

# India Celebrates Airmail's Golden Jubilee

India, which claims a first for inaugurating the world's first airmail service, celebrated the occasion of its airpost's golden jubilee with the issuance of three commemorative stamps, a re-enactment of that historic flight of 1911.

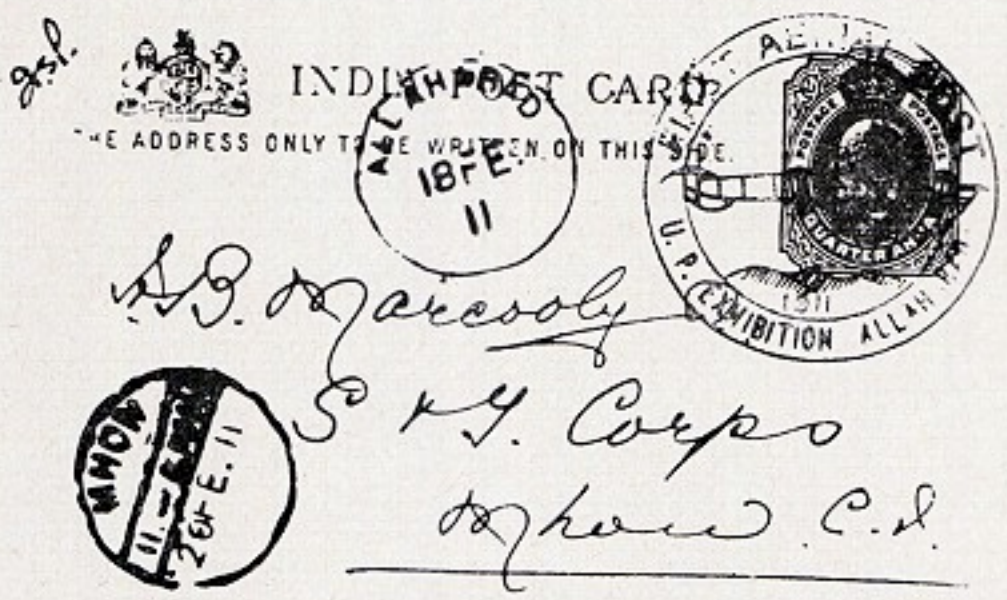
Dhirubhai Mehta of Bombay, reporting the ceremonies for The American Philatelist, writes that six Piper Cubs and an Indian Air Force Viscount participated in the re-enactment on the exact 50th anniversary date—February 18, 1961. The original flight a half-century ago covered a distance of about six miles—Allahabad to Naini Junction.

The February re-run, in which the Indian post office department, the Hind Provincial Flying Club and the Allahabad Philatelic Club participated, saw Dr. Subbaroyan, Indian minister of transport and communications, wave the green clearance flag for the five Piper and the Indian AF planes to take off from the Allahabad Fort Grounds carrying their load of more than 32,000 covers franked with the new stamps and canceled with the special re-enactment cachet. The sixth Piper Cub had crashed earlier on the Fort Grounds, injuring its captain, L. K. Varma.

Mehta reports the re-enactment flight was staged from the very spot where Frenchman Henri Piquet took off in his Humber biplane with the first airmail ever sanctioned by a post office department. The flight carried the mail across the Yamuna River to Naini. "About 5,000 pieces of mail was carried on Piquet's flight of February 18, 1911," Mehta pens.

The first-day ceremonies for the three jubilee commemoratives were held at the Allahabad post office, followed by luncheon, then the flight re-enactment.

*Allahabad  
18 Feb 1911  
My dear Mary  
I am sending  
you the postcard  
that it may be  
conveyed by the  
first Postal Aerial  
Service in the  
world. Many messages  
9 letters have been  
sent by aeroplane,  
first flown under  
the auspices of the  
Postal Service.  
Yours truly:  
D. B. Mehta*



Illustrated above are the address and message sides of an Indian postcard carried on first airmail flight, February 18, 1911. Note special cachet cancel.