

Nigeria Postal Agencies

Display to WASC members

Introduction

A display set out in chronological order

How many postal agencies were there in Nigeria?

How were new postal agencies justified?

What did it take for them later to be upgraded to
departmental POs?

What determined where new Postal Agencies were opened?

In 1924 the PMG said in the P&T Annual Report

"It is the policy of the Department to open Post Offices wherever the needs of the local people demand it. It is realised that many of these small offices will not pay their way but in view of the convenience they afford and as it is believed that they assist materially in the development of the country everything possible is done to accede to requests for new offices. Government has always granted any additional money wanted for the purpose."

This seems to provide a policy framework for the growth in numbers of postal agencies from then onward, apart from retrenchments in the early 1930s recession and during World War II.

I have a copy of a letter dated 18 September 1956 from the Office of the Director of Posts & Telegraphs to a Mr H.E. Walker who had asked how many post offices there were in Nigeria at that date. The letter lists 154 post offices (including those in Cameroons) but in a final sentence at the end of the letter, shown here, says that there are another 850 active postal agencies, which the writer had not listed.

✓ Warri	Warri
Wukari	Benue
✓ Yaba	Colony
Yelwa	Sokoto
Yola	Adamawa
✓ Zaria	Zaria
✓ Zungeru	Niger
Zuru	Niger

Five Mobile Post Offices are in use and they are based on Aba, Benin, Enugu, Ibadan and Jos.

In addition to the above 850 Postal Agencies are in operation.

I am, Sir,
Your obedient Servant,


(R.W. CORKILL)
f. DIRECTOR,
POSTS AND TELEGRAPHS,

Mr. H.E. Walker,
5, Highfield Road,
Cheshire Hulme,
Cheshire,
England.

RWC/AAO.

I can show correspondence from 1959-1960 relating to a request for a postal agency at Uyanga in Cross River State north of Calabar, which starts with a request from the local government and Court office to the Senior District Officer.

8/5/59 1139 930 371
C.E. Otu,
c/o Chief Tom Bassey,
Uyanga Native Court,
Calabar Division.
29th April, 1959.

The Senior District Officer,
Calabar.

Sir,

I have the honour most respectfully to apply to you for the following request asking for your kind consideration in allowing us to have a Post Office opened at Uyanga which is the central village for the following villages combined:

1. Uyanga	5. Ikwari
2. Ikosai	6. Ifumba
3. Iko'Kpedem	7. Oyo Uyanga 1 & 2
4. Awai	8. Akankpa
	9. Nyak-Asang
	10. Owai
	11. Ayabam
	12. Mbarakom
	13. Estate
	14. Uwet
	15. Ewen
	16. Budeng
	17. Ekpri Ibami
	18. Aqua Ibami
	19. Iwari (1)
	20. Iwari (2)
	21. Nde-Okoro
	22. Ekpri Iko
	23. Ndadiso
	24. Ndimoko
	25. Midaha etc. etc.

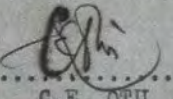
Every time we have to suffer in going to pick mails up at Calabar for a distance of 39 miles to the post office which very often makes us to lose our letters.

Many of the big schools opened here, and many businesses opened here are lamenting of where and how to have quick communication with their friends in distant places.

I shall be eagerly looking to you for good consideration and I promise to be willing to come in for any necessary training if my service will be needed, for this approval.

Believing your love will give me good consideration and response.

C.B.
Please enquire from my
Egale - what postal facilities
are at Uyanga 8/5 See 1372

I hope to be, sir,
Your obedient servant,

C.E. OTU

The council completed an application form (not seen) and the Head Postmaster of Calabar District sent the District Officer a note of the criteria he would need to see satisfied in order to approve this.

APR 26/1 930 371

HEADPOSTMASTER'S OFFICE,
CALABAR.
16th SEPT. 1960.

The District Officer,
CALABAR.

UYANGA POSTAL AGENCY
PROPOSED ESTABLISHMENT.

1. Subsequent to the application dated 3/10/59 submitted by Ejagham Dusanga Iyong Iyong District Council, a standard form 'A' for establishment of a postal Agency at Uyanga Okposung village is fully completed by the council and forwarded to me.

2. As the council is under your administration, it would be appreciated if you confirm the following statements.

(a) That Uyanga Native Court, of which one room would be used as postal agency is of cement walls, covered with corrugated iron sheets and secured doors and windows.

(b) That a cemented-in-safe or strongly constructed cash box for the safe custody of the stocks and cash is provided.

(c) That Messrs S. A. Olory the Chairman of E.D.I.C.C. and J. A. Agbachom the Chairman staff and finance committee of E.P.I.I.C.C., who are the prospective sureties are of good financial standing.

3. It is anticipated that this memo will receive your full co-operation and early attention.

DISTRICT OFFICE
19 SEP 1960
CALABAR
P-18

HEADPOSTMASTER
CALABAR DISTRICT.

Link for Gayhem. or (a) & (b)
above H. H.

C.B.
Take action as above
D. 19/60

Uyanga local council responded to enquiries to describe the building that would become the postal agency office and to state that the 1953 census population of Uyanga was 2282.

RECEIVED
Ejagham Dusanga Iyong Iyong District Office,
Calabar,
10th November, 1960.

The Ag. Senior District Officer,
Calabar Division,
Calabar.

Uyanga Postal Agency
Proposed Establishment.

With reference to your letter No. 930/390 of 13rd September, 1960 I confirm that the room to be used as postal agency in Uyanga Native Court is of cement walls, covered with corrugated iron sheets and secured doors and windows and that there is a cemented-in safe for safe custody of stores and cash.

P-114
Ejagham Dusanga Iyong Iyong County Council.

The District Officer replied to the Head Postmaster to support the application for a new postal agency, but expressed a preference to site it at Akampka. It is a village between Uyanga and Calabar, so a postal agency there would shorten the journey for residents of, and businesses in, Uyanga to collect their mail.

930/390. 8 December, 60

The Head postmaster,
Post Office,
Calabar.

Proposed postal Agency at Uyanga.

With reference to your letter No. HP. 26/1 of 24th November 1960, there is a great need for postal services in that area, your office has received much correspondence on this matter from the people of Uyanga and Akampka and also from the General Manager of Dunlop Nigeria Plantation Ltd. Uyanga is 40 miles from Calabar and Akampka 30 miles, the latter place is more central and I feel probably the better situation. There is a native court at both places and Akampka also has a police post next door to the native court. I consider Akampka the best location for a postal Agency.

509/12
C. Stewart.
AG. Senior District Officer,
Calabar Division.

In the event, a postal agency was opened at Akampka on 2nd November 1961, but a postal agency also eventually opened at Uyanga in 1964. This correspondence shows that the local representatives needed to make a call for postal agency facilities. To succeed the local authority needed to show potential demand, provide a suitable building with a safe, find a reputable postal agent and provide sureties from the local headmen. In rural areas the local courtroom was often the most suitable building.

What determined how postal agencies converted to staffed sub post offices?

Documents found in the Calabar archives reveal the criteria to consider upgrading from postal agency to a sub-post office staffed by a salaried post office employee in 1954. A weighting was given to the various postal services, as shown in the first letter below which relates to three specific postal agencies, which gave a total number of "units" of value of service. The second letter shows that none of these three agencies came at all close to qualifying because it would require a minimum of 17,000 units per annum.

Calabar.
4 September, 1954.

The Secretary,
Ministry of Works,
Eastern Region,
K N G U.

Unit Statistics of Postal Agencies
Calabar Division.

I have to refer to your Circular letter No.2/1954 of the 20th of July, 1954 and to submit herewith the following information as requested :-

(a) Akpaebu Postal Agency, Ikot Makanda.

Stamps sold	555	550	Units
Postal Orders issued	692	692	"
Postal Orders Paid	192	192	"
Registered letters posted	357	714	"
Registered letters delivered	343	686	"
Parcels delivered	27	54	"
TOTAL		2688	

(b) Akpa Okorong Postal Agency.

Stamps sold	444	440	Units
Postal Orders Issued	392	392	"
Postal Orders paid	360	360	"
Registered letters posted	456	912	"
Registered letters delivered	359	718	"
Parcels Delivered	23	46	"
TOTAL		2868	

(c) Oreek Town Postal Agency.

Stamps sold	436	360	Units
Postal Orders Issued	528	528	"
Postal Orders paid	756	756	"
Registered letters posted	360	720	"
Registered letters delivered	900	1800	"
Parcels delivered	56	72	"
TOTAL		4236	

2. I am to add that statistics in respect of the Aingeje Postal Agency will be forwarded to you when available.

District Officer,
Calabar Division.

No. 230/2134.
Calabar, 4 September, 1954.

Copy to:-
The Resident,
Calabar Province,
Calabar.

For information. A copy of the Minister of Works Circular letter mentioned above is attached.

Minister of Works,
Calabar Division.

CIRCULAR No. 2/1954
24/7/54
Ministry of Works,
Eastern Region,
K N G U.
20th July, 1954.

To All District Officers,
Eastern Region.

Unit Statistics of Postal Agencies

Please without delay furnish my Ministry with names and locations of all Postal Agencies in your Division, showing how many units each has.

To raise a postal agency to a Post office status, it must show a minimum of 17,000 units a year.

Mbomu Office
Minister of Works. See P. 213

D.S.

P. 200 for early action
pl. Compile from reply
from p. 14, and any other items
24/7/54

The District Officer,
Calabar.

First phase post offices and agencies

1890 – 1939

By reference to the Nigerian P&T annual reports

In 1901 there were six postal agencies: - Asaba, Agberi, Bakana, Buguma, Idah and, Qua Iboe. A notice in the Gazette of 23rd May 1904 announced that a postal agency was established at Old Calabar (notwithstanding that the Head Post Office was situated in Old Calabar) at the residence of Mrs C.R. Moore "...situated about 30 yards down Main Road from the pillar box at Mission Hill" and another "...at Creek town at the residence of Mr R.E.S. Rollings. Postage stamps will be sold to the public and registration and parcel post business will be conducted. Insurance of letters and parcels will not be conducted at the Postal Agency."

Proud gives EKDs of 1 March 1900 for Asaba, 27 March 1900 for Agberi (aka Aboh from about July 1905) and 19 January 1900 for Idah. Note that the first cancellation at this office reads IDA.



The earliest postal agencies appear to have been run by trusted white administrators as a convenience to themselves and for European residents and traders in their administrative area. The Lagos Postal department annual report for 1904 records: *Approval was given to a scheme for establishing Post offices at certain railway stations in order that the benefits of the postal service might be extended to the more important towns and villages adjacent to the railway..... instructions and the necessary stationery were supplied to the Railway Clerks whom it was proposed to appoint to perform postal duties. But there the matter has ended; the scheme not yet having been brought into operation.*

By 1905 mail facilities had been opened at all stations between Iddo and Ibadan on the Lagos Government Railway. They were not provided with P&T department date-stamps so some of the railway staff used straight line handstamps they already had in hand for railway forms.

I can show examples from IDDO and IBADAN. Similar handstamps or manuscript cancellations are also known from Agege, Aro, Ifo, Itori, Olokomeji and Otta.



Most of these had not yet been formally defined as Railway Postal Agencies but the term soon came into use for them. The 1922 postal establishment lists show postal agency categories of Railway Postal Agency (RPA), Private Postal Agency (PPA) and Postal Agency (PA). It seems these categories reflect who ran each type of postal agency; also, to some degree, who paid the establishment costs. Later lists also show a category entitled Native Administration Postal Agency.

My understanding is:

- Railway Postal Agencies were run part time by railway staff paid by the railway company. There may have been a contractual payment from the P&T Department to the railway but the P&T Department also provided the telegraph lines that connected the stations beside the rail tracks so this may have been a benefit in kind.
- Private Postal Agencies were managed part time by trading companies from their own premises, set up at their own cost.
- Otherwise Postal Agencies were, for the first few decades, funded by the P&T department and run by trusted, probably white, agents.

Arochuku (now Arochuku; population about 10,000) was another of the early postal agencies established by the Southern Nigeria Post Office. It is situated 70 miles north west of Calabar and is the capital of a native kingdom that exists to this day. The Aro Confederacy was at war with the British in 1901-02 but was eventually overcome. Proud does not show any earlier date than 1906 for the establishment of this postal agency. It remained a postal agency until it was upgraded to a full post office from 1 March 1948. (NB the Railway Postal Agency of Aro is unrelated)



Although not included in the above list of six postal agencies, Akassa had a peculiar postal history. Starting as a Royal Niger Company private post office from 1890 until 31 December 1899, it continued to provide a postal service to the public under Southern Nigeria administration from 1900. At some time after 1900 it was reduced to a postal agency and is listed as such in the January 1922 Post Office Circular under Warri. It closed in 1932 but re-opened as a postal agency in 1954.



Creek Town postal agency also opened in a private house in 1904; at the residence of Mr E.J. Rollinge. The first postmark was a cds reading OLD CALABAR / CREEK TOWN and I can show the bottom half of it on a damaged stamp in 1906.



The 1931 P&T annual report confirmed that Creek Town was one of a number of postal agencies that closed in September 1931 due to the general economic recession and the need for the department to make economies. A large double ring cds was in use at that time with known dates from 1 March 1930. Although the postal agent used a new skeleton date-stamp for the first year or two from the reopening, the postal inventory seems to have been found again because the double ring date-stamp was used from late 1943 and I can show it on cover still in use in 1972.



The postal agency was upgraded to a sub post office on 21 December 1984.

In June 2017 Edet Akpan crossed by boat from Calabar to visit the Creek Town sub post office with the last postmaster, who had not been there for the previous five years. The postmaster still has the postal inventory, so they took the last date-stamp with them. However, when they "posted" the souvenir covers the date slugs were stuck, so these covers are postmarked with the last day of normal postal service – 12 May 2012. A backstamp of Calabar dated 12 June 2017 shows the true date of posting.



Bakana opened as a postal agency in 1893 and continued as such until about 1914 when it was closed. It opened again on 19 Sept 1945 but I do not know whether it was in the same premises. It is a village at the head of a navigable creek in the Niger Delta a short distance west of Port Harcourt. There is a riverside settlement named Bakana and a second settlement a short way inland is named Old Bakana. Neither has any road access to the rest of Nigeria; communication remains water-borne.

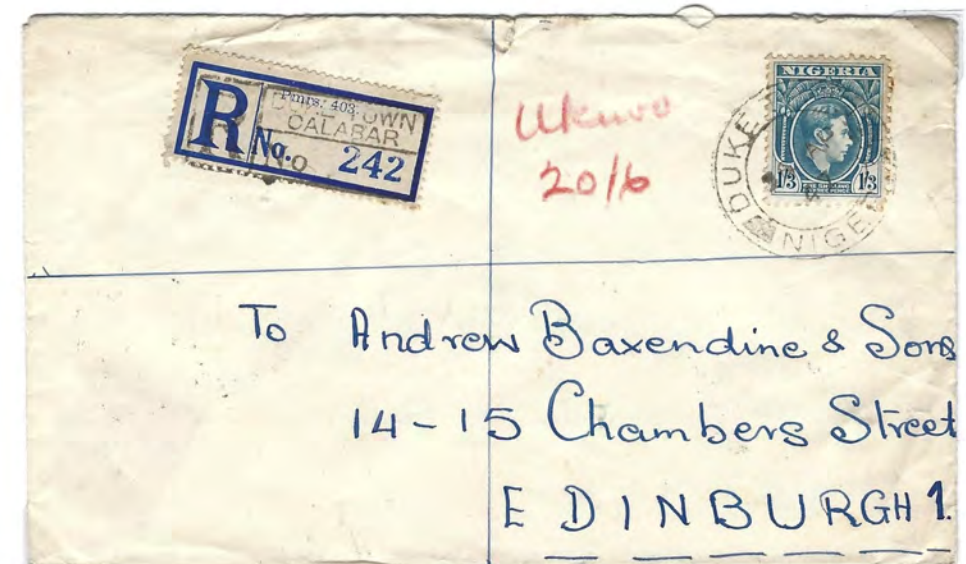
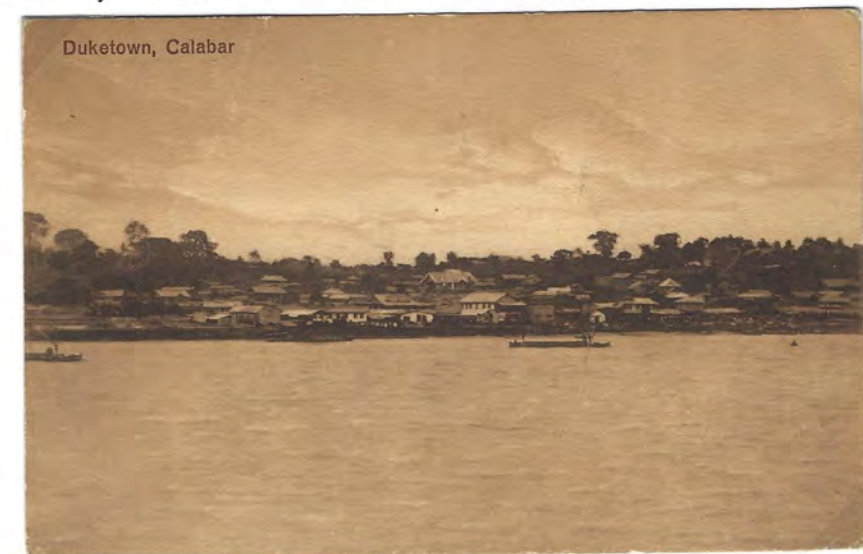
In the first phase there were two single ring cds used before 1909 and one double ring cds used thereafter. I can show the first and third types.



In the second phase a skeleton postmark was used between 1945 and 1956 when it was superseded by a double-ring cds. Jones shows an ERD of April 1962 for the single ring cds BAKANA – PORT HARCOURT shown here.



Another Southern Nigeria postal agency was opened on 1st June 1904 at Duke Town, in the home of Mrs C.R. Moore in Mission Hill. It continued as a postal agency under Nigeria but closed at some time in the early 1950s. My last postmark is dated 24 January 1951 and Proud lists the LKD as 27 February 1951.



Baro, Northern Nigeria

When the River Niger was the main transport artery to the interior of Nigeria, before completion of the western railway, Baro was an important place. 407 miles upriver from Forcados, it was the usual northern limit of navigation for the Niger steamers, so cargoes for most Northern Nigerian places needed to be unloaded and taken forward by launch further upriver or by carrier overland. The Northern Nigeria government started construction of a railway line from Baro to Minna and Kano, which soon also connected at Minna with the Lagos Government Railway extension from Jebba. These used postcards dated 1912 and 1913 show river boats with a dockside crane and an aerial view of the railway yard and warehouses, both in around 1911 when the railway link was completed.



A full-service post office opened at Baro in about 1909 and continued to operate as a sub post office when the river traffic declined as first the passengers, then some cargo, transferred to the railways.

The Northern Nigeria government supplied two types of double ring cds to this postmaster as shown here. The first type read BARO NORTHERN NIGERIA in a large arc and was used until September 1911. The second type has BARO in a small arc at the top and NORTHERN NIGERIA in a large arc at the bottom. That was used from 1912 to 1921.

The Nigerian P&T Department replaced this with a double ring cds reading BARO / NIGERIA from 1921.



Although the 1919 P&T Annual Report said "The resuscitation of the Transport Service on the River Niger necessitated a good deal of repairs to the craft ... which had been laid up", the 1920 report had to admit "The water services left a good deal to be desired; owing to the need for economy and the lack of craft it was found possible only to run a fortnightly service over most of the waterways." Then the 1922 report said "The Niger service south of Lokoja remained poor while between Onitsha and Forcados it could be said to be almost non-existent."

The Niger Mail Service Discontinued.

The fortnightly transport service between Bako and Onitsha in connection with the Lagos mail boat train and the intermediate fort-

Post Office Circular. Vol. IV. N° 7 issued at Lagos July 1919.

Page 6. Notice N° 4.

Niger River Travelling Post Office - Cancellation of Service.

On and after the 1st August 1919, the Travelling Post Office on the Niger River Steamers will be discontinued and mails for the River Stations where there is no Post Office nor Postal Agency will be retained at Ibadan, Lagos, Onitsha or Forcados until called for.

The firms concerned have been communicated with and will doubtless advise the Postmaster of the nearest office as to the disposal of their correspondence.

x x x x x x

Travelling Post Office - Official Designation.

The official designation of the Travelling Post Offices (Railway) is as follows:-

Ibadan - Ibadan	-	T.P.O. Up.
Ibadan - Ibadan	-	T.P.O. Down.
Ibadan - Jibba	-	T.P.O. Up.
Jibba - Ibadan	-	T.P.O. Down.

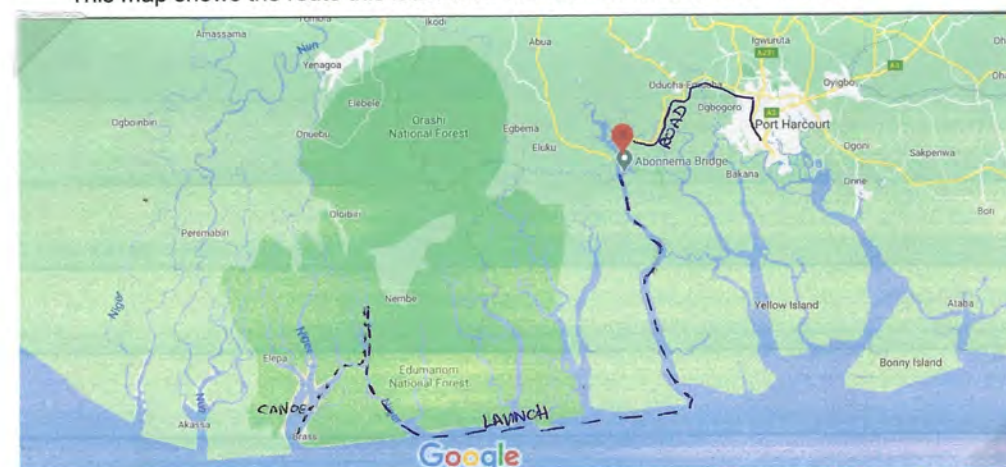
The 1930 Post Office Annual report said:
It was necessary to provide a regular canoe service from Nembe to Brass and Akassa, consequent upon the Marine Department terminating the old Port Harcourt – Degema – Brass service at Nembe.
Then the 1932 Post Office Annual Report said
The Marine creek service between Port Harcourt, Degema and Nembe was withdrawn at the end of the year. On this route in future a contractor will be responsible for the transport of mails.

The registered air mail cover shown here was posted just a few months after the postal agency was revived in 1938, addressed to the UK, and carries an interesting series of transit postmarks. Having been posted at Brass on 20 May it first reached Nembe on 23 May, by canoe. It then went to Degema on 26 May by contractor's launch and then to Port Harcourt overland on 27 May.

The quickest air connection was via Kano rather than Lagos, so the cover was carried on the Eastern Railway to Kaduna Junction sorting office where it transferred onto the train to Kano; the whole rail journey taking two days. The sender correctly paid 6d single weight airmail plus 3d registration.



This map shows the route this letter took between Brass and Port Harcourt.



Brass postal agency was upgraded to a full post office on 1 May 1948. A savings bank facility was added at that time and the Savings Bank canceller can be found used postally.



Brass Island is now the site of oil and natural gas terminals fed by a pipeline from the oilfields in the Niger Delta.

The system of postal agencies was extended and new telegraph offices were opened at Iseyin and Shaki



LIST OF POST OFFICES IN NIGERIA.

Northern Nigeria.

Abuja (*c*).
*Agenebode (*b*).
*Akwanga (*c*).
Ankpa (*c*).
Azare (*c*).
Badeggi (*d*).
Baro (*b*).
Bauchi (*b*).
Benue Bridge (*b*).
Bida (*b*).
Birnin Kebbi (*b*).
Bukuru (*d*). ✓
Ibi (*b*).
Idah (*c*). ✓
Jemaa (*b*).
Jos (*a*).
Kaduna (*a*).
Kaduna Junction (*b*).
Kano (*a*).
Katcha (*d*).

Katsina (*b*).
Keffi (*b*).
Kontagora (*b*).
Lau (*b*).
Loko (*b*).
Lokoja (*a*).
Maidugari (*b*).
Minna (*a*).
Nafada (*b*).
Numan (*b*).
*Okwoga (*c*).
*Potiskum (*c*).
Rahama (*d*).
Rigachikun (*d*).
Sokoto (*b*).
Yelwa (*b*).
Yola (*b*).
Zaria (*a*).
Zungeru (*b*).

Southern Nigeria.

Western Division.

Abeokuta (*a*).
Ado Ekiti (*c*).
†Agege (*d*).
Akure (*b*).
Badagry (*c*). ✓
Ebute Metta (*a*).
Epe (*b*).
Ibadan (*a*).
*Ibadan Branch Office (*b*).
Igbein Hill (*b*). ✓
Ikorodu (*c*).
Ilaro (*d*). ✓
Ilesha (*b*).
Ilorin (*a*).
Iseyin (*b*). ✓
§Itori (*d*)..

Jebba (*b*).
Jebu Ode (*b*).
Lagos (*a*).
Lagos Telegraph Office (for telegrams only).
Offa (*b*).
Ogbomoshosho (*c*).
§Olokemeji (*d*).
Ondo (*c*). ✓
Oshogbo (*a*).
Oyo (*b*).
*Shagamu (*c*). ✓
Iddo-Ibadan { Travelling
Post Offices.
Ibadan-Jebba { (Stamps
only).

(123)

Southern Nigeria—continued.

Central Division.

Agbor (*b*).
Akassa (*c*).
Benin City (*a*).
†Brass (*b*).
Burutu (*a*).
Forcados (*a*).
Gana-Gana (*c*).
Ifon (*b*).

Koko (*b*).
Kwale (*b*).
*Owo (*b*).
Sapele (*a*).
Siluko (*c*). ✓
Ubiaja (*b*).
Warri (*a*).

Eastern Division.

Aba (*a*).
Abakaliki (*b*).
Afikpo (*b*).
Afikpo Road (*d*).
Ahoda (*b*).
Asaba (*b*). ✓
Awgu (*c*).
Awka (*b*).
Bansara (*b*).
Bende (*b*). ✓
Bonny (*a*).
Calabar (*a*).
Creek Town (Calabar) (*c*).
Degema (*a*).
Duke Town (Calabar) (*c*).
Eket (*b*). ✓
Ikot (*b*).
Ikot Ekpen (*b*).
Itu (*b*).

Nsukka (*c*).
Obubra (*a*).
Ogoja (*b*).
Oguta (*b*).
Ogwashi-Uku (*b*).
Okigwi (*c*).
Okrika (*c*). ✓
Onitsha (*a*).
Onitsha Market Place.
(Stamps only.)
Opobo (*a*). ✓
Oron (*b*).
Owerri (*b*).
Port Harcourt (*a*).
Udi (*c*).
Umuhia (*c*).
Uyo (*b*).
Port Harcourt—Enugu.
Travelling Post Office.
(Stamps and Postal Orders sold.)

British Sphere of the Cameroons.

Bamenda (*b*).
Buea (*b*).
*Kumba (*b*).
Mamfe (*b*).

*Tinto (*b*).
Victoria (*a*). (Savings Bank business not transacted.)

EXPLANATION OF TERMS.—(*a*) Signifies Head Offices at which all classes of Post Office business are transacted. (*b*) Posts and Telegraphs Offices at which Money Order and Savings Bank business is not undertaken. (*c*) Postal Agencies. No telegraphs; issue and pay Postal Orders; perform parcel

9A

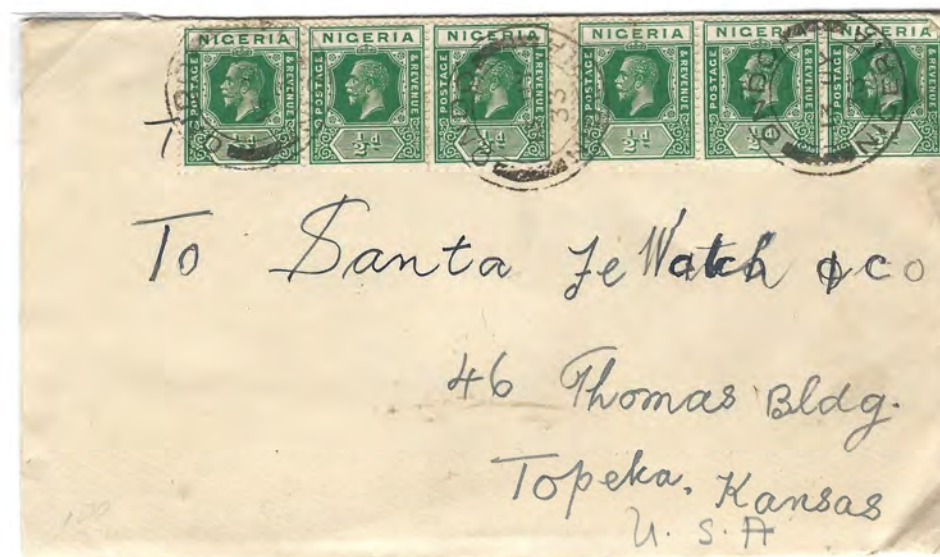
Of the six postal agencies listed in 1901 Asaba and Eket (aka Qua Iboe) had been upgraded to P&T offices; Aboh (aka Agberi), Bakana and Buguma had dropped off the list; so only Idah remained a postal agency.

1924

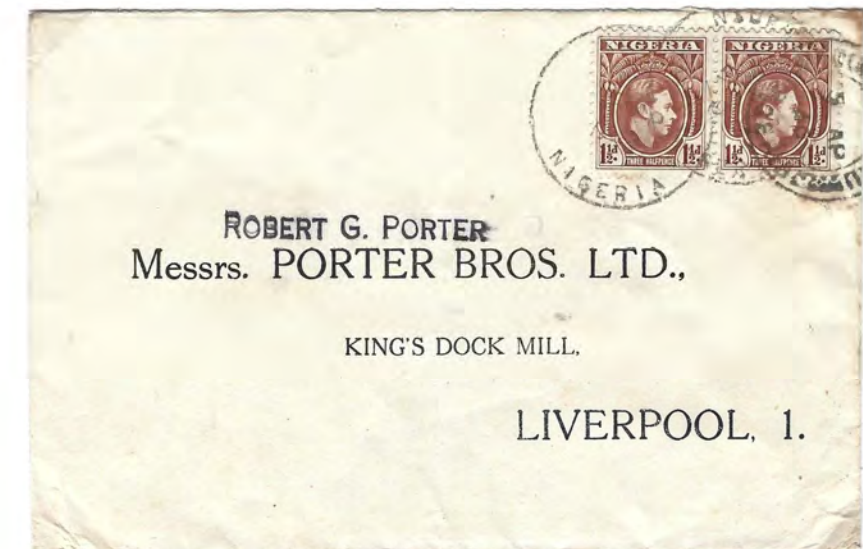
Defalcations. There were unhappily a larger number of cases than usual of clerks defalcating. These occurred at:

Ondo where a native Court Clerk acting as Postal Agent was nearly £200 short in his accounts. He was convicted and sentenced to a term of imprisonment.....

Proud shows Ondo as opening in 1916 and becoming a sub office in 1939. One of the covers below is addressed to George Odom Ltd.



Nsukka postal agency opened in 1924 according to Proud (exact date not yet located), but the first front shown below is dated at Nsukka on 28 MY 23 and it is not shown on the October 1922 post office list. Nsukka is located 43 miles north of Enugu and is now a city of 300,000 with Nigeria's oldest university, but in the colonial era was one of the more comfortable up-country locations for whites to live. The postal agency was upgraded to a sub-office on 1 June 1946. The Porter cover is dated just prior to that change.



1925

Eastern Division "Postal Agencies at Imo River and Igumale were opened during the year and it was soon evident that a Postal Telegraph Office was necessary at the former place. The Okrika Postal Agency was closed."

Proud shows Imo River as originally a Railway Postal Agency (no opening date given) then becoming a sub-office in 1939. It must have become a telegraph office sooner than that. Proud shows Igumale with EKD of 25 June 1926 operated as a Railway Postal Agency.



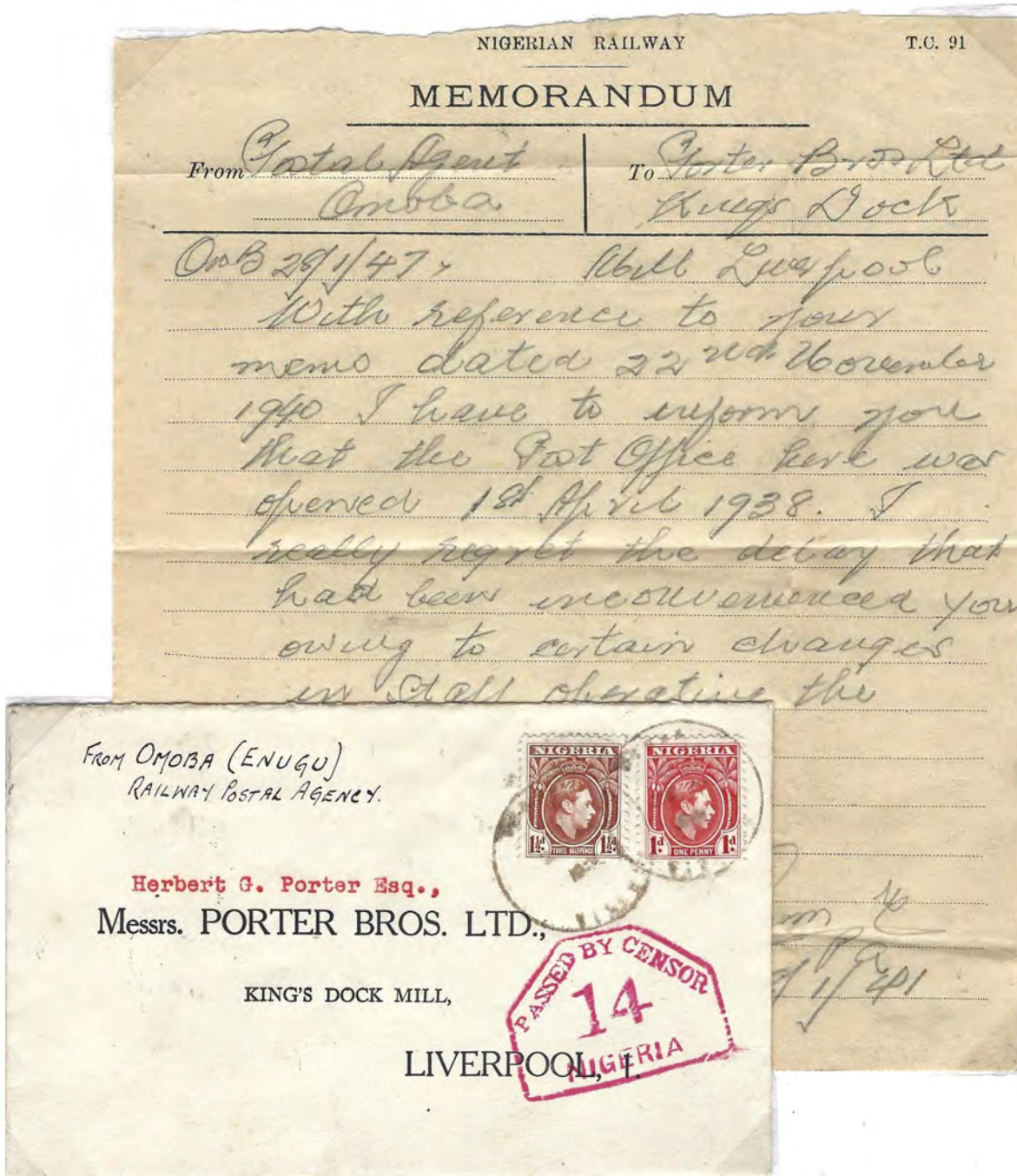
"the Agency at Agbado which was relinquished by Messrs The Lagos Stores was reopened as a Railway Postal Agency." Agbado operated as a Railway Postal Agency until it became a private postal agency on 4 September 1935. It was eventually upgraded to a post office on 1 May 1957.

I am unable to show the first skeleton date-stamp but I am able to show a cover and loose stamps with the double ring cds which was used from 1925 until 1959! A very robust tool!



1926 Railway Postal Agencies

"The time during which passenger trains stop at stations has been reduced during the year so that at some stations the Eastern TPO is unable to cope with all the business offering. I refer to Agbiam and Uzuakoli at which places full railway postal agencies have been established." Also "...established a Railway Agency at Challowa." The postmarks of railway postal agencies are indistinguishable but I can show a later example of a Railway Postal Agency, by way of a Nigerian Railway memorandum and its cover, addressed to Herbert Porter, from the postal agent at Omoa. The note is dated 1947 at the top and 1941 at the foot; the latter is correct.



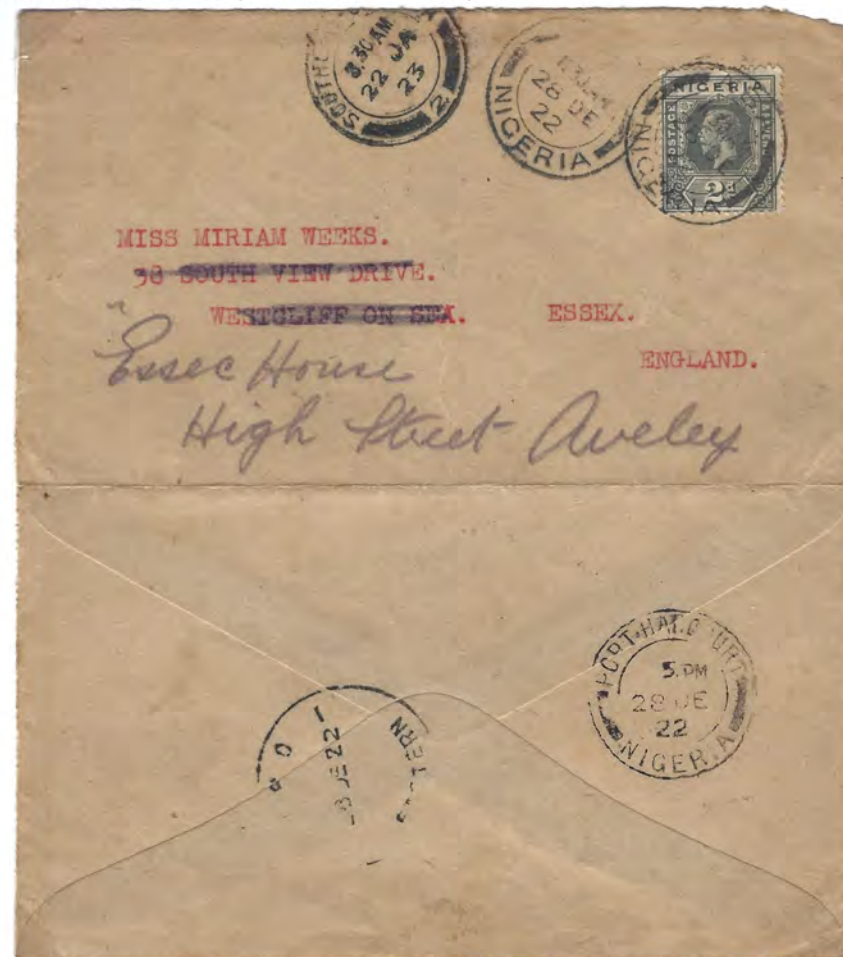
Proud shows Kafanchan as initially a Railway Postal Agency, converting to a sub-post office on 1 April 1931. His EKD for Kafanchan is 15 July 1927, using a skeleton canceller. The permanent canceller shown below is known from 18 July 1929 and my cover dates from just before the conversion to a sub-post office.

Confusingly, a further postal agency was opened in different premises at Kafanchan Town in 1948 which used a skeleton cancel "KAFANCHAN PA" until 1951, also shown below.



1930

"The Travelling Post office between Port Harcourt and Enugu [the Eastern TPO] was discontinued in 1930 and the Departmental Offices at Jemaa and Nassarawa were closed, being no longer necessary."
Cover from Aba to the UK, posted on 28 Dec 1922, with backstamps of the Eastern TPO1 and Port Harcourt, both on the same day.

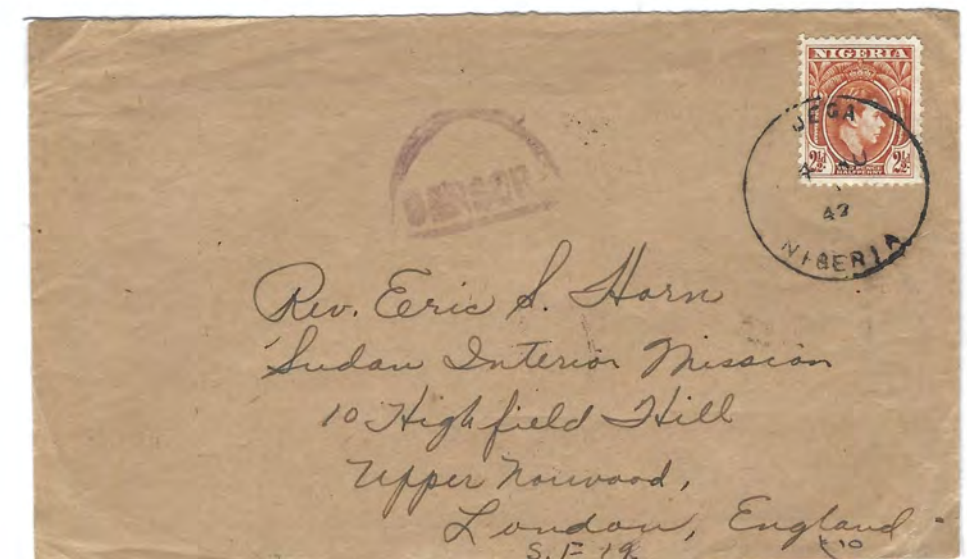


Jemaa never reopened, but a postal agency reopened at Nasarawa in 1938.



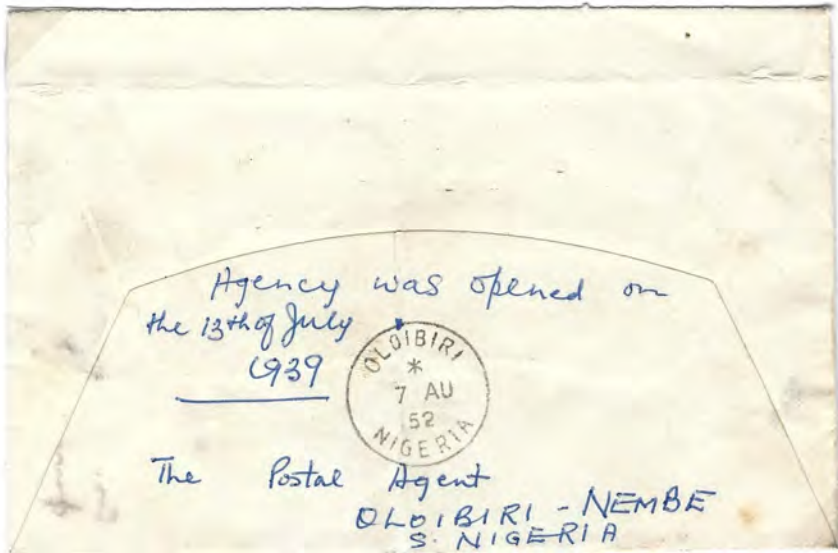
Although Jega had a short-lived postal facility under Northern Nigeria administration between 1906 and 1909, the Nigerian P&T department did not sanction a postal agency in this town until one was opened on 1 November 1937, which then continued to 1960 and beyond. In colonial times Birnin Kebbi (23 miles to the north west) was the more important town, housing the District Officer, and had a full post office from 1910 to 1960 throughout. Mail from Jega was taken first to Birnin Kebbi, then to Sokoto, as shown by the backstamps on the cover below.

The postal agent at Jega used a skeleton canceller until 1948, then used a double-ring cds until 1960 and beyond.



Oloibiri postal agency opened on 13 July 1939, via Nembe in Rivers State (Proud wrongly shows this agency as opening on 29 June 1939, under Degema). In 1956 Oloibiri became the first place in Nigeria where oil was discovered. An oil pipeline connected Oloibiri to Port Harcourt, 45 miles to the west. The oil infrastructure was abandoned in 1979 and the village has reverted to the small Niger Delta creeks village it was in 1939.

The postal agent in 1952 replied to Porter's enquiry by letter which is attached to the back of this sheet.



Ogoni native postal agency opened on 1 December 1939 in the Calabar province. Ogoni was a farming and fishing community until Shell started drilling for oil in 1958. As a result of uncontrolled exploitation of oil, the Ogoni area is now severely polluted with oil spills on land and in the rivers and with acid rain due to the flaring of gas from oil wells. The population of 400,000 lives in poverty and degradation which local and international campaigners are now trying to put right.

Proud shows several different cancellers used or sent to Ogoni. Ogoni does not appear in a 1956 list only of post offices and sub post offices, but by September 1957 it was named by Proud as the supervising office for a new postal agency at Bori Ogoni so it should have been upgraded by then. The Gazettes need to be checked.



Igbogila is located about 14 miles from Ilaro in Ogun State and a postal agency opened there on 9 March 1942. It is a farming community which is now very impoverished. Farm settlement began at Igbogila when the Western regional government led by the late Obafemi Awolowo, launched a five-year development plan (from 1955 to 1960) to enhance the general standard of living of the people. To achieve this, the premier and other officials went to Israel to study its agricultural development scheme named Moshav. The report of the study in 1959 birthed the establishment of 20 farm settlements and five institutes across the region with the aim of achieving food sufficiency and to encourage educated young men make a profitable career in farming.

Now called Sawonjo, the farm settlement still sits on 335,000 ha. of land presently occupied by only 121 elderly residents (as at November 2019) subsistence farming no more than 10 ha. each, with no electricity and no running water. Most settlers have had to find better alternatives to raise their families elsewhere. Houses have been deserted, while many have collapsed. The postal agency closed many years ago (find date)



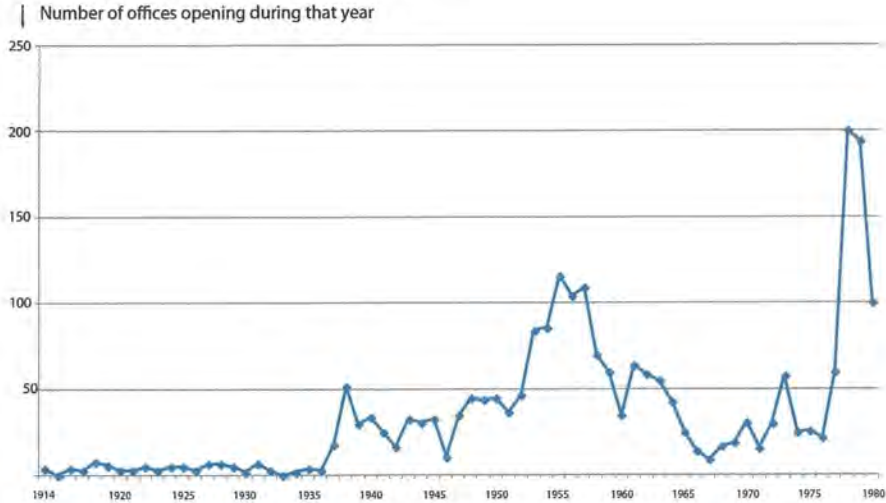
Lagos Island

A microcosm of the post-war boom
in postal establishments in Nigeria

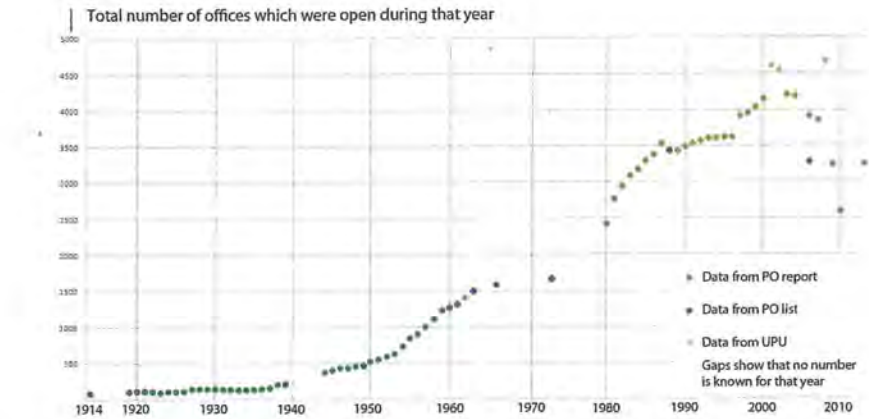
The rise and even greater rise of post office and postal agency numbers

My study of Nigerian postal agencies was triggered by the above letter but, until Paul Redhead published, in Cameo in October 2020, his research into the annual numbers of postal facilities opening and the consequent total number of them in each year from 1914 to 2010, I had not fully understood that there were two periods of extraordinary expansion. They were in the 1950s and around 1975 – 1989.

Paul Redhead's graphs are shown here.



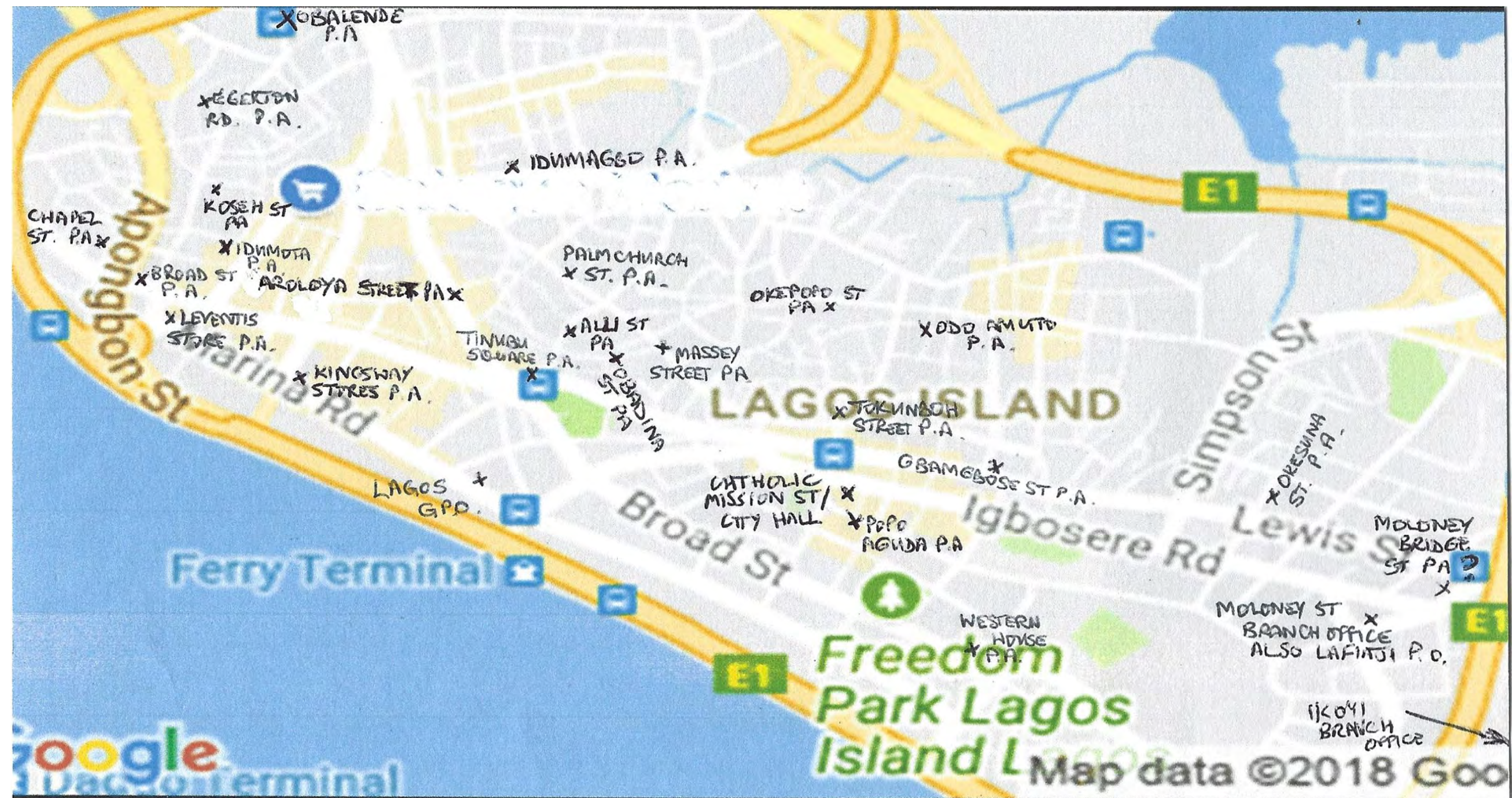
4 The total number of offices open at any one time:



Later in this display I will show what coverage of postal agencies arose in the 1940s and 1950s on Lagos Island. In the commercial heart of Lagos it appears that the P&T Department left the decision about where to open new postal agencies to the private individuals and companies who applied to open them, so long as they could show sound finance and good references, rather than creating a planned network based on densities of population and of business premises.

Until 1945 the only postal facilities on Lagos Island were the GPO, which was built on the Marina in the 1920s to replace the Old Post Office, a Branch Office at Catholic Mission Street and a short-lived attendance by a post office official in 1930-1933 at the landing stage to handle late mails for them outbound steamers, for which a partial strike of the postmark is shown here. There were no postal agencies before then.





Postal facilities were opened in various parts of Lagos as it expanded in the post war period. The first was a branch post office at Lafiaji in the Savings Bank Building which opened on 1 November 1945 and, after an unknown closure period, reopened on 17 June 1958.

The first postmarks were a skeleton in two forms, the latter with the letters B O spaced out. By 1 December 1949 a single-ring cds had been ~~was~~ brought into use.



Registered oval postmarks show that the postal agency continued to operate in 1953 and 1955, so it is unclear what closure period there was before June 1958.

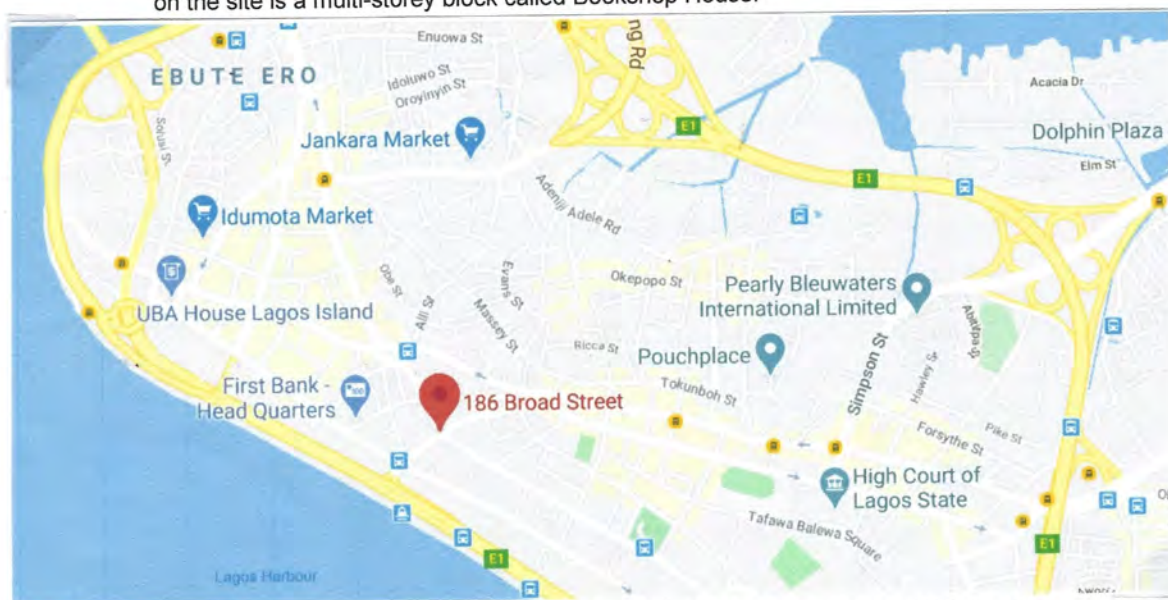


The first new postal agency was Bajulaiye Court which opened on 17 December 1945. Bajulaiye is an area on the edge of Shomolu in the mainland part of Lagos but I do not yet know the location of the postal agency.

The first date-stamp was a skeleton type used until about 1953 when a single ring cds came into use. From 1956 a double-ring cds was also used.



A branch post office opened at Gaiser's Building, 186-190, Broad Street, Lagos Island on 18 March 1946. G.L. Gaiser was a Hamburg-based merchant before the First World War, whose assets were confiscated by the British Government and resold after the end of that war. The original Gaiser's Building at the junction of Broad Street and Odunlami Street (see map below) has long since been redeveloped: the building now on the site is a multi-storey block called Bookshop House.



Proud shows a series of six states of a skeleton canceller in use from 1946 to 1952 when it appears the post office may have closed for a few years to be rebuilt. In 1957 a series of single ring cds datestamps were provided which included the post office number 463 (Lagos GPO was 461) and a counter number from 1 to 8 (possibly excluding #3?). I can show #7 on a block of four stamps.



After General Gowon came to power in July 1966 by way of an army mutiny, Broad St, Lagos was re-named Yakubu Gowon Street and the name of the Broad Street branch post office changed accordingly. I have not yet found a Gazette notice to say exactly when that change was made. General Gowon was deposed by another military coup on 29 July 1975 and soon afterwards the Nigeria Gazette gave notice of a change back to Broad Street branch post office, on 16 August 1975.

I can show use of a skeleton date-stamp with this text on 7 FE 1973.



Government Notice No. 1626

MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS

YAKUBU GOWON STREET BRANCH POST OFFICE—CHANGE OF NAME

It is notified for general information that following reversion of Yakubu Gowon Street, to its former name—Broad Street, Lagos consequently Yakubu Gowon Street Branch Post Office and Parcel Office, Lagos in Lagos State of Nigeria are hereby changed to Broad Street Branch Post Office and Parcel Office with effect from 16th August, 1975.

A postal agency was opened at Campos Square, Lagos on 1 October 1948. Campos Square is found halfway along Gbamgbose Street (see 23 August 1957) and close to Tokunboh Street (see 22 Dec 1956), showing how densely spaced the Lagos Island postal agencies became in the late 1950s.

The first postmark was a skeleton date-stamp shown here used on cover in July 1951. From January 1955 the postal agent used a double ring cds which is also shown here on cover.



On 1 October 1951 a branch post office was opened at Moloney Street, Lagos Island specifically as a savings bank. Porter tried to get a specimen postmark but failed, so he wrote to the P&T HQ to complain. The reply, dated 8 July 1953, is copied on the back of this sheet – at that date, the Moloney Street Branch Office did not accept any letters for postage. But a short while later it did become a full post office. Judging from the amount of mail found with its cancellations, it was then a busy facility.

In the 1950s it used skeleton cancellations in several forms, some simultaneously. At present I can only show Proud D3 on a small piece. It also used on registered mail a single ring cds with its establishment number 468 and the letters S B (for savings bank). A registered oval date-stamp seems not to have been made available until 1961, shown here on cover and piece.



A postal agency opened at Okepopo St, Lagos Island on 21 November 1951 under the supervision of Lagos post office. Okepopo Street is a narrow street of low-grade retail with two or three floors of flats above. The Google map shows where this street is found on Lagos Island.

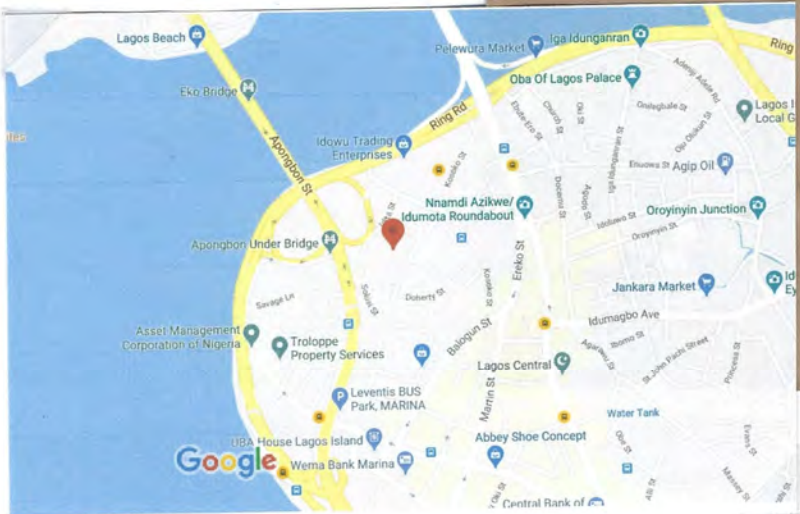


The postal agency used a skeleton date-stamp until 1954, then a double ring cds. On 9 May 1957 a single ring cds was provided which added the word STREET to the postal agency name, reading OKEPOPO STREET LAGOS, which Proud wrongly assumed to be another new postal agency. This postmark does not seem to have been used until after independence.



A postal agency opened on 22 June 1953 at Egerton Road, Lagos Island shown located on the map below, close to the Eko Bridge.

Proud shows use of three states of a skeleton cancellation up to 1960. This example of 3 March 1955 is the first state. The steel cds, of which I show two examples from 1963 and 1968 on cover on the next sheet, was delivered on 9 May 1957.



A postal agency opened on 1 April 1954 at Tinubu Square, Lagos in the hub of the commercial district on Lagos Island. I can show a 1960s photo of the Square. There were also postal agencies at Gbamgbose Street (opened 23 Aug 1957) which runs out of Tinubu Square to the east, Tokunboh Street also to the east (opened 22 Dec 1956) and at 186/190 Broad Street (opened 18 March 1946) to the west. The GPO building is a short distance to the south.

The postal agent at Tinubu Square used a skeleton date-stamp until late 1960 when a single ring cds came into use. There are two states of the skeleton; state 2 having the A of PA inverted.



A postal agency named Moloney Bridge was opened on Lagos Island on 15 July 1954. I do not know the exact location of this postal agency, which is not to be confused with the Moloney Street Branch Office that had opened in 1951.

The Moloney Bridge postal agency recorded by Jones as having used a skeleton cancellation until 15 NO 1958. He also records just one date of use of a type 31 single ring cds reading MOLONEY BRIDGE STREET – LAGOS on 6 AU 62, but I am not certain that there is a real street of that name. These are both scarce postmarks. I can show an incomplete strike of the skeleton postmark on a loose stamp. Although the word MOLONEY could refer to the Moloney Street branch Office only the MOLONEY BRIDGE date-stamp included the word NIGERIA.



As if we need further confusion the 2020 Google map shown here locates Lafiaji post office in Moloney St but the post office number for Lafiaji – 460 – is not the same as the number of the Moloney Street Branch Office – 468 – and Proud gives the address of the Lafiaji Branch Post Office as the Savings Bank Building, Lewis Street, nearby. Speculatively, I wonder if 21st century rationalisation has merged these two Branch Post Offices on the Moloney Street site

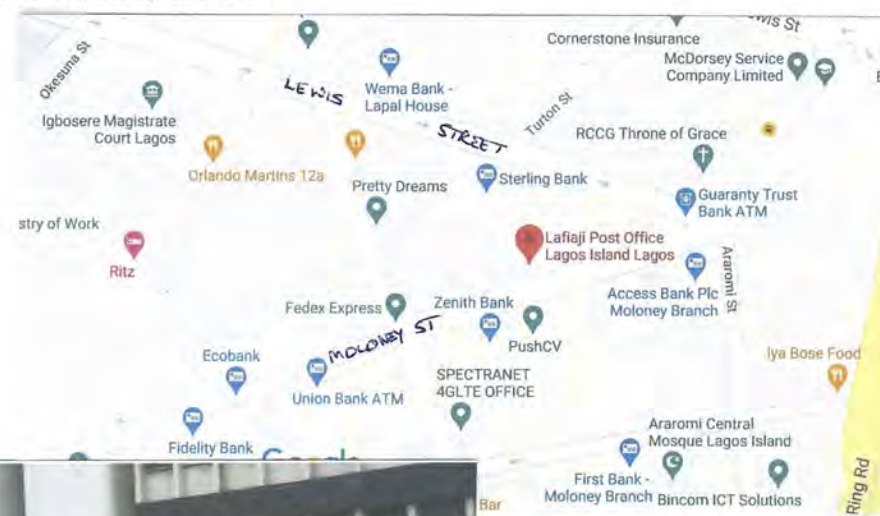


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Postal agencies were opened in various parts of Lagos as it expanded in the post war period. A postal agency opened inside the Kingsway Stores on 8 October 1954 and the postcard image probably dates from around that time.

Proud shows three states of skeleton cancellations used throughout from opening until independence in 1960. A steel single ring cds reading KINGSWAY STORES LAGOS was sent on 10 May 1957 but Proud does not show it having been put into use. I can show a later cds reading KINGSWAY STORES P.A. use in 1968 on a registered cover to Chicago along with a rubber registration cachet reading the same.

By August 1969 Kingsway Stores is shown as S.O. instead of P.A.; so, by that date it seems to have been upgraded to a sub post office.



The expansion of the postal agency network in Lagos continued with the launch of two more postal agencies on 15 November 1954. Idumota postal agency opened at Idumota Market which is one of the largest markets in Nigeria, not just in Lagos. The market is located on Lagos Island, as shown here.

There are four states of its skeleton date-stamp recorded by Proud, one of which is mis-set to read IDUMOTAP.



The second postal agency opened on the same day, 15 November 1954, was Massey Street. This joins onto both Palm Church Street (opened 11 Feb 1957) and Tokunboh Street (opened 22 Dec 1956). Its' customer base was attacked from both directions within three years! Proud did not record any use of its date-stamps after January 1956 but I can show the steel single ring cds in use in 1964.



The busy suburb of Obalende gained a postal agency from 18 May 1955 which was still trading as a postal agency in 1960. Obalende is the location of a large bus terminus off the Lagos Island Ring Road and is a busy commercial hub with three open air markets.

Proud shows two styles of skeleton cancellation, both of which I can show below, and he records that a steel single-ring cds was sent on 9 May 1957.

Government Notice No. 1501
MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND AVIATION
OBALENDE POSTAL AGENCY—
OPENING OF
It is notified for general information that a Postal Agency was opened at Obalende in the Colony Province on the 18th May, 1955, for the sale of stamps, the transaction of postal order business, acceptance and delivery of registered articles and the receipt and despatch of mails.
J. A. FARRER,
Acting Director of Posts and Telegraphs
Lagos, 21st June, 1955.
C0021/T



Odo Amuto postal agency opened on Lagos Island on 18 May 1955 (correcting Proud's date) The postal agency name conflates two street names Odo Osun Street and Amuto Street which form a right-angled junction at the point shown on the map.

The first postmark was a skeleton date-stamp but a single ring cds (sent on 9 May 1957) replaced it from July 1962. It is shown here on piece dated 13 OC 64 and on cover dated 28 OC 65.



Nigeria – mobile post offices

Mobile post offices in road vehicles, as distinct from travelling post offices on river or rails, did not start use in Nigeria until November 1949. As an experiment, a converted ex-RAF wireless trailer was opened on 7 November 1949 by the Commissioner for the Colony of Nigeria to serve the Idumagbo area of Lagos. Its staff were able to transact all postal business except parcels and it was designated as a Branch Office (MPO "B"). It used a skeleton postmark which started as reading IDUMAGBO BO 1, but later dropped the numeral. The skeleton postmarks made no reference to its status as a mobile post office and they are scarce on cover.



Although Idumagbo was set up in November 1949 as the first mobile post office in Nigeria, it moved to a conventional building at some time in the mid 1950's. I have chosen to put that change date as 1 January 1956 because Proud's EKD for an IDUMAGBO registered oval is 4 January 1956 and most postal agencies did not use registered oval postmarks until they were upgraded to departmental post offices. The first registered oval reads IDUMAGBO B.O. NIGERIA shown here on a cover dated 9 DE 57 and a loose stamp dated 5 AP 60.



The location of Idumagbo Avenue, Lagos Island is shown on this map.

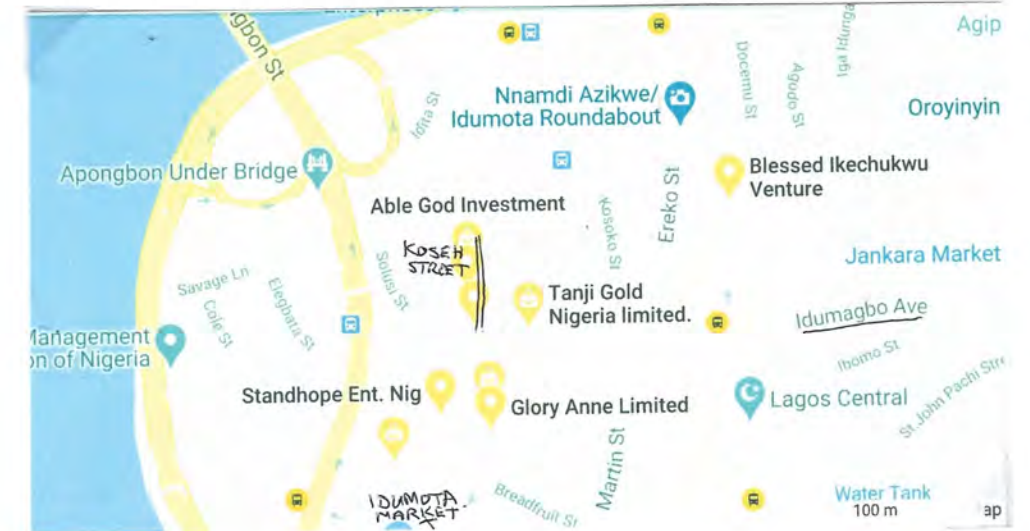


The later use of a registered oval postmark reading IDUMAGBO LAGOS is shown here dated 12 FE 72, 5 MY 77 and 15 AU 80. These are all the same tool as each other but I do not think they are a worn version of the same date-stamp used in 1962.

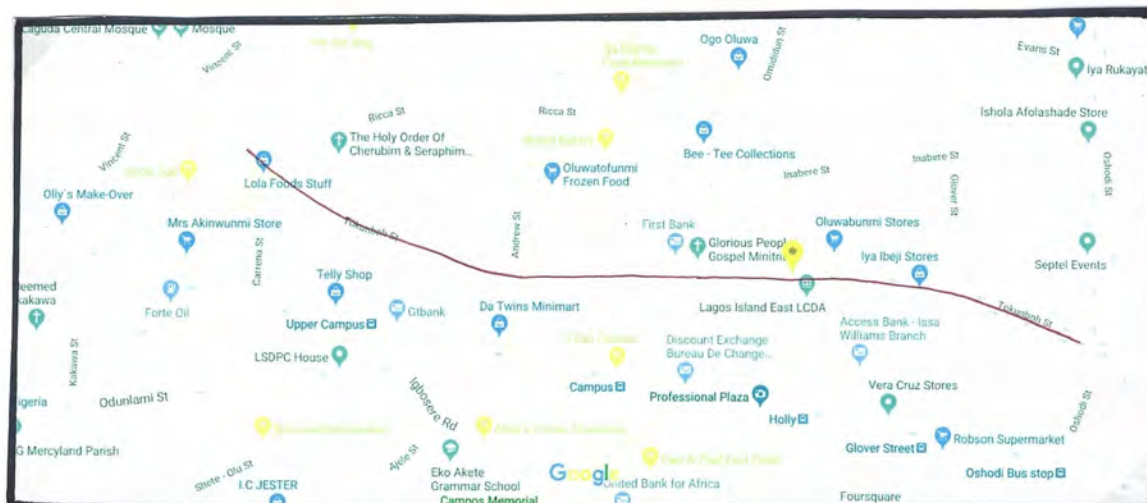


A postal agency was opened at Koseh Street, Lagos on 16 January 1956. Koseh Street is in the Balogun district of Lagos Island and is another of the dense network of Lagos Island postal agencies that emerged in the 1950s. The postal agency at Idumota which opened on 15 November 1954 can only have been a matter of 100-200 yards away.

The first postmark was a skeleton date-stamp, used until 1960.



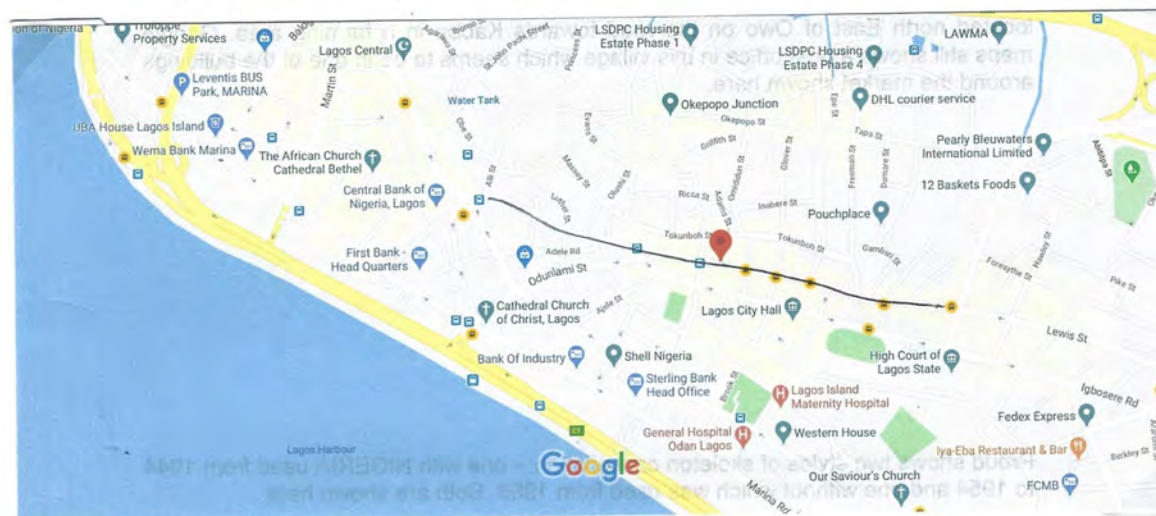
I have located Tokunbo St on a map taken from the web.



The Palm Church is another name for St Johns Anglican Church, one of the oldest religious sites on Lagos Island. This postal agency would have been in very close competition with other post offices and agencies on Lagos Island and the erratic fabrication of the canceller may be evidence of mismanagement of this one, leading to its early demise.



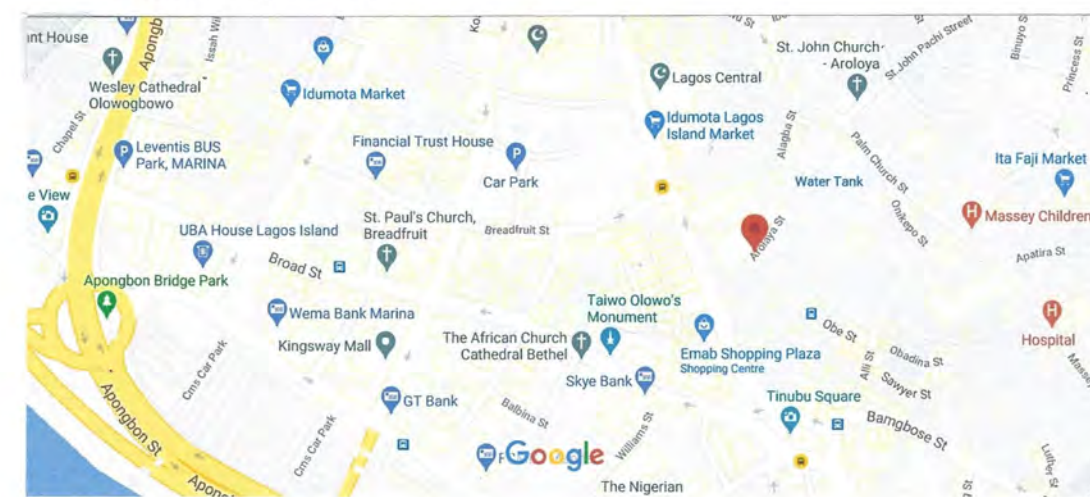
A postal agency was opened at Gbambose (now Bamgbose) Street, Lagos Island on 23 August 1957, as shown on the map below.



The first postmark was a skeleton date-stamp in which the M is inverted, shown here used in January 1959. It seems this error was never corrected before it was replaced by the single ring cds shown on the next sheet.

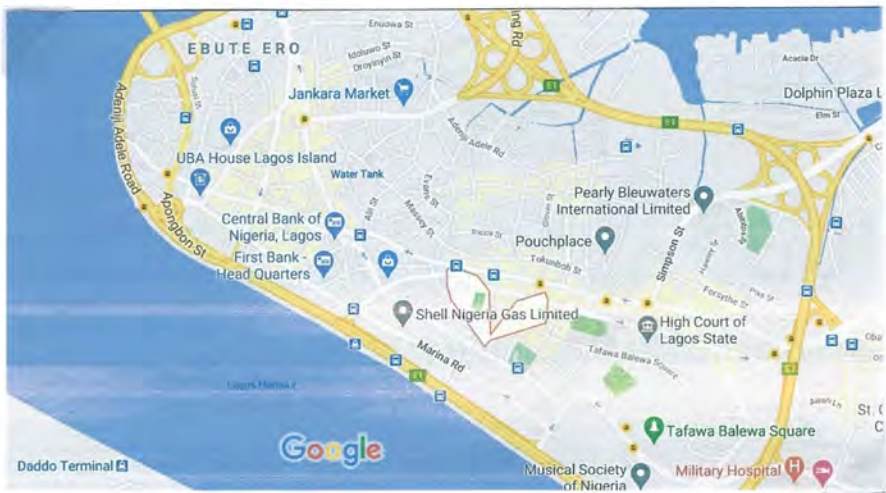


A postal agency was opened at Arolaya Street Lagos on 5 September 1957, close to Tinubu Square and Palm Church Street postal agencies: – apparently too close as it had disappeared by the time the 1961 list of post offices and postal agencies was compiled. Consequently, its postmarks are very scarce and neither Proud nor Jones records having seen any.

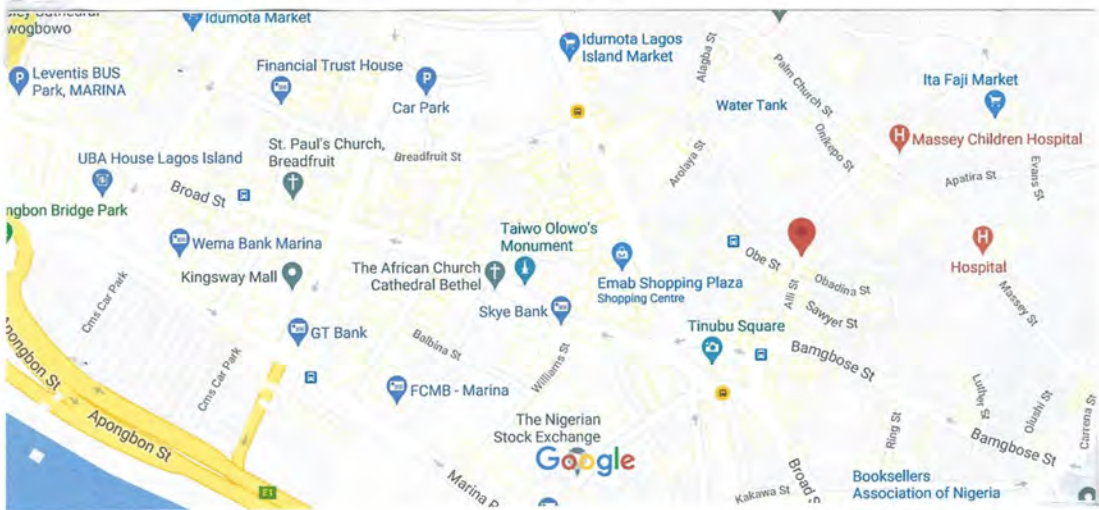


A postal agency named Popo Aguda opened on 11 November 1957 in Tokunboh Street, Lagos Island. Popo Aguda is the Brazilian Settlement in Lagos, founded in the mid-19th century by slaves returning from Brazil to their African homelands (named the "Aguda"). Campos Square is at the centre of this enclave, but it also covers parts of Tokunboh Street and Gbamgbose Street. By the 1880s (when slavery was abolished in Brazil and Cuba) the Aguda made up about 9% of the population of Lagos. The return migration ended in the 1920s but the people of Popo Aguda still maintain Catholicism and Brazilian festivals. Some also still have Brazilian surnames.

It is a scarce postmark but this postal agency is listed in 1963, 1973 and 1988.



A postal agency opened at Alli Street, Lagos on 1 July 1958. Alli Street connects Tinubu Square, Palm Church Street and Massey Street all of which already had postal agencies. It seems to have been a postal agency too many as it closed on 13 April 1960 and have never re-opened. Its postmarks are scarce: Jones records just two dates in October 1959 for its skeleton date-stamp. I do not have one to show.

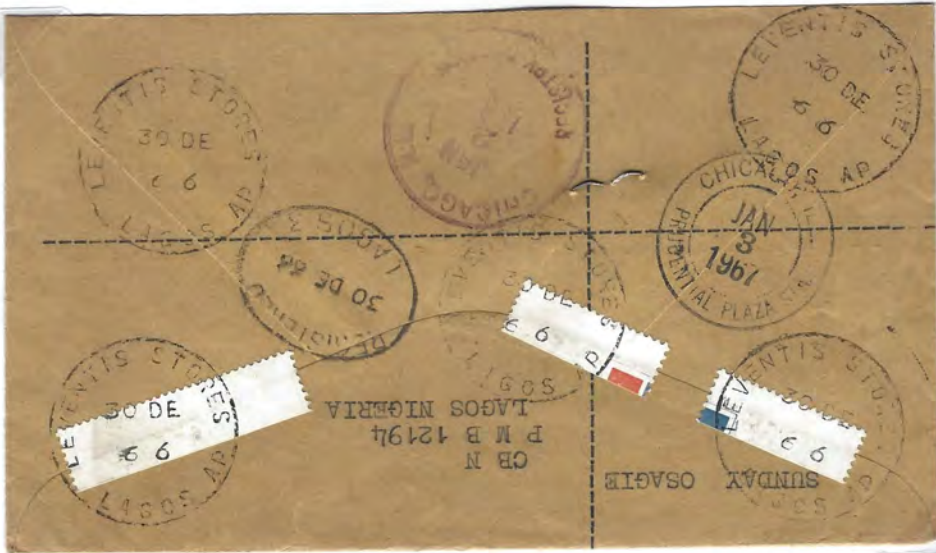


Ikoyi Branch Office, Lagos, opened in Bourdillon Road, on the southern edge of Ikoyi, on 18 January 1965. It is surprising that this post office was not established sooner because Ikoyi, at the eastern end of Lagos Island, was developed in the colonial era as an upmarket residential area for British expatriates. It remains the most affluent area of Lagos, with the exclusive Ikoyi Club, Ikoyi Golf Club and the boutique shops in Awolowo Road. The post office is still trading and is also known as Ikoyi Falomo post office.

The type J79 postmark illustrated by Jones is the IKOYI 2 version shown below, but there was also an IKOYI 1 that I can also show here.



A postal agency was opened in the Leventis Store at Lagos on 14 March 1966. The postcard view shows the Leventis Store, on the Marina, at about that time. I also show a skeleton cancellation in use in 1966 which read LEVENTIS STORES / LAGOS AP.



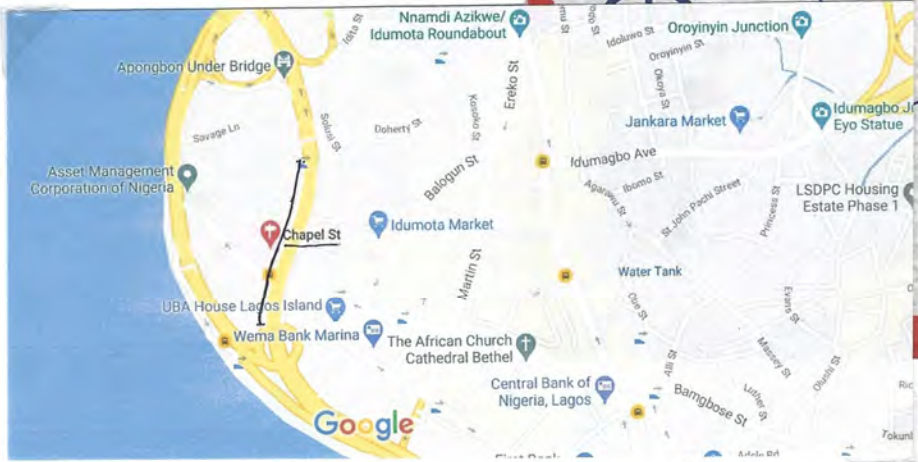
A postal agency opened at Western House, 8/10 Broad St, Lagos on 11 November 1968. Western House is an 18-storey residential block at the far end of Broad Street from Tinubu Square, now in need of renovation. Part of the development included a few commercial units one of which is now a DHL office and may previously have been the postal agency.



Image capture: Apr 2017 Images may be subject to copyright.

A postal agency opened at 5, Chapel Street, Lagos on 18 November 1970. This new postal agency was close to the Broad Street Branch Office, the Idumota agency which had opened in 1954 and the Koseh Street agency from 1956.

The only date-stamp recorded by Jones is the type 31 cds shown here, on one date – 7 FE 1979. This example has the same format as he showed, with the date set in three lines 19 / JU 19 / 78.



A private postal agency was opened at Obadina Street, Lagos on 24 September 1973. The map shows this street to be close to Tokunboh Square, Alli St, Massey St and Palm Church Street all of which previously had postal agencies. It is possible that all except Tokunboh Square postal agency had closed by 1973 but closures were rarely recorded in the Nigerian Gazette.

The skeleton date-stamp and registration handstamp for this agency are shown on cover on the next sheet. A photocopy of part of the reverse of this cover shows the date, 28/3/76, entered by hand.



An example of "missing Gazette information" is the City Hall Branch Office. This is named as a district office in the 1988 post offices list and the postmark on cover below shows that it existed in November 1980. It is not listed in 1963. The present Lagos City Hall in Catholic Mission Street, Lagos Island was built in 1968, as shown here.



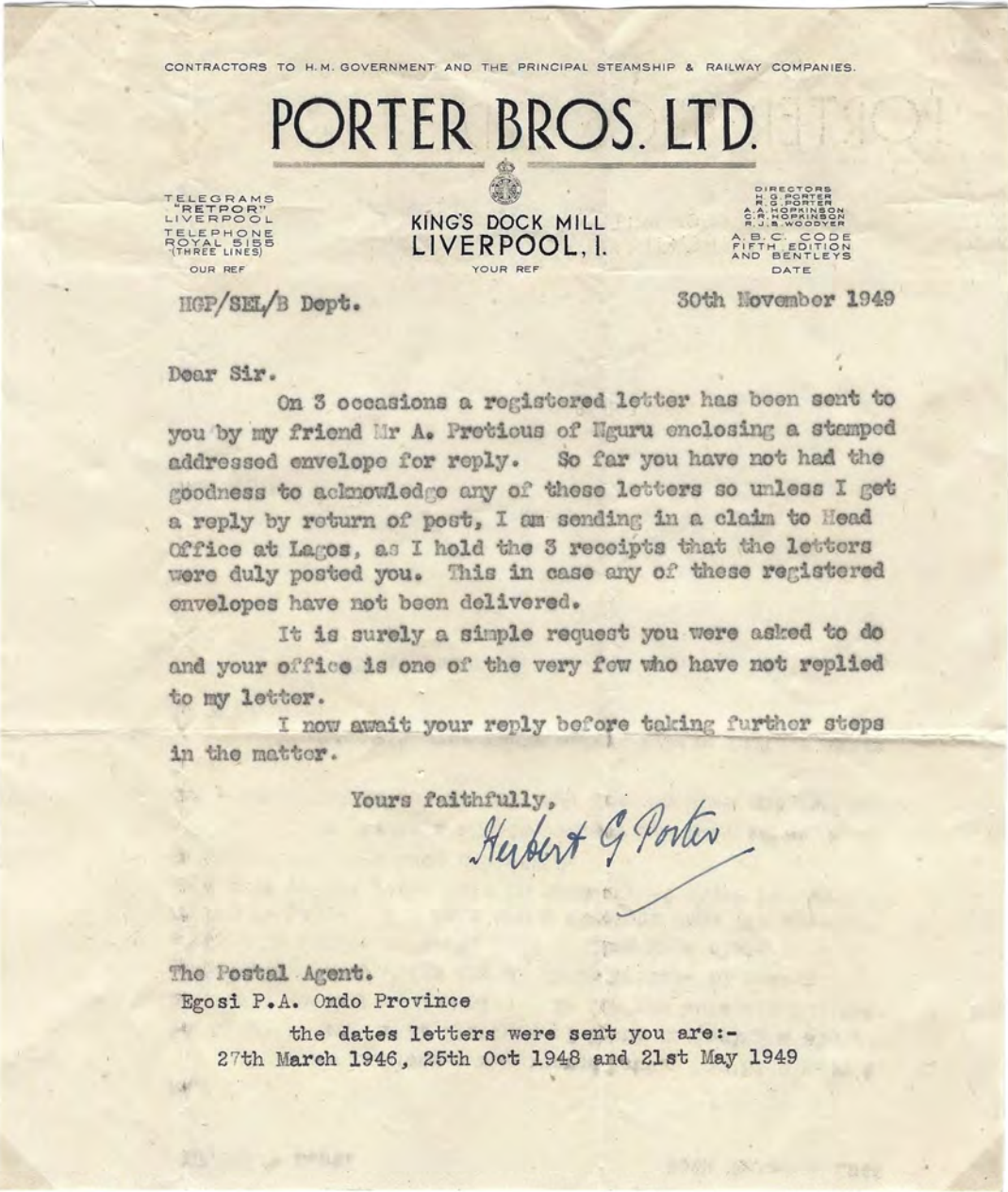
Did this post office replace Catholic Mission Street PO? Jones does not record any Catholic Mission Street postmarks after 1972 and it is notable that the same post office number 462 appears in both Catholic Mission Street and City Hall date-stamps.



Postal agencies 1945-80

Some unusual agencies and some errors in Proud and in
Jones

Egosi postal agency have a very short lifetime; opening on 9 June 1943 and closing on 31 May 1948. Herbert Porter failed to get a specimen of its cancellation because the postal agent did not respond to his first request in 1946 and, by the time he sent a reminder in October 1948 and a complaint in November 1949 it was closed. I can show his final complaint letter and the envelope which was returned to him with a manuscript explanation and an array of backstamps.



Now I just need to find a cover that shows this hitherto unrecorded Egosi postmark.



Isheri postal agency also seems to have had a short lifespan. Proud shows it as having opened on 17 September 1945 and closing in October 1949, but I have a postmark on piece with a 2d QE2 stamp indistinctly dated 1955. Isheri is in the northern suburbs of Lagos, close to Agege and the cover below shows the only recorded type of date-stamp used by this postal agency. The cover also shows a clear strike of the AGEGE TELEGRAPHS cds, which Proud did not record in use as a postmark.



Iva Valley postal agency opened on 1 May 1945 under Enugu. It is a suburb on the western edge of Enugu around a coal mine that was established by the British in 1917. On 18 November 1949 a miners' strike (more accurately a go-slow) turned violent when a British policeman, Captain F. S. Phillip who spoke no native tongue at all, took fright and shot two of the workers. The local Igbo police were sympathetic to the miners but Hausa troops had been brought in from Northern Nigeria and also fired on the miners. 21 of the striking miners and a bystander were shot dead. 51 were injured. The events of that day had a profound effect on Nigerian opinion of the British which eventually led to independence.

The postal agency used only skeleton cancellations before independence and the first setting is shown here.



A postal agency opened at Akpap Okoyong on 1 September 1947 in Cross River State, under Calabar. Akpap is well-known for being the home of Mary Slessor (lived 1848-1915 and lived at Okoyong from 1888 to 1915). Her house is now a tourist attraction, pictured here.



Proud recorded three versions of a skeleton cancel used between 1947 and 1960, of which the cover below shows the third.



Iwopin postal agency opened on 22 July 1948 and remained in operation as a PA up to and beyond independence. It is a coastal settlement at the eastern end of the Lagos and Lekki lagoons which, since 1975, has had a large pulp and paper mill. On the reverse of the second cover is a skeleton postmark which seems to read indistinctly "IJEBUODE PO", which is not recorded by Proud. The road route to Iwopin from the west passes through Ijebu Ode, so I have some confidence in my interpretation of this marking.

GOVT. NOTICE No. 1295
IWOPIN POSTAL AGENCY
OPENING OF
It is notified for general information that a Postal Agency was opened at Iwopin, in the Ijebu Province, on the 22nd July, 1948, for the sale of stamps, the transaction of postal order business, the acceptance and delivery of registered articles, the delivery of parcels and the receipt and despatch of mails.
J. A. GUNDRY,
Director of Posts and Telegraphs
Lagos, July, 1948. 01425



Although the official opening date of the postal agency at Ibadan University College is shown as September 1949 an air letter from a member of the staff of the Engineering Department at University College dated 29 April 1949 says that a postal agency has been open there since January 1949 but had not by then been supplied with a date stamp (see copy attached to the back of this sheet). The first device supplied to this postal agency was a skeleton which reads IB UNY COLLEGE PA / NIGERIA shown below.



We have a new Post Office, opened last January, in the University, but as they have not yet a Date Stamp, they merely act as a sorting office, and letters are taken into the town for cancellation. Lagos is 112 miles away, $\frac{1}{2}$ hour by plane, 3 hours by car, and 8 hours by train. Letters take 3-14 days, and parcels much longer. I think that if we had a philatelist as P.M.G., the service might be improved it could not possibly be made any worse. Air Mail from London never takes less than 5 days - the plane takes 20 hours, and the rest is wasted this end.

I don't know what values are to be issued for the P.U.C., but as soon as I can find out, I will quote you for any quantity you may require.

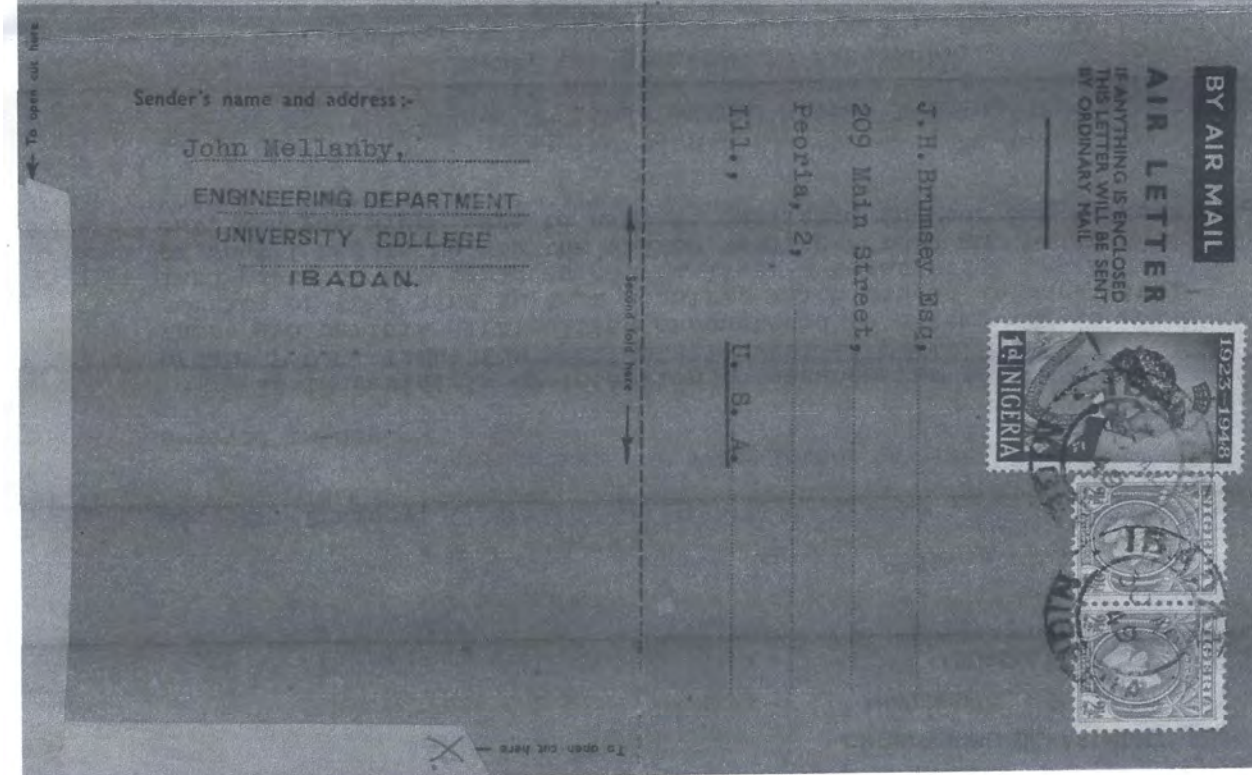
I can't do anything myself with stamps or covers out here, but my partner in England, Mr. Sykes, Systematic Stamp Service, 26 Orchard Street, Cambridge, may be able to do business. My own interests as a collector are confined to British West Africa and Germany. As a dealer I am prepared to buy and sell anything that shows a profit!

I am trying to arrange for agents in the other West African Colonies, i.e. Gambia, Gold Coast & Sierra Leone. If my arrangements are successful, can I help you with any of these?

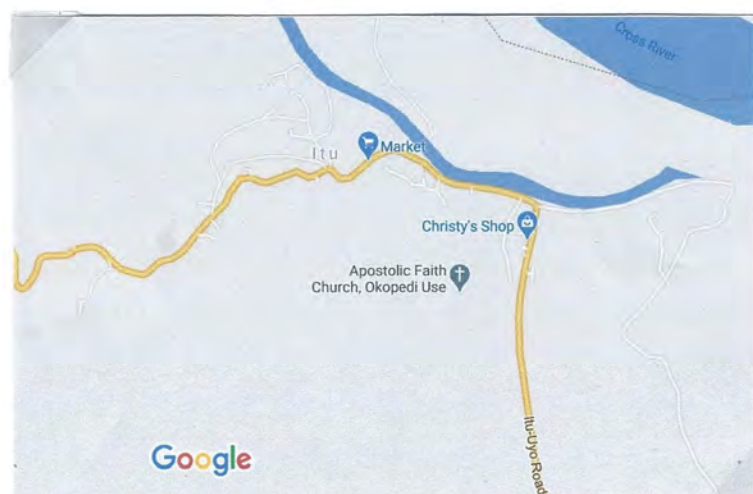
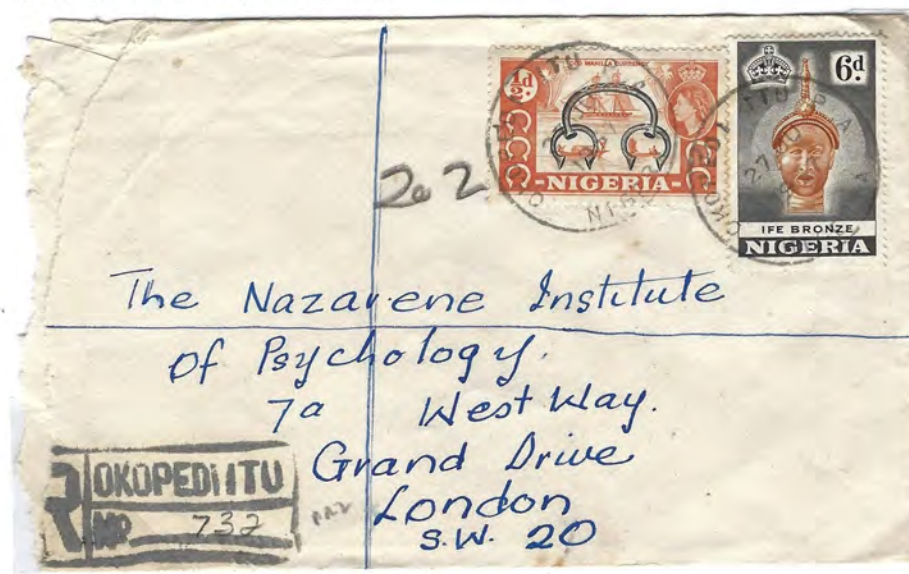
Yours sincerely,

John Mellanby

P.S. I am franking with 2d values, much the scarcest value in the set. I trust they will arrive reasonably cancelled.



Okopedi postal agency opened on 8 August 1950 under Itu post office. A settlement named Okopedi is located about 14 miles from Uyo, on the road to Oron which is about 4 miles further south. It would seem surprising that its supervising office would be Itu because, by 1950, both Oron and Uyo had departmental post offices. An intense search of Google maps revealed that a very small settlement named Okopedi Use can be found immediately to the south of Itu as shown on this map. The skeleton date-stamp reads OKOPEDI ITU to distinguish it from Okopedi, near Oron, which seems never to have had a postal agency.



Ikeja Airport post office opened on 9 April 1951. This civil airport serving Lagos replaced the pre-war airport at Apapa, by adapting the former world war 2 airbase at Ikeja. A terminal building for both domestic and international flights was constructed, which included the post office. That building was destroyed by fire in 2000 by which time it had become only the domestic terminal – a new international terminal having opened in 1979. I do not know if the post office in the domestic terminal had closed before 2000. The railway post office at Ikeja closed when the Ikeja Airport PO opened.

The first postmark was a skeleton date-stamp used between 1951 and July 1953. I show examples dated 30 MY 1951 and 30 JA 1953. Then, a double ring cds was used between 1952 and 1960, as displayed here with dates of 24 MY 53 and 30 JA 60.

A single ring date-stamp reading IKEJA AIRPORT / NIGERIA was also used in parallel from September 1954 until after independence in 1960.



As an important international post office, the IKEJA AIRPORT post office was supplied with a registered oval canceller from early 1954. The first version, shown here on a loose stamp from 4 JA 55, read IKEJA AIRPORT NIGERIA. A pair of new oval date-stamps reading IKEJA AIRPORT 1 and IKEJA AIRPORT 2 were sent to the post office on 8 August 1960 and Jones records them in use from June 1961. Jones records R25 in use from 1962 but I think he has misread the IKEJA AIRPORT 1 oval in which the 1 is often weakly struck, as shown on this 1963 cover.



A postal agency had existed at Duke Town Calabar since 1904 until, in 1951, the Calabar District surveyor asked the agent to move the agency from there to Efut. The Efut postal agency opened on 13 July 1953 at 44 or 45, Edgerley Rd, Calabar but closed again in July 1954 upon the resignation of the postal agent (see Edet Akpan, "The untold history of Efut postal agency" in Cameo January 2020, pp24-28).

On 9 August 1955 the same postal agent wrote asking to be allowed to reopen it, but the Surveyor, Calabar District told him his HQ had decided to reopen a postal agency at Henshaw Town which had closed in 1942 and said that Efut would be too close to it. In October 1955 the District Officer over-ruled him and the agency re-opened on 14 April 1956. Due to a burglary it closed again on 4 October 1956! It finally re-opened on 15 September 1958.

The skeleton cancellation illustrated by Proud for the early phases of its existence read EFUT PA / NIGERIA. The version after 1958 until at least 1966 shows EFUT / POSTAL A EN Y, missing letters G and C.



Oban postal agency was open for a short period under Southern Nigeria between 1911 and 1913 then was re-opened on 13th April 1955. We know from enquiries made by Eddy Akpan that it closed in 2017 when the last postal agent retired. Herbert Porter obtained his usual philatelic cancellation on 5 DE 1955, as below.



Government Notice No. 1378
MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND AVIATION
OBAN POSTAL AGENCY—OPENING OF
It is notified for general information that a Postal Agency was opened at Oban in the Calabar Province on the 13th April, 1955, for the sale of stamps, the transaction of postal order business, acceptance and delivery of registered articles and the receipt and despatch of mails.
J. A. FARRER,
Acting Director of Posts and Telegraphs
Lagos, 7th June, 1955. C0021/T



93/3 Pms. 8
Regn. No. Certificate of Posting of a Registered Postal Packet.
A Postal Packet addressed as under, upon which a Fee of Three Pence has been paid, in addition to the postage of it has been registered and posted here this day :
Date Stamp
Accepting Officer's Signature (or initials) }
Oban Calabar Prov. 26 NOV 1955



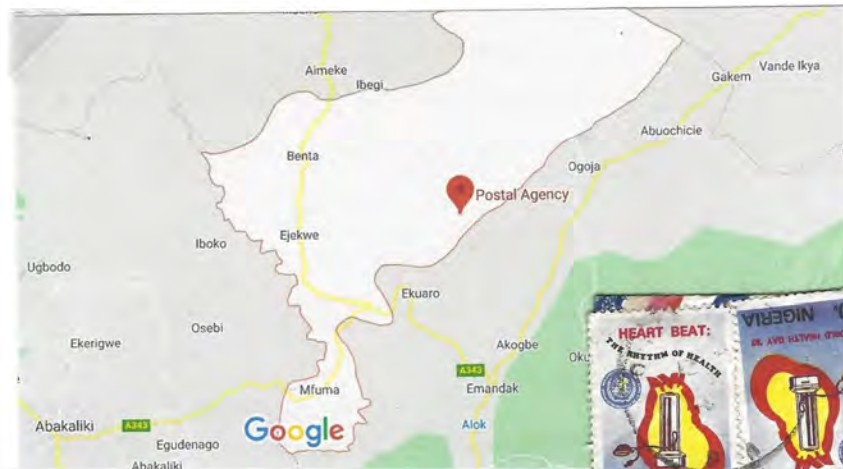
Modakeke postal agency opened on 22 July 1955 under supervision of Ife post office. It closed a year later due to fraud by the postal agent who was imprisoned. It was open again before the date of my second example – 17 AU 1957. The skeleton cancellation is found in four states of which those I can show are states 1 (all text in the top segment) and 3 (P A in the bottom segment).

The single ring cds reading MODAKEKE – IFE was in use from on or before 8 May 1963 until at least 1980. I can show examples from 1964 and 1976.



A number of the postal agency opening dates during 1956 are missing from Proud. One such is Okpoma, five miles from Bende, which Proud lists with EKD of 23 November 1956, derived from a type 37 single ring cds of that date. Okpoma is the chief town of the Yala community in Cross River State and, below, I show the 2020 Google map of the boundary of Yala marking a current postal agency at Okpoma Yala.

Proud states that control of this postal agency was re-allocated from Bende to Brass before 1960. That would be bizarre – Bende was five miles away; Brass was 230 miles away. It is a mistake. The list in the 1963 post office guide shows there are two places named Okpoma: one near Bende and the other in the Delta near Brass. I show on this page a skeleton date-stamp of OKPOMA YALA (near Bende) in 1964 and, probably, in 1992. A later Nigeria Gazette shows control of Okpoma Yala, moved from Calabar to Ogoja, the nearest town as shown on this map, from 1 December 1977.



Okpoma postal agency near Brass opened in about 1960 but I do not have the exact date because of an error in Proud's book where he took the opening of this agency to be a re-allocation of control of the Okpoma Yala postal agency. I can show a single ring cds OKPOMA – BRASS used in 1964 and 1975. Note that the 1975 cover shows that this registered letter was transferred from Okpoma to Brass on the same day, 24 October 1975 which would clearly be impossible if the origin of it was Okpoma Yala.



A postal agency was opened at Iseke on 2 January 1957 but there seems to have been a "false start" in July 1956 when the Nigerian Gazette had announced this opening once before. Iseke village, near Orlu and about 6 miles from Ihiala, is believed to be the home village of the 18th century slave Olaudah Equiano, whose autobiography was published in London in 1789. After working as a slave on a plantation he became a slave crew member on ships trading with the USA and Britain. He was educated by one of the sea captains and eventually bought himself out of slavery using money he made trading on his own account during his voyages.

Porter obtained his specimen of the postal agency skeleton date-stamp on 3 May 1957 as shown here.



Aba Branch Post Office opened at Ngwa Road Aba on 12 August 1959 and still operated as a post office in 2020 as shown on the Google map below. The nearby postal agency at Obiora Road had already been open since July 1957 and continued to trade until at least 1975.

Proud shows just one state of a skeleton date-stamp reading ABA BRANCH / OFFICE which Jones records in use until September 1965. A single ring cds reading NGWA ROAD B.O. is recorded by Jones between 22 AU 72 and 8 SP 84. It is not clear what postmark was used between 1965 and 1972.

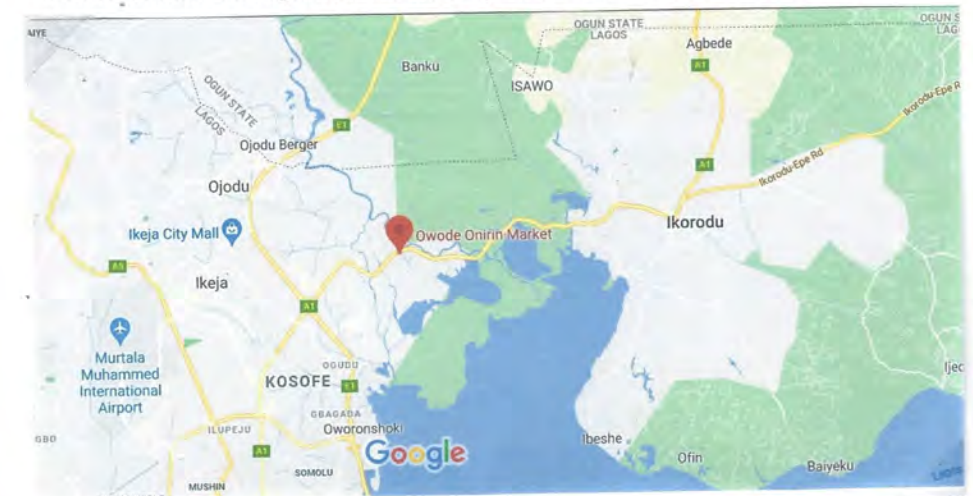


A branch office probably opened some time in 1960 or early 1961 at the Secretariat Building in Ibadan. It is included in the 1961 post office list but is not recorded in Proud's book. Jones' earliest recorded date is 21 AU 61. The Federal Secretariat was relocated to a new building at Ikoyi in about 1978 but this branch office continued to operate until at least 1982 if postmark evidence can be believed. It is also possible that the postal inventory was moved to the new building at Ikoyi.

My first two postmarks are a cds of SECRETARIAT BO2 in 1964 and A registered oval in 1966.



It is known that a postal agency at Owode Market, between Ikeja and Ikorodu, was open by 1963 because it is on the 1963 Post Office Guide list of postal agencies. The commencement date is unclear because it was not announced in the Nigeria Gazette. Its status is further confused by its use of a skeleton postmark OWODE / PA at the same time as there was another Owode postal agency in the 1963 list under Abeokuta. But by 1963, Owode, Abeokuta had been allocated post office number 590 and was using a J51 cds with that number, so any skeleton date-stamp in the 1960s relates to Owode Market. The registration handstamp on this cover is also evidential.



The University of Lagos at Yaba (now known as UNILAG) was founded in 1962 and immediately established its postal agency to take effect from 17 December 1962. I can show a 1967 skeleton cancellation (also with a rubber registration handstamp) and a registered oval from this agency.



The University of Nigeria campus at Nsukka first opened on 7 October 1960, just a few days after Nigeria became an independent state. The postcard-size photo by Noble's of Enugu shows its new, quite raw appearance on 20 November 1960. A postal agency was opened at the University a year later, on 21 October 1961. The first version of its skeleton canceller includes the place name Nsukka and so does a later version in 1971 after the facility had become a sub post office.



After decimalisation I can show that the sub post office was supplied first with a large single ring cds reading UNI OF NIG NSUKKA, here struck on cover in violet and showing no year slug, then used another smaller cds reading UNIVERSITY POST OFFICE NSUKKA, again struck in violet, possibly in 1973.



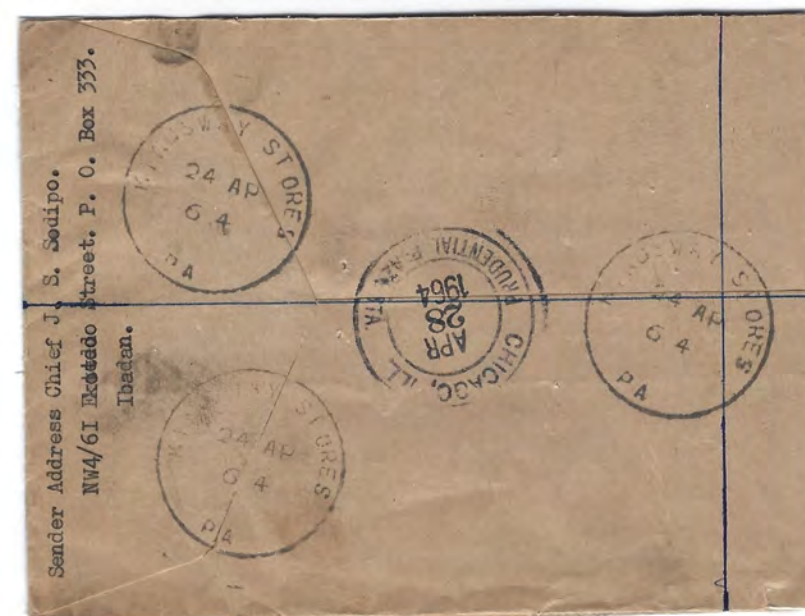
Escravos is where both Shell and Chevron have a port for transshipping crude oil on the coast near Warri. There is a small airport for oil workers and, judging from this ESCRAVOS BAR postmark, there are facilities to cater for the on-site staff. The postal agency opened on 1st February 1961.



The postal agency at the Lagos store seems to have been successful enough to encourage the company to open postal agencies in their stores at Kano and Ibadan in 1962, on 11 June and 21 October, respectively. I show a cover with skeleton cancel of the Kano agency dated 15 AU 1963.



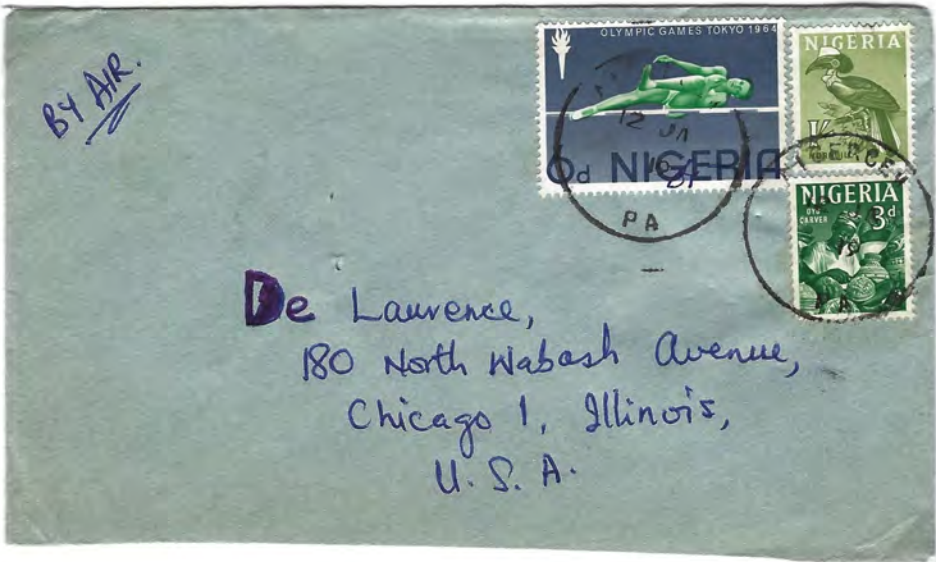
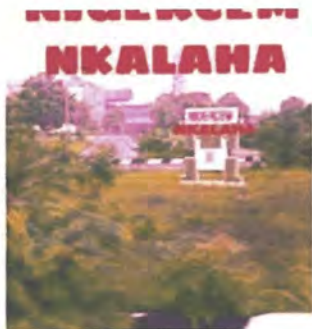
On this next sheet I can show a cover with a skeleton cancel dated 24 AP 64 which fails to name IBADAN but where the sender's address provides the evidence. Then I also show a registered cover to the USA in August 1965 dated by a steel cds which now does include the word Ibadan, along with a registration label with hand-written KS/IB (an abbreviation of Kingsway Stores, Ibadan)

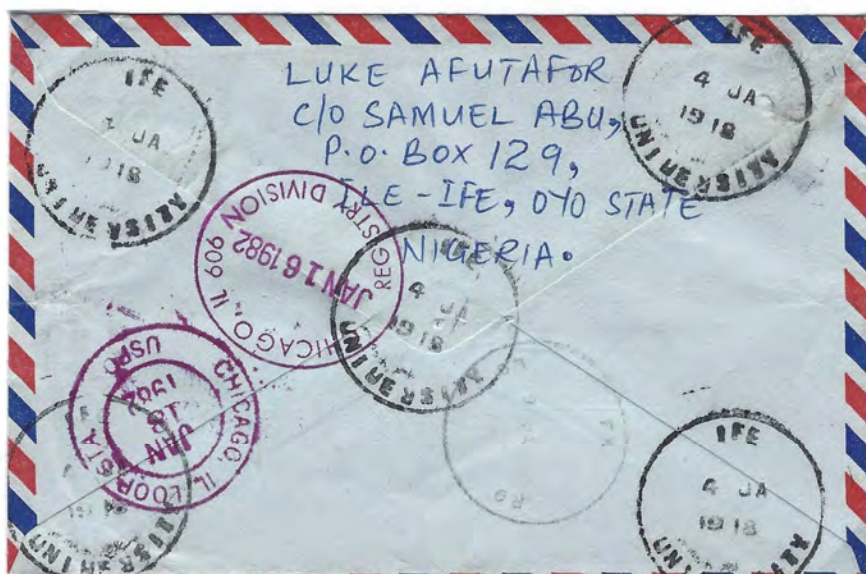


Mayflower was another unusual postal agency. It was established on 29 July 1964 at the Mayflower School, Ikenne, which is a prestigious fee-paying private school. I can show a photo of the school entrance and an example of the skeleton cancellation from the later 1960s – unfortunately with no year slug.



Nigercem Postal agency was opened on 7 August 1964 to serve the employees of the large cement works at Nkalagu (aka Nkalaha), near Abakaliki. The cement works had opened in 1958 with national and local government funding. It was privatised in 2002 but a fraud investigation into that privatisation was launched in 2009 because the works fell into disuse at that time and has not yet reopened.





A detailed image of a registered letter envelope from Christ's School, Lagos, Nigeria, dated 1st September 1970. The envelope is addressed to The Deposit Accounts Manager, Lombard North Central Limited, 17 Bruton Street, London W1A 3DH. It features a large 'R' in a circle, a 'REGISTERED' stamp, and a 'CHRIST'S SCHOOL' postmark. The envelope is decorated with several Nigerian postage stamps, including a 10k stamp featuring a lion and a 2k stamp featuring a bird. A receipt stamp from the Post Office is also visible.

Inside the Leventis Store at Port Harcourt a postal agency counter was in operation from 24 July 1972. It used a skeleton canceller which included the letters "PH" as an abbreviation of Port Harcourt. The date slugs in the example below are almost completely missing but the Port Harcourt GPO registered oval applied in transit shows it was sent in August 1976. Kingsway Stores and Leventis were Nigeria's first department store chains but the late 1980s recession and oil crisis killed them off. I would like to find an image of the Port Harcourt branch.



The Federal Government Girls' College at Gboko was established in January 1975 and I think this unusual cancellation reads, in full "F.G.G.C. GBOKO" with PA in the bottom segment. It is possibly a bag seal and seems to have been used to obliterate another conventional postmark. I do not know when this postal agency opened; this example was used on 28 FE 2003.



Also at some time shortly after 1975 the University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital, close to the University of Nigeria Campus at Nsukka, gained its own postal agency and I have a very fine strike of its skeleton cancellation on a 28 kobo registered PSE in August 1978. The agency has also obtained a locally-made registered handstamp.



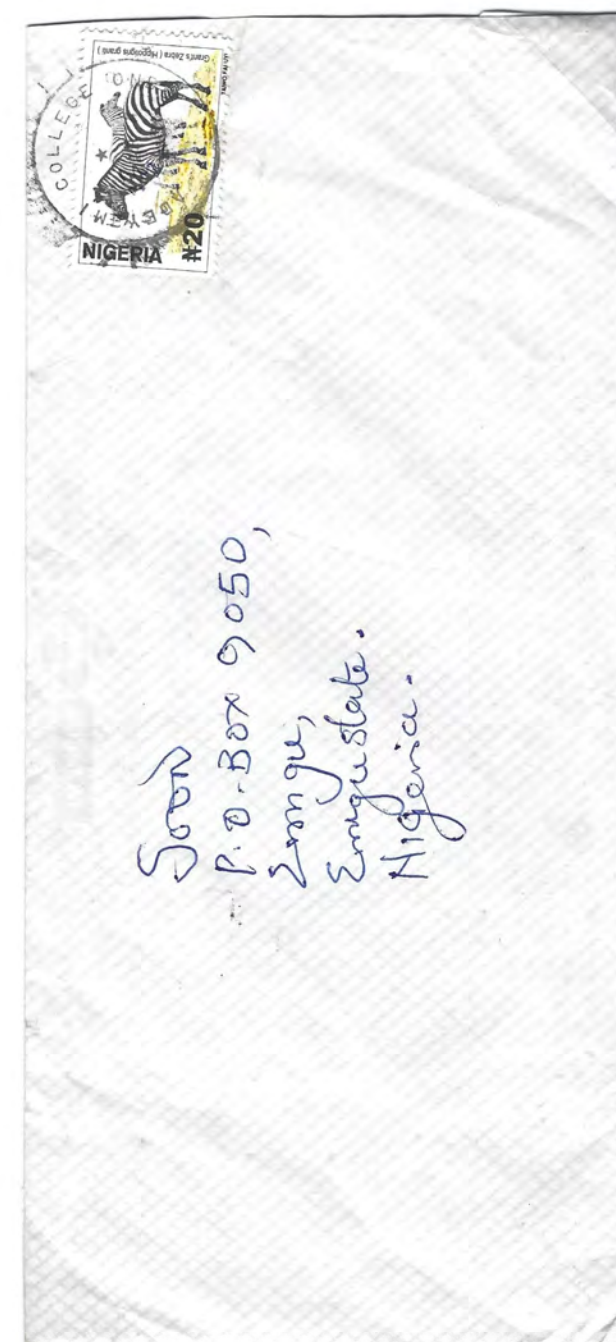
A year later both the skeleton postmark and the registration handstamp had changed. Although there is no year slug in this TEACHING HOSPITAL / PA date-stamp, the backstamp of Surulere 1 is dated 17 JA 79 (giving an unimpressive five days to travel a few hundred yards from the hospital to Surulere head post office).



A branch post office opened at Murtala Muhammed Airport, Ikeja on 12 January 1977, probably as part of the development of the new international terminal. The old Ikeja Airport terminal continued in use as the domestic terminal. The post office has used a range of different states of a skeleton date-stamp. The most accurate type is shown on the re-rated registered PSE dated 16 AU 85 which has the letters IKJBO all the right way up and evenly spaced.

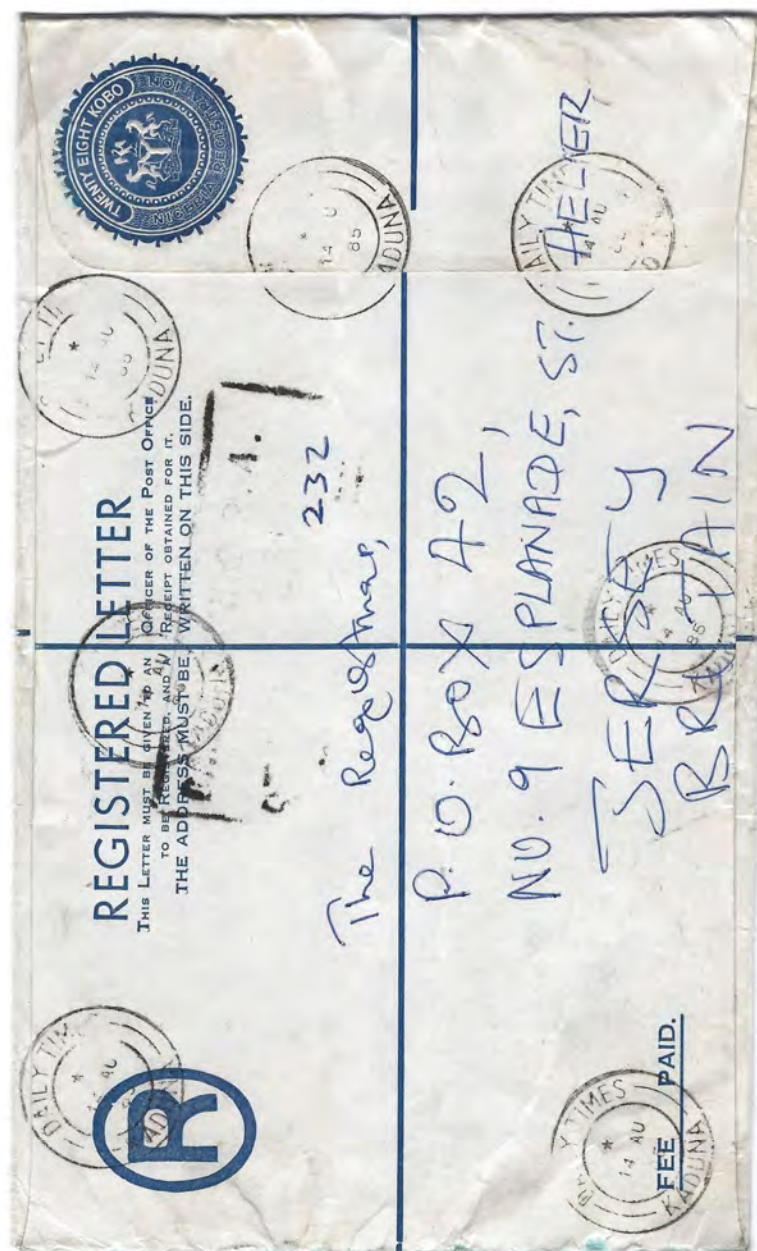


A postal agency was opened on the campus of Adeyemi College, Ondo on 14 April 1978. This teacher training college was founded in 1963 and accepted its first students in 1964.

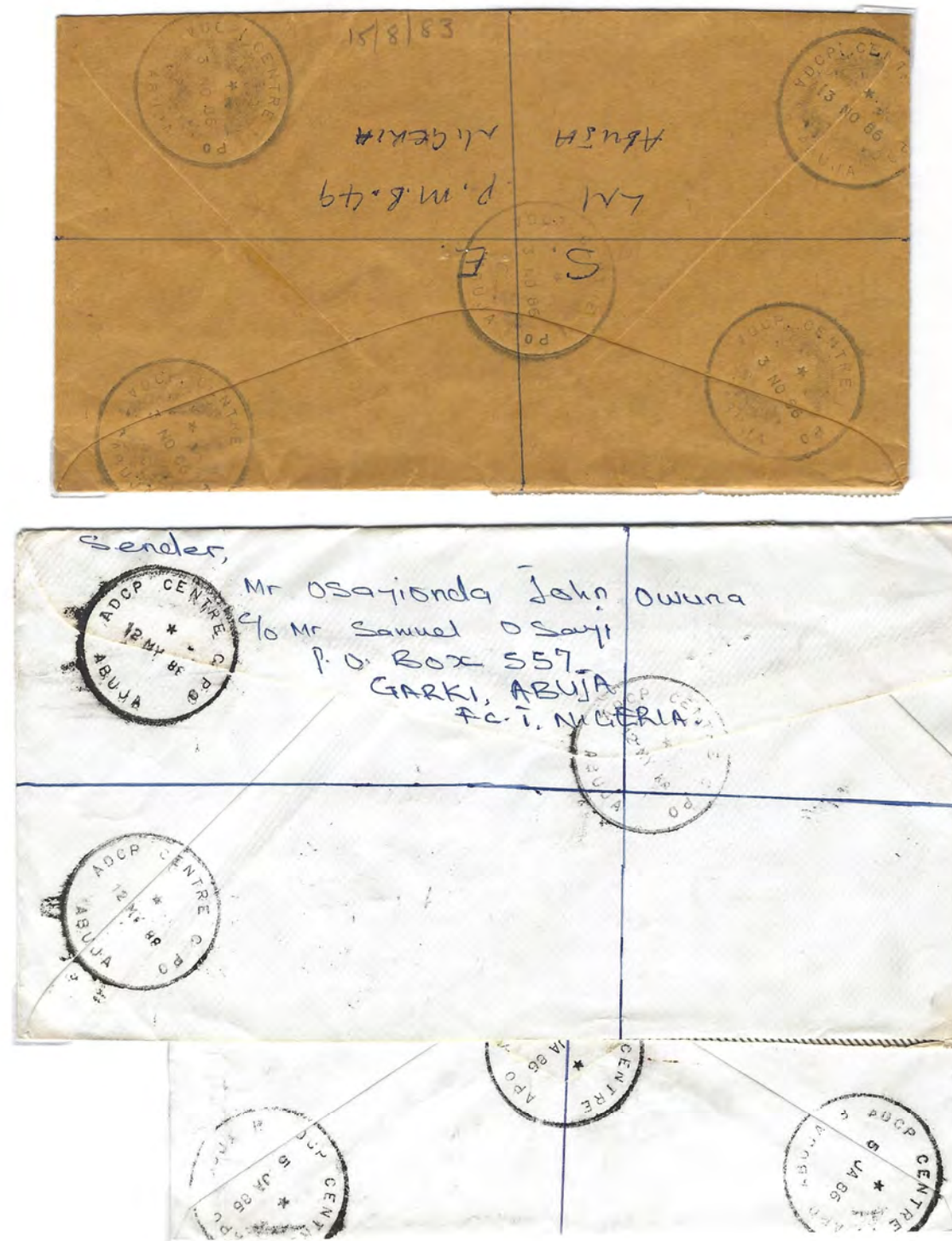


The Daily Times newspaper had been, in the 1970s, the newspaper with the largest daily circulation in Nigeria but the Babangida military government bought a controlling 60% stake in the company on 1 September 1975 and was then able to suppress its criticism of the regime and its policies. Not surprisingly, its circulation soon declined as readers turned to livelier independent newspapers.

This cover shows that it operated a postal agency at its Kaduna office in the 1980s (note the letters "P.A." in the registration handstamp). I have seen no opening or closing dates in official documents. It appears to have been run inefficiently: – this cover is backstamped KADUNA on 29 AU 85 and again 5 SP 85 so this registered letter spent 22 days drifting around Kaduna before being sent onward to Jersey.



ADCP Centre Abuja postal agency (or post office?) opened on 15 August 1983 and used a skeleton postmark in which, by November 1986, the A of ADCP had become inverted. ADCP stands for Aquaculture Development and Co-ordination Programme and there is an on-line reference to "ADCP Housing" in Abuja. This postal facility could be part of a larger experimental or model housing development.



A new 15-storey Federal Secretariat Building was erected in Ikoyi in 1976 when Lagos was the Federal Capital of Nigeria. Only a couple of years later the Federal Government decided to move the capital to Abuja, which completed in 1991. After just 15 years' use the Ikoyi building was abandoned. Not only a waste of money at the time but in 2020 the abandoned building stands derelict when it could have been converted to housing years ago.

I don't have opening and closing dates for the post office in this building but they are very likely to be 1976 and 1991 in line with the above. I can show a cover sent on 19 AU 1987.

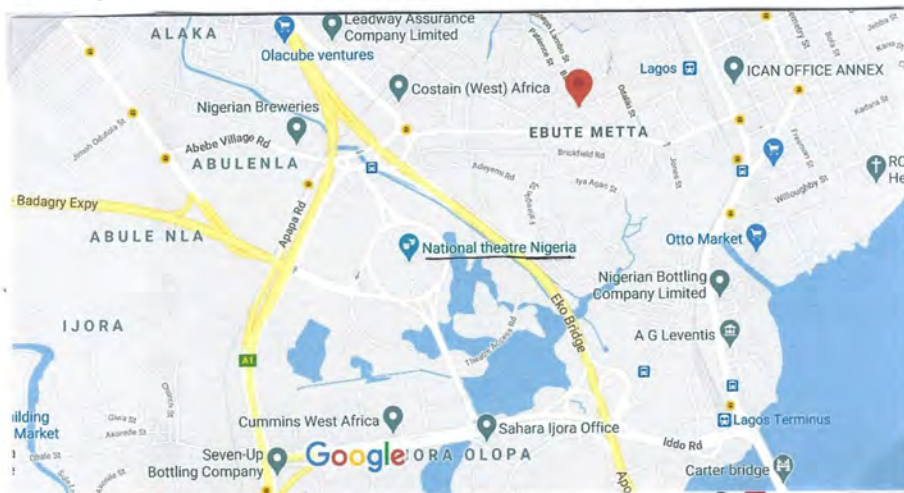


A 350-hectare purpose-built international trade fair complex was constructed at Ojo, to the north of the Badagry Expressway, in 1977. It comprised exhibition halls and an amusement park as well as an open marketplace and permanent shops. It hosted the first 10-day Lagos International Trade Fair; then the market stalls remained trading.

It appears that the Trade Fair postal agency was also permanent as the date of the cover shown here is 22 JY 1981 but the Trade Fair took place in November each year.



I can show a skeleton date-stamp on cover dated 5 NO 1980.

[illegible]

A postal agency opened at the Ojo Military Cantonment west of Apapa at some time after 1973 and before 1980, but no Nigeria Gazette announcement has yet been found. It is not shown on the 1973 post office list, but this cover shows that it was in use in July 1980. The Cantonment includes the Nigeria Army School of Medical Science marked on this Google map but also covers the large area west of the Trade Fair Complex and north of the Expressway.

The skeleton postmark reads
OJO MIL CANT APAPA / PA
and the agency also had a
rubber registration handstamp
OJO MIL. CANTONMENT P.A.



Ikot Obio Nko - a new post office in 2018. Edet Akpan attended the inauguration of a new postal agency in this village on 28 JU 2018 and sent "first day" covers to friends in the UK, unclearly struck with the skeleton date-stamp shown here. The village is in Akwa Ibom State, south of Uyo and close to Nung Udoo (see 16 May 1938).

