issued on 28 June 1987.

As previously mentioned, many other regular issuances were annually issued on national, international and religious occasions. It is also to be noted that the third phase experienced the issue of two large sets; the first included thirty two stamps and the second included fifty stamps. The first set was issued in January 1978 on water sources in Kuwait, old and new. It showed the methods of transporting water to

The set of combatting smallpox (1978), the international anti-apartheid year (1978), the handicapped international day (1981), the International Year of Peace (1986).

The Olympic Games - Moscow - July 1980

The set on water sources in Kuwait, issued in 1978.

houses including water-filled leather bags carried by donkeys. Fresh water was also transported from "Shatt al-Arab" by Dhows manned by Kuwaiti seamen. As well, tank trucks were used for that purpose, until water pipes were extended to houses.

The second set was issued in January 1983. It displayed the different kinds of flora that grow in Kuwait.
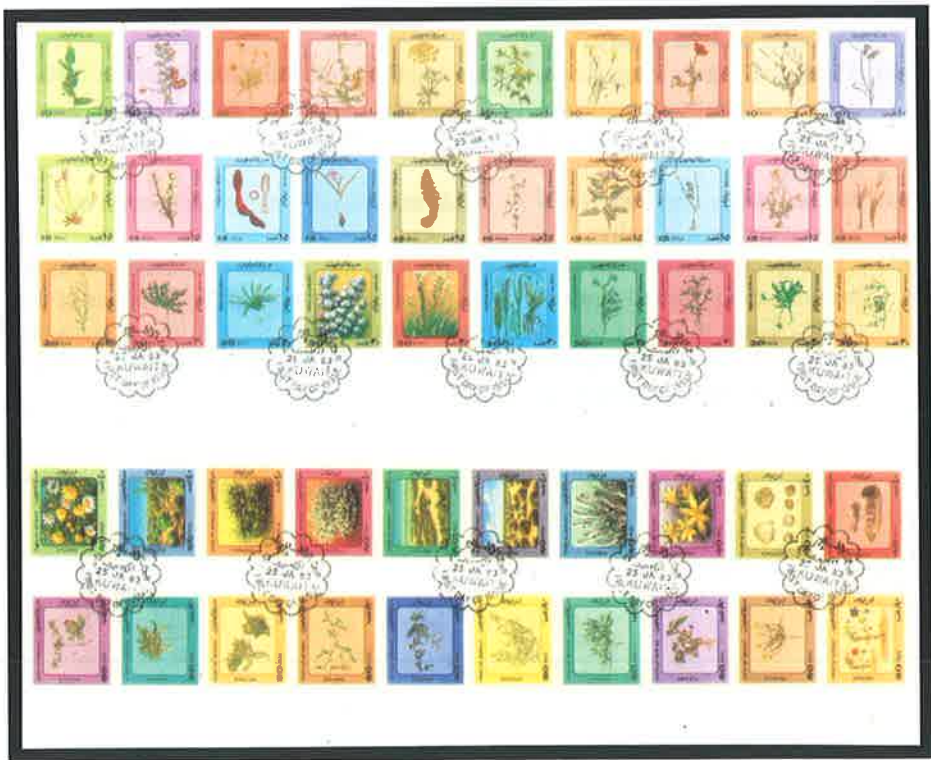
The set issued in January 1983 on wild flowers and desert plants in Kuwait.

References of Chapter Five

(1) The word "department" was used instead of the word "ministry" before independence. The department was headed by a chairman, a director general, and then a deputy director general. After independence, the "department", became a "ministry," the "Chairman" became a "minister," the "director general" became "the ministry undersecretary," and his "deputy" became "assistant undersecretary."

(2) The Postal Agencies in Estern Arabia and the Gulf, Neil Donaldson - p. 180.

(3) The Arab countries which participated in that conference were: Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Libya,Yemen, Algeria, Tunis, Sudan, Jordan, and Iraq.

(4) Unfortunately, the Iraqi forces stole this machine during its occupation of Kuwait and took it to Iraq.

(5) The regular set is a set of stamps of a standard design but in different colors and denominations, usually available at the post offices to meet the demands of the public. These cover the postage fees of letters and parcels of different sizes and weights. As for the memorial sets, they are usually issued for a limited period after which they are withdrawn.

Chapter Six

The Kuwaiti mail during the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait and after the liberation

- The Iraqi invaders' plunder of the post offices
- Postal correspondence
    - Outgoing mail
    - Incoming mail

- Carrier pigeons

- The mail in Kuwait after the liberation
    - Re-operating the post offices in Kuwait

- Memorial stamps issued by friendly countries on the occasion of the liberation of Kuwait

Chapter Six

The Kuwaiti mail during the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait and after the liberation

The invaders' plunder of the post offices

The destruction that befell the national establishments of Kuwait due to the Iraqi invasion affected the Kuwaiti mail as well. The invaders plundered most of the equipment and modern installations the Kuwaiti postal department had been provided with in the past years to serve the public. Much of the remaining equipment was destroyed. The reaction of the Kuwaiti mail employees and many of the foreign employees was to stop going to work to protest against the aggression and declare civil disobedience. However, some employees of certain Arab nationalities continued to work. As a matter of fact, some of them cooperated extensively with the invaders, and gave them many details of the work of the ministry, including confidential information.

The invaders and some of those who co-operated with them stole postage stamps, stationery, postmarks, and other tools. This, however, was not of any use to them, as the citizens boycotted postal service, and the expatriates mistrusted the Iraqi invaders. The Kuwaiti citizens sent their letters to relatives abroad by means of those who left Kuwait; they would carry the letters to their countries where they would post them to their addressees. As for the letters coming to Kuwaiti citizens from their families abroad, they were also sent with Arab nationals coming to Kuwait via Jordan to terminate their work

and dislocate their property to their countries so that it would not be exposed to plunder and theft by the invaders or the mobs who cooperated with them. Generally, these letters were limited because many Kuwaitis went to Basrah to call their families abroad. This continued until about the end of 1990, which made postal correspondence of little importance.

Postal correspondence

With the help of some Arab nationals cooperating with them, the Iraqi invaders – a few days after the invasion – opened some of the post offices: Safat, the General Post Office, Hawalli, and Salmiya. A number of employees of certain nationalities informed them of the methods of work and continued to work in these offices. Their work was only to sell Iraqi stamps – after Kuwaiti stamps were prohibited – in addition to sending few letters that some foreigners wrote to their families abroad via Baghdad and Amman.

Some of the letters that were sent abroad during the invasion were observed by the Safat Post Office and the General post office. However, the number of those letters seems to be very limited due to the people's avoidance in dealing with the invaders, and their mistrust in the Iraqi regime, particularly when they realized that the actual intention behind the invasion was nothing but plunder, theft and destruction.

The invaders had prepared some postmarks to be used before sending the mail to Baghdad. There were two postmarks; the first was circular and was to be used in the General post office and the second was rectangular and was to be used by Safat Post Office.

Outgoing mail

It seems that the amount of mail leaving Kuwait during the invasion was insignificant. However, some letters were actually sent abroad from the Safat Post Office and the General Post Office. Iraqi stamps were stuck on them, and marked with the postmarks prepared

by the invaders to support the occupation and their false claims that Kuwait was the "nineteenth governorate." Other similar actions were also taken to achieve the same aim, such as substituting car plates for others on which was written "Iraq-Kuwait." Their postmarks had the words "Republic of Iraq - Kuwait Post Office" in addition to the date.

Among the countries to which those letters were sent were Jordan, Yemen, and others supporting the invaders, as well as India, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, and other east Asian countries.

Incoming mail

It was natural that large amounts of letters were on their way to Kuwait from different parts of the world in the days that preceded the invasion. It was obvious that those letters were held in their countries of origin or in the countries through which they passed, waiting for the developments that would take place. There were also a considerable number of letters in the post offices in kuwait, in the airport, or elsewhere waiting to be postmarked and delivered. When the invasion took place, most of those letters remained where they were due to the absence of post office staff. The situation remained as such until the invaders took hold of all the state utilities. They started their useless desperate attempts to re-operate these utilities as normal to make the world believe that everything was functioning normally. In the post offices they opened, they postmarked the incoming letters before delivery with their special postmark of the Iraqi post office. The distribution and delivery process was limited to few letters being placed in the Safat post office boxes, whereas the other letters were neglected and not delivered. That was due to their lack of knowledge of the addresses, and their being engaged in other matters, the least of which were theft and plunder. They thought of nothing but that, especially that they were thrilled by the plentiful good things of the country and the civilized advancement they never dreamt of or witnessed, as they came from an environment enveloped in ignorance, retardation, and resentment.

Letters sent from Egypt to Kuwait during the invasion, and returned after being marked "Returned due to the current situation in Iraq and Kuwait."

There were other letters that had been sent to Kuwait from individuals, companies and establishments in different parts of the world. Some of these letters reached Kuwait and remained neglected in the Safat post Office except those that were addressed to post boxes in that office. The Iraqi regime's employees postmarked them and placed them in boxes of some establishments and companies. Most of these letters, which were postmarked with Baghdad Post Office, came from Arab countries, such as Jordan and probably Yemen, as well as India, the Philippines, Hong Kong and other east Asian countries.

It was obvious that most countries that stood up against the Iraqi invasion did not send letters to Kuwaiti during that period. An example is the Arab Republic of Egypt which prepared a special seal on which was printed "Returned due to the current situation in Iraq and Kuwait." The letter would then be returned to the sender if he had his address on it.

The post offices that were occupied by the invaders continued to operate under their administration until the first week of January 1991. They were then closed as many of the employees of the Iraqi regime left Kuwait when they realized that the end was imminent.

The Kuwaiti mail department considered the Kuwaiti stamps during that period cancelled, especially since there was a possibility that they would be stolen by the Iraqis or those who cooperated with them. Thus the Kuwaiti stamps that were issued before the invasion were not used even when the post offices were reopened after the liberation. This continued until January 1993 or so, when the Kuwaiti post offices resumed selling stamps that were issued before the invasion and that were kept in the safes of the ministry.

The Kuwaiti government in Saudi Arabia printed two types of stamps (without a specified value) during the invasion. They carried the flag of Kuwait and had the phrase "FREE KUWAIT" printed on them. Five million copies were made of each in Bahrain and they were distributed for free in January 1991 in the Gulf countries and all over the world. The aim was to serve the Kuwaitis in the Gulf countries and

everywhere. As a matter of fact, those stamps were not postage stamps in the real sense of the word, rather they were for political purposes to remind the world of the fair case of Kuwait.

Two stamps, postage free, issued by the mail department of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Communications from Saudi Arab ia. Five million copies of each were printed in Bahrain. They were distributed for free in January 1991.

Carrier pigeons

The period of the aggressive Iraqi occupation was, by all means, horrible. Any Kuwaiti was exposed to execution if the invaders felt that he did anything that might help his country, however simple it might be. Thus, it is worth referring to one of the citizens who tried to offer mail service to the people of his country who were badly in need of it.

One of the citizens resistent to the occupation was Ahmed Abdul-Majeed al-Kazmi who raised carrier pigeons. He had a good number of pigeons which were well trained to travel to distant places and come back to their holes in his house. In September 1990, a month after the invasion, some of the military and other Kuwaiti citizens had to leave Kuwait for Saudi Arabia or Iran which were the only two countries the Kuwaitis could directly go to one way or another. Some

of those citizens asked al-Kazmi to lend them some of his pigeons to carry messages to their families and inform them that they arrived safely. Al-Kazmi would gladly offer the service, and would prepare the pigeon and provide the person concerned with the information required. He would place the pigeon in an old cage so as not to attract the attention of the enemy on the borders, and would inform the traveller and his companions of the importance of answering any enquiries the enemy had about the pigeon. He instructed them to tell the enemy that it belonged to one of the children who would like to take it with him. After crossing the borders, the traveller would write a phrase or two on a small piece of paper and his family's phone number. The paper was tied to the bird's leg before releasing it to fly back to Kuwait. On its arrival to his house, al-Kazmi would open the paper and read it on the phone to the traveller's family.

Copies of messages written by some Kuwaitis and sent to their families in kuwait by means of carrier pigeons, after leaving the Kuwaiti borders.

Several messages were sent in this way from Saudi Arabia and Iran. Some pigeons would come back within one day, while others took two. One pigeon returned one week after the departure. Some of them arrived with the messages ruined due to landing in humid places or ponds during the return flight, which would make reading the message impossible.

One of the interesting stories that happened during that period was that one of the birds was lost on 12 September 1990 and did not return. Ahmad al-Kazmi had bought it from Czechoslovakia in May 1990, i.e. about two and a half months before the invasion. Immediately after the liberation, it happened that Ahmad al-Kazmi's brother travelled to Czechoslovakia in March 1991 and visited the person who had sold this pigeon to his brother. When the Czechoslovakian (i.e. the seller) made sure of the identity of al-Kazmi's brother, he told him that the pigeon returned to him on 23 September 1990 (i.e. about 11 days after it left Kuwait) and that he still had it. He also called al-Kazmi in Kuwait, who gave him the number of the pigeon and other details concerning it. The Czechoslovakian then gave the pigeon to the brother to take it back to Kuwait. The Czechoslovakian related that when the pigeon returned to him, it was identified by the brass ring which bore its number and other details and was tied to one of its feet. He added that he was surprised and told his friends about the story. The news spread. Some journalists published the story with the picture of the pigeon which became known as "the pigeon that ran away from the hell of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait." Moreover, the Czechoslovakian's house had regular visits due to the large number of people interested in the story of the pigeon, and many hobbyists offered to buy it. But the Czechsslovakian assured them that he would not sell it, and that he would return it to its owner after the liberation of Kuwait, which he did. Ahmad al-Kazmi received his pigeon in early April 1991. He renamed it (B-52) after the bomber that destroyed the oppressors.

Vlani 2. septembra bola nedeľa. MVDr. Jozef Zaťko vyšiel na dvor, aby nakŕmil holuby a psíkov. Pozná každého svojho holuba, hoci ich má vyše sedemdesiat. Odrazu zbystril zrak. Zbadal medzi nimi modrotepaného krasavca. Prizrel sa ešte raz. Veď je to ten, čo ho vo februári odniesol do Kuvajtu Abdul Husajn Mustafa... Je to možné?! Holuba chytil, nebránil sa. Bol vychudnutý. Pozorne snímal krúžok na nohe. Pozrie sa do svojich záznamov. To predsa nie je možné...

Nevedel som veru, že Arabi sú mimoriadnymi milovníkmi chovu holubov. Prekážajú sa navzájom, kto má krajšieho. Svoje bohaté záhrady majú ozdobené veľkými citrónovými klietkami, v ktorých chovajú všakovakých tavýchto vtákov z celého sveta. Za vzácnym holubom sú schopní cestovať takýto kilometrov. Veru už ich dávni predkovia boli teklto fanatici. Chovajú nielen úžitkové plemená, ale aj holubov ozvrolých, hrvoliakov, okrasných, bradavičnatých, letúňov, poštových...

HOSŤ Z PIEŠŤAN

Prvé správy o domácom chove holubov sú z obdobia 3500 rokov pred Kristom. Z oblasti starého Egypta, kde ich označovali za vtáky nebies a nebeské mláďatá. V Európe patrí prvenstvo slávny Grékom. Veď aj Homér písal 700 rokov pred Kristom o strieborných holuboch. Chovali ich nielen na rýchle prenášanie správ, ale aj ako zdroj mäsa. Zvyšky ktorý holubov medzi Tatrami a stredným Dunajom objavujú slovenskí archeológovia už zo 8. a najmä z 9. storočia, teda z čias Pribinu a Veľkej Moravy.

Doktor Jozef Zaťko pracuje na Obvodnej veterinárnej správe v Nitre a chovu holubov sa venuje od roku 1949. Cez jeho ruky prešli niekoľko desiatok generácií rôznych plemien. Rozpráva nám o plemenách fešákov, pre ktorých je dôležitý výkon pri letaní. Mal desiatky krásavcov, streďo- i dlho-zobých letúňov; najmä s elhozobjení, ktoré choval pre výškové lety, doslahol najeden úspech. Celé dni a noci vytrval vyčkával svojich operencov z preletkov. Či už z domácich súťaží alebo zo zahraničia: z Juhoslávie, Belgicka, Rumunska, Nemecka, Poľska, Maďarska...

Venovať sa chovu a šľachteniu holubov nie je lacný špás. Vypestvať holuba, naučiť ho vracať sa do rodného hniezda, starať sa o krmivo – to všetko si žiada nielen čas, ale aj nemalé finančné prostriedky a lásku k vtáralám.

Medzi holubami doktora Zaťka bol i jeden modrotepaný, bystrý a príľúbý, ktorých

Veterinár doktor Zaťko sa už vyše tridsať rokov venuje chovu a šľachteniu holubov

Priletel z Kuvajtu
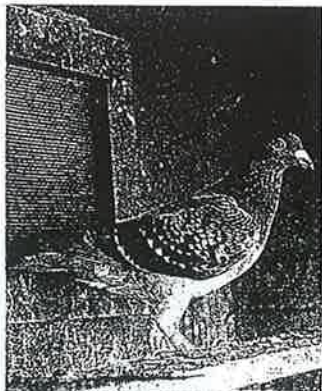
Kuvajťan znova v Nitre
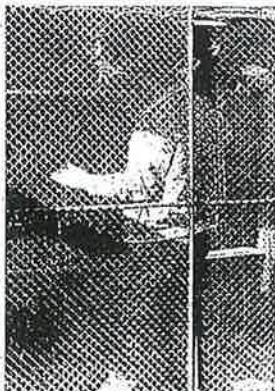
V tejto klietke pod Zoborom je dnes lepšie ako v krásnej záhrade v Kuvajte

A copy of the Czechoslovakian newspaper that published the story of the pigeon that ran away from Kuwait and the hell of Saddam.

The mail in Kuwait after the liberation

The post offices in Kuwait were not reopened until two months or so after the liberation. Some of the coalition forces established mail services after entering Kuwait, which were offered to members of the armed forces of their countries. Also the forces of the United Nations

offered mail services to their personnel in the same way. The soldiers would give their letters to the persons in charge of these services in the camps. The letters were collected, postmarked and placed in special boxes prior to their transportation from Kuwait to two centers in Saudi Arabia, al-Khafji and Hafr al-Baten, to be sent from there to their countries. No stamps were stuck on these letters. Instead they were stamped with a special postmark on which was written "MILITARY POST OFFICE." Amongst the most important of those mail centers were the USA, Britain, France, Egypt, Syria, Pakistan, Senegal, and others in addition to the United Nations post office. Letters sent during that period are considered rare mail materials that can only be found with difficulty, and for which hobbyists exert great efforts to acquire.

The American mail on its arrival to the Gulf countries

It is worth mentioning that the International Red Cross office that was opened in Kuwait after the liberation played an important role in sending letters between Iraqi prisoners of war and their families in Iraq. It would receive the letters from the Iraq prisoners and hand

1.

MESSAGE CROIX-ROUGE
RED CROSS MESSAGE
رسالة الصليب الاحمر

رقم الصليب الاحمر
No. CICR
ICRC No. ....

2. EXPEDITEUR / SENDER / المرسل

Nom complet   Full name   الاسم بالكامل
(selon l'usage local) (as expressed locally) (حسب الاستعمال المحلي)

....

Alias ....
اللقب
Date de naissance   Sexe
Date of birth .... Sex : M / F
تاريخ الولادة   أ / ذ   الجنس
Nom complet du père
Father's full name ....
اسم الوالد بالكامل
Adresse postale complète
Full postal address ....
العنوان بالكامل

....
Code postal   Téléphone
Postal code .... Telephone ....
الرمز البريدي   رقم الهاتف

رقم الصليب الاحمر
No. CICR
ICRC No. ....

3. DESTINATAIRE / ADDRESSEE / المرسل اليه

Nom complet   Full name   الاسم بالكامل
(selon l'usage local) (as expressed locally) (حسب الاستعمال المحلي)

....

Alias ....
اللقب
Date de naissance   Sexe
Date of birth .... Sex : M / F
تاريخ الولادة   أ / ذ   الجنس
Nom complet du père
Father's full name ....
اسم الوالد بالكامل
Adresse postale complète
Full postal address ....
العنوان بالكامل

....
Code postal   Téléphone
Postal code .... Telephone ....
الرمز البريدي   رقم الهاتف

4. COMITE INTERNATIONAL DE LA CROIX-ROUGE   اللجنة الدولية للصليب الاحمر
    INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS
    19, av. de la Paix - CH - 1202 GENEVE

A replica of the message the Red Cross delivered to the families of the prisoners of war, provided that only personal and family affairs are written (on the back).

TA/BASRAH/CRI

AR/KUWAIT
CC AR BAGHDAD

.0 4 JAN. 1992

Basrah 31-10 1991

RE : Family RC Messages from Iraq to Kuwait

Please, find enclosed __121__ family messages of which :

__121__ RCM from civilians in Iraq to family in Kuwait (first go)
Tracing requests files DKWB/DKWK : From MBAS [2676 - 2695]
[2698 - 2713] [2717 - 2726] [2718 - 2736] [2738 - 2744]
[2746 - 2751] [2754 - 2758] [2762 - 2808] and 1986
PDNKW or AFN no : _____

_____ RCM with answers from civilians in Kuwait to fam. in Iraq(2 go)
Tracing requests files DKWB/DKWK : 1154 - 317 - 85 - 2727 - 811
2035 - and ID 300056 and 2RCM of DKAS 459
PDNKW or AFN no : _____

_____ R.T.S. (Incomplete address, addresses not found, etc)
Tracing requests files DKWB/DKWK : _____
_____
_____
PDNKW or AFN no : _____
_____

Thank you for distributing these messages to the persons concerned
and best regards,

Encl.ment.

Hay Al-Karrada — Section 901 — Street No. 14 — House No. 32 — Baghdad — Iraq — Tel. 718 68 63 — Telex 213619

The International Committee of the Red Cross delivered letters sent from Iraqis to their families in Kuwait and vice versa. This note dated 31/10/1991, shows that 121 letters had been sent from Iraq to Kuwait during that period.

them to its office in Iraq which would in turn deliver them to their families there. Some of the Iraqis in Kuwait were – and probably still are – making use of the services of the International Red Cross office in Kuwait, which it receives and distributes incoming letters from Iraq to Kuwait via its office there. Usually, the International Committee of the Red Cross provides this service for the foreigners in countries where mutual mail services are not available (as is the case in Kuwait and Iraq as of this writing.)

Reoperating the post offices in Kuwait

On 27 April 1991, the Safat Post Office was reopened to receive the public and offer limited mail services. Mainly these services were receiving outgoing mail and collecting their postage fees. Later, the major branches such as Salmiya and Hawalli were gradually opened. At that time, postage stamps were not available. Outgoing letters were stamped with a manual rubber seal for temporary use. Two seals were made for that purpose. The first had the phrase "POSTAGE PAID" in Arabic, while the second had it written in English. The two seals did not show the value paid. The mail department, during that period, did not use stamps for fear that large quantities of postage stamps issued before the invasion could have fallen in unauthorized hands or in an illegal manner. Therefore the Kuwaiti stamps issued before the invasion were temporarily cancelled.[1] For two months, the mail department continued to receive letters from the citizens and collect the postage fees in cash against stamping them in the way mentioned above. The stamping machine, which printed the value on the letter, was also reused. The situation remained as such until the sets of liberation stamps were issued on 22 May 1991. On that day, three different sets of stamps were issued, each of which consisted of 3 stamps. The

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(1) As of January 1993 post offices in Kuwait started selling some of the available stamps that were issued before the invasion. Amongst them was the set of the eagle that was issued a few weeks before the invasion and which was considered rare.

first was named the "liberation set." It carried a picture of some Kuwaiti soldiers hoisting the flag of Kuwait, while pigeons of peace fly over Kuwait towers. The second set was named the "peace set." It carried the map of Kuwait with pigeons of peace in different colors above. The third set was the "rebuilding set" with the map of Kuwait surrounded from above by two flags in a semi-circle, while the lower part of the map was an image of the earth.

The two postmarks used after the liberation (from 27/4/1991 to 21/5/1991) instead of postage stamps before the issuance of the liberation sets.
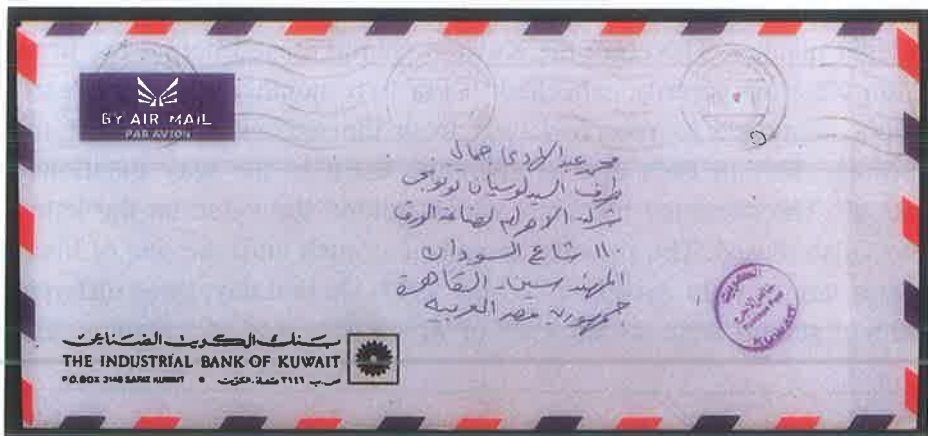
A letter dated 11/5/1991 sent from Kuwait to Cairo - carrying the POSTAGE PAID stamp before the issuance of the liberation sets.
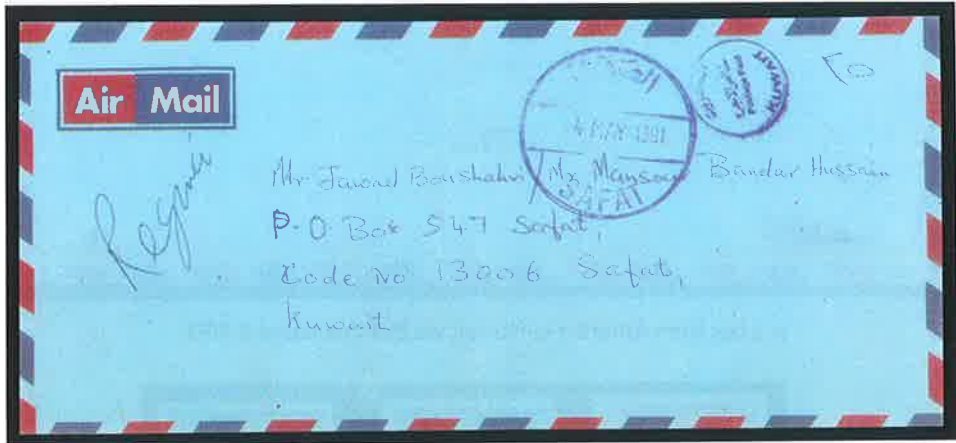
A local letter with the postmark dated 4/5/1991

A local letter dated 21/5/1991 issued from Safat Post Office with the postage fees printed on it with the stamping machine

A letter from America to Kuwait via Bahrain dated 2/6/91

The liberation stamps issued on 22 May 1991: The liberation set (top row), the peace set (middle), and the rebuilding set (lower)

The conditions continued to improve and gradually return back to normal. The process of mail collection and delivery was reestablished in an improved way. While the other post offices opened their doors for the public, the mail department continued to issue different sets, some carrying the flags of the allies, others supporting the cause of the Kuwaiti prisoners of war, while others pictured the oil wells which the invaders destroyed and ignited before their defeat and retreat.

On 25 July 1991 a set was issued consisting of 42 stamps worth fifty fils each. Each carried a flag of one of the coalition countries in addition to the United Nations flag in the shape of a pigeon. As well, a memorial card with all those flags was issued and on which was written "Kuwait thanks the world".

The set of stamps issued on 25 July 1991 carrying the flags of the coalition countries

Two envelopes stamped with the seal of "the first day of issue." The first carried the flags of the countries of the cooperation council and the United Nations. The second carried the flags of the USA, Britain, France, Canada, and some European countries (which were all Allies).

-242-

On 16 November 1991, the "Prisoners of war" set was issued. It consisted of two stamps on which was written "Don't forget our POWs" in Arabic and English. The former set was in denominations of fifty fils and the latter was in 150 fils.

Stamps issued to remind the world of the Kuwaiti prisoners of war.

As for the letters coming to Kuwait from abroad, they started to arrive via Bahrain, where they were postmarked before being sent to Kuwait.

Some of the embassies of Kuwait in Europe issued memorial stamps for free on the occasion of the liberation.
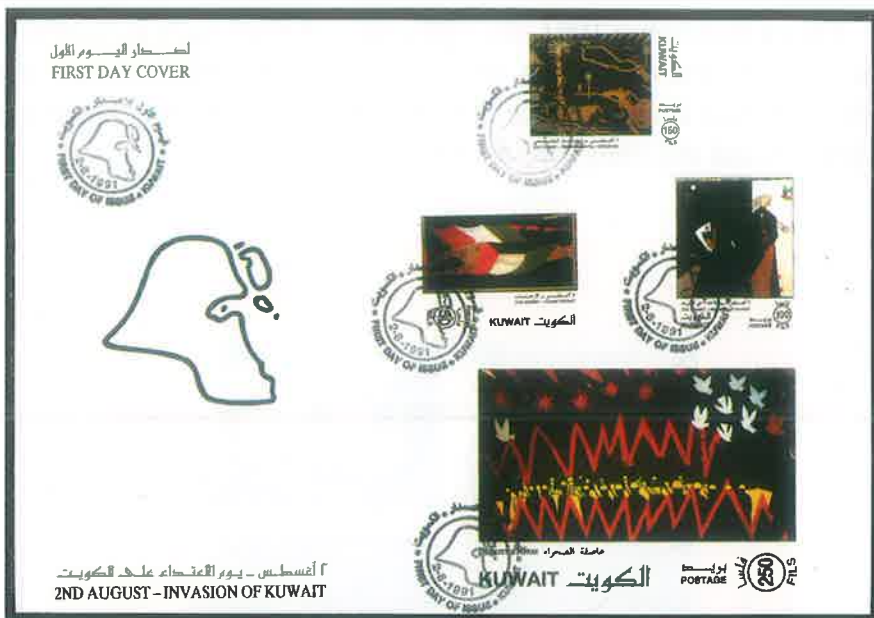
Two sets of stamps: the first was issued on 2/8/1991 the anniversary of the aggression on Kuwait); the second was issued on 26 February 1992 on the occasion of the first anniversary of the liberation of Kuwait.
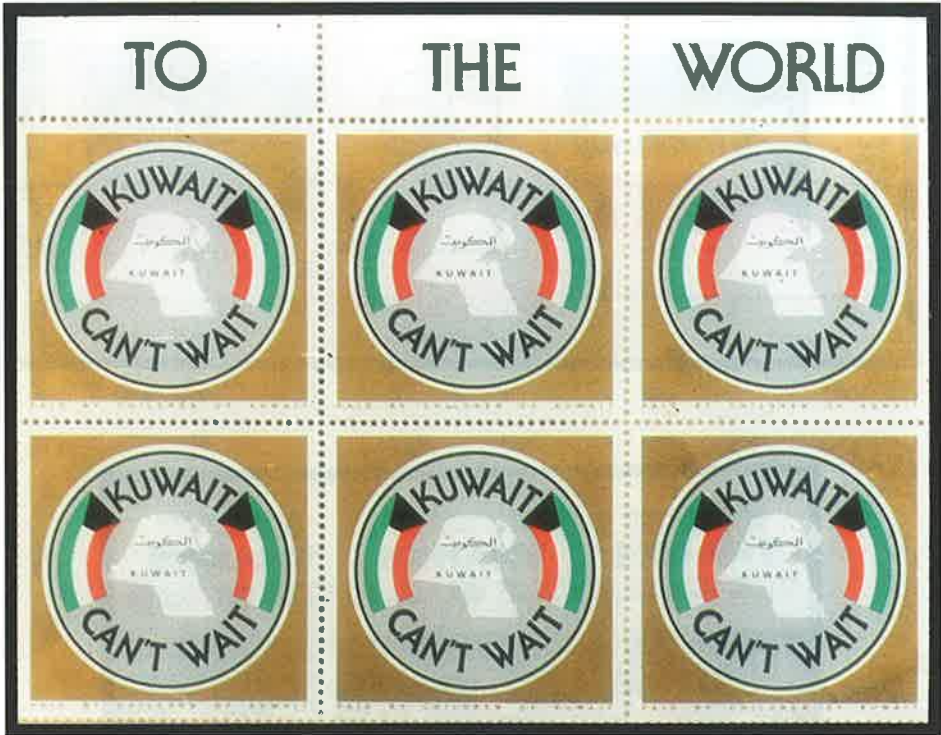
During the invasion, some of the embassies of Kuwait in Europe issued memorial stamps for free.

Other stamps issued by one of the Kuwaiti embassies in Europe on the occasion of the liberation

-246-

Memorial stamps issued by friendly countries on the occasion of the liberation of Kuwait

Some friendly countries issued sets of stamps on the occasion of the liberation day of Kuwait. Saudi Arabia, for example, issued a set of two stamps in denominations of 75 H and 150 H (Halalah). The two stamps carried the flag of Kuwait centered on its map. "Kuwait is a free country" was written on the stamp.

The set of stamps issued by Saudi Arabia on the occasion of the liberation of the State of Kuwait

The United States and France, as well as other countries, issued memorial stamps on the occasion of Desert Storm and the liberation of the State of Kuwait. Some post offices in Europe printed memorial envelopes specifically for this occasion. In 1991, the American postal department issued a pictorial book in honor of the American soldiers who participated in the liberation war. The book contained many of the expressive letters sent by some of them to their families, and letters sent by some American children to their fathers on the battle-

field. Those letters expressed the appreciation of the soldiers' families for the noble work their sons did, and for the sake of peace and freedom. Others expressed parents' wishes for their sons' success, and for Kuwait's victory, freedom and peace.
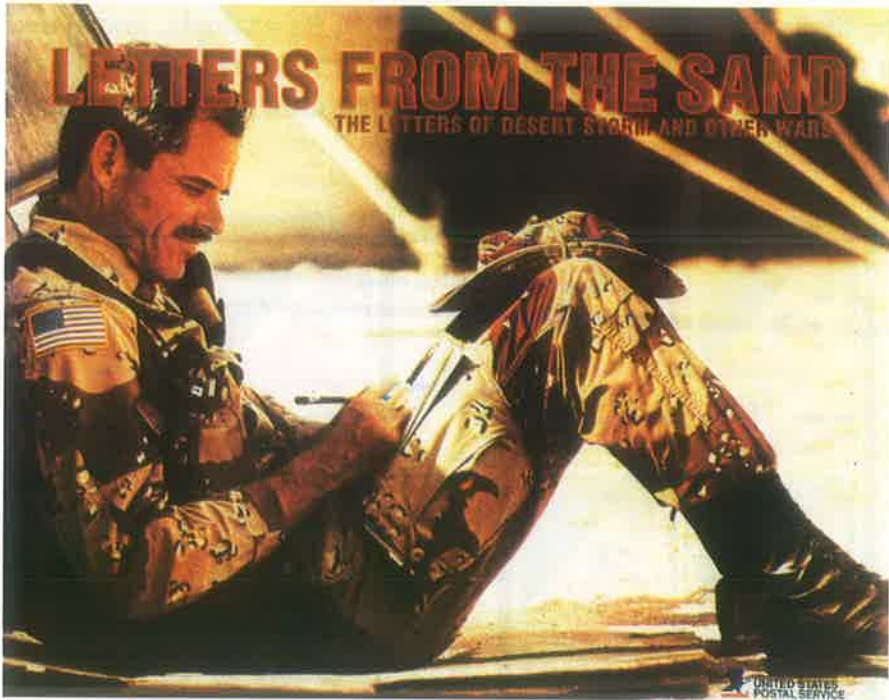
The cover of the book issued by the American Postal Department in honor of the American soldiers participating in Desert Storm

A set of stamps issued by the United States in memory of Desert Storm

Pages form the book issued by the American Postal Department in memory of Desert Storm

Some memorial stamps and envelopes issued by a number of European countries on the occasion of Desert Storm and the liberation of the State of Kuwait.

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2-	Khalid Khalaf Al-Tailji	His late father, Khalaf al-Telegy worked for the India Post Dept in Kuwait (1919 - 1936)	3/2/1993
3-	Abdul- Samad M. Sadeq Al-Mahmeed	The British Post Dept. (1950 - 1958) Kuwait Post Department (1958 - 1983)	21/2/1993 19/3/1993
4-	Bader and Yassin Jassim cAbdal	Their late father, Jasem cAbdal, worked for The India Post Dept. and The British Post Dept. (1919 - 1958)	30/3/1993
5-	Ali Abbas Khaja	The British Post Dept. in Kuwait (1949 - 1958) Kuwait Post Department (1958 - 1983)	2/4/1993

6-	Ghuloum M. Khaja	The British Post Dept. in Kuwait (1948 - 1952)	11/4/1993
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