Vyatka province lay some 550 miles almost due east of Moscow. Its capital is now Kirov in honour of a leading early communist.

There were four districts which never used stamps (the Quartet) viz. ELABUGA, ORLOV, SLOBODOSKOY and YARANSK, and two other districts which did not use stamps for a period, viz. NOLINSK and SARAPUL.

Most of the known mail comes from the Vyatka Court Archive. Official mail is predominant. Private mail consists mainly of appeals and complaints to the courts.

The lack of private mail is almost certainly caused by the fact that mail without stamps, or even with, was of no interest to early collectors.

Mail originating from a volost (group of villages) always seems to have an m/s acceptance signed and dated by a volost official, and sometimes a cachet or the administrative handstamp of the volost or a handstamp including the word “POCHTA” (POST).

A decree dated 24 January 1900 stated that each volost should be issued with a standard datestamp.

Since the Quartet did not use stamps I assume no datestamp was issued to them.

In selecting material to show I have tried to include a variety of mail types, with an emphasis on private mail. I note that I have seen few examples of insured mail, but money letters were always insured; we know that it is mentioned in the ORLOV rules (Fig. 2) (please see paragraph 6) and receipts are shown under SLOBODOSKOY (Fig. 18).

Covers are in chronological order within each district.
ORLOV DISTRICT POSTAL RULES

These rules (Fig. 2) (45cm x 36cm) may have been displayed in Orlov postal establishments.

We know that SLOBODSKOY district used the same rules.

It seems possible that the Quartet all used the same rules, since they all started their postal service around the same time, 1867/1868.

In other VYATKA districts their own rules were issued in booklets.

Parcel weight is expressed in the historic “pood”, equal to 40 old Russian pounds, (1 pood equalled 16.31 kgs).

Note: It has been found necessary to adapt the literal translation to assist comprehension, every attempt has been made to remain accurate.

RULES
For the sending by the Zemstvo mail in the Orlov district (uezd) of parcels, money and other kinds of correspondence.

1) By using the Zemstvo post it is possible for institutions, societies, officials and private persons to send correspondence of different kinds free of charge, and private parcels for a charge, except for:

a. Parcels with a weight in excess of 1 pood as well as bulky and awkward to transport items;

b. Taxes and other charges destined for the State Treasury.

i. Note 1. Parcels containing books and other teaching or writing materials for educational establishments of the Zemstvo, may be of any weight.

ii. Note 2. Parcels under 1 pood of weight to and from persons attending Zemstvo educational establishments in the town of Orlov, may be sent by Zemstvo mail free of charge.

2) Within the town correspondence is accepted at the Zemstvo post office from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. every
day, except for non-working days, and on Mondays and Thursdays when correspondence is accepted from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. (which are mail despatch days). Within the district correspondence is accepted by the village (volost) authorities.

3) Money and other insured correspondence, and parcels arriving from the State Post mail are to be recorded in official books. Money transfers and parcels arriving in the town from official (but excluding any post office) public establishments, and private persons, are to be recorded in received registers, and on arrival a receipt is to be issued with the signature of the head of the district post office, in addition parcels from private persons handed to the town post office are to be registered in a specified book by the sender, who has to declare the parcel’s contents. In a volost authority the arrival is to be recorded in a register and a receipt is to be issued with the signature of a member of the volost authority.

Explanatory note: Due to the printer’s error the Orlov Uezd Zemstvo Uprava (District Zemstvo Board) issued an ordinance at its XLI session correcting the published charges thus:

“To send a parcel a charge is made of 10 kopeks for each separate parcel weighing up to 10 Russian pounds, 15 kopeks for every separate parcel weighing from 10 to 20 Russian pounds and 25 kopeks from 20 Russian pounds to 1 pood.”

(An attempt has been made to correct the erroneous original).

5) Periodicals and private correspondence arriving by the State Post as well as correspondence brought in by private persons, are not to be registered in books, and volost authorities will not issue a receipt.

6) Money in sealed letters is absolutely not accepted to be sent by the Zemstvo post, with the exception of money letters delivered from the State Post.

7) The Zemstvo is only financially responsible for money transfers and valuable packages accepted with a receipt, as well as for money, valuable packages and recorded correspondence received from the State Post. Any other correspondence is beyond the Zemstvo’s financial responsibility.

8) If correspondence or money that are to be received from the State Post, or a proof of receipt of money, or recorded mail is not handed over within two weeks, then the post official who sent the advice or proof of receipt of money or recorded mail must report the fact to the Zemstvo postal authority within one month of giving it to the postman.

9) Any enquiries about undelivered correspondence must be answered by the Zemstvo mail within one month from the day of the missing mail having been reported. If correspondence has been lost by the Zemstvo post, then the authorities must pay compensation in accordance with the State postal rules.

10) A “power of attorney” (to receive correspondence from the post office on behalf of someone else) is to be addressed to the Zemstvo authority. If the power to receive correspondence has been addressed to a postman, or any other person, the Zemstvo authority will not take responsibility for the loss of the correspondence, nor will it accept enquiries.

11) At the time of arrival of mail at volost offices the presence of a volost authority executive is required to receive it, or persons authorised by the volost authority, in any case the responsibility remains with the volost authority.

12) Correspondence within the town, excluding private parcels, is delivered by Zemstvo postmen. Parcels are handed out at the post office; the addressee is to receive advance notification of its arrival.

13) The order of handing out, and accepting, correspondence at volost level is determined by volost authorities themselves or another authority in charge.

14) The format of books for the registration and receipt of correspondence is determined by the Zemstvo authority, and the books procured by a volost authority are chargeable to the account of the district authority.

---

Head of authority  Kilbardin

Secretary  P Ardashev
ELABUGA District

Elabuga town lies on the River Kama. It was famous for its flour mills, the export of corn, and it had a tanning industry. Around 1900 the town population was approximately 10,500 and that of the whole district was 282,500. The district covered 3,414 square miles.

Postal service history

1868 District postal regulations established.

Information source for the above, by V.P. Grodetskij & M.I. Shmykova in “Zemskaya pochta Vyatskoy Guberniya”, volume 2; published by Izhevsk 2011.

1869 Expenses 100R Office books and blank forms purchased.

1870 Further 150R spent


1871 Postal service started

Information source an article by N, Spassky “Zemstvo Pochta in Vyatka Guberniya” published in the newspaper Viatskie Gubernskie Vedomosti” no.15, 21 February 1873 and No. 16, 24 February 1873.

1918 The service ceased when the Zemstvo was abolished.


Postal material seen by me, which seems very scarce:

Official outgoing 2

A numbered official letter (Fig. 3) closed by the district’s official wax seal.

Fig. 3: ex the Vyatka District Court Archive. From the collection of T. Page.

ELABUZHSK. UEZDNOI ZEMSK. UPRAVI (Elabuga District Administration), forwarded to Elabuga Imperial P.O. on 16 August 1878 for onward delivery to Vyatka, arriving there on the 19th.
An official outgoing letter (Fig. 4) sent from Makan – Pelginskoe Volost Pravlenye (V.P.), village administration to Ysadskoe V.P of Malmyzh district.

The yellow wafer seal is that of Makan – Pelginskoe V.P.

Arrived at Elabuga Imperial P.O. 8 December 1880 from the district post, despatched by Elabuga Imperial P.O. on 10 December 1880, received by Malmyzh Imperial P.O. on 11 December 1880.

An official outgoing letter (Fig. 5) sent from Elabuga to Slobododoskoy city of that district, addressed to "maschansky starosta" (an elected city officer). It has the official ledger no. of 5402. It bears the blue wafer seal of Elabuga Zemstvo Uprava (administration). Handed in to Elabuga Imperial P.O. 28 December 1892, despatched 30 December 1892, despatched at the Slobododoskoy Imperial P.O. 2 January 1893.
ORLOV District

Orlov was a port on the Vyatka river. Around 1900 the town population was approximately 2,700 and that of the whole district was 92,900. The district covered 5,272 square miles.

Postal service history

1868 26 September: Postal regulations established (see Fig. 2).

1869 6 January: First mail distribution.

1918 The service probably ceased when the Zemstvo was abolished.

Information from "Collection of resolutions of Orlov Uezd Zemstvo (Vyatka Guberniya) for 56 years (1867 – 1912). Vyatka 1916 page 224.

Postal material seen by me

Official local 9,
Official outgoing 5,
Private local 5,
Private registered outgoing 1,
Private registered incoming 1.

A registered heavy cover (Fig. 6) addressed to Vyatka and subsequently redirected to Kumensk.

Postmarked on 19 December 1892 with the first handstamp of Orlov Zemstvo Post (oval with stars).

Franked at 21k, heavy registered letter rate, and despatched from Orlov Imperial P.O. the following day, arriving at Vyatka on the 20th.

Four days later the letter was redirected to its final destination, arriving at Kumensk on 25 December.
An official, outgoing letter (Fig. 7) from Adyshevskoe village administration (volostnoe pravlenye) in the district of Orlov to Platininskoe V.P. in the district of Slobodskoy.

The large size (192 mm x 131 mm) envelope has the wafer seal of Adyshevskoe V.P.

The item was returned from Slobodskoy because Plasitininskoe V.P. did not exist in Slobodskoy.

On the back the writing of two postal officials in the Slobodskoy district.

The first m/s, in black, states: “There is no Plasitininskaia Volost in Slobodskoy District”. (Signed “P. Koshurnikov Pochta”).

The second m/s, in violet ink, states “By the absence of Plasitininskaia Volost in Slobodskoy district”. Then a signature followed by “Assistant”.

Plasitininskaia Volost was actually in Vyatka District. The front has “To Slobodskoy city” deleted and “Back to Orlov” written.

Hand and datestamps noted which demonstrate the despatch and the return of the item.

The oval handstamp of Adyshevskoe V.P. (on front), received by Orlov Imperial P.O. on 5 March 1898 (on front) from the district post, forwarded by Orlov Imperial PO on 6 March 1898 (on back) to Slobodskoy Imperial P.O. where it was received 8 March 1898 (on back), returned 10 March 1898 (on front) to Orlov Imperial P.O., where it was received 11 March 1898 (on back), who then handed it over to the Orlov main Zemstvo (district) P.O., on 12 March 1898 (on the back oval handstamp).
An incoming registered cover (Fig. 8) from Samara city, Samara province, to Korshinskovo Volost Pravlenye, Orlov province.

It was sent by a peasant whose native village (pochinok) was Krutetskoe, Korshinsky Volost in Orlov district. He was then working in Samara and living at Nuleskoy street, in the house of Voronin No. 26.

The letter was addressed to the Head (starshina) of his native village requesting a new passport (internal), which had to be purchased periodically.

The cover was posted at the Imperial P.O. in Samara, Imperial P.O. datestamp and cancellation 20.11.1900 and the registration label added.

The letter was franked with 3 blue 7k Imperial stamps.

The cover then went via Novgorod, Imperial P.O. 24.11.1900.

Orlov Imperial P.O. 27 NOV 1900. Orlov Zemstvo main P.O. (oval) 30 NOV 1900.

Fig. 8: From the collection of R. Calvert.
Improvised cover (Fig. 9) to Vyatka with the fancy district circular postmark of the Zemstvo.

Post dated 25 July 1904.

Franked at the 14k heavy letter rate and despatched from the Orlov Imperial P.O. the following day, arriving at Vyatka on the 27th.

A local letter (Fig. 10) endorsed in manuscript “Received at Istobenskoe volostnoe pravlenye for delivery via the Zemstvo post 9 August 1911 (signed)

Assistant to the Clerk”.

This cover has no handstamp, only m/s receipt.
Letter of complaint (Fig. 11) from a peasant addressed to the Orlov District Zemstvo Assembly.

Accepted at the volost (village) where its seal was applied and endorsed in manuscript “Received at Verhovskoe Volost Pravlenye for the (Zemstvo) post, December 17th” and signed by the accepting clerk.

Forwarded to the railway TPO No. 220 KOTLAS – VYATKA.

Franked with 3 x 7k Imperial stamps (heavy letter rate) which were cancelled with the TPO oval Postmark dated 18 December 1913. Received atVyatka the following day.

SLOBODOSKOY District

Slobodoskoy town had various industries viz. tanning, iron works and a trade in furs. Around 1900 the town population was approximately 7,900 and that of the whole district was 250,300. The district covered 10,941 square miles.

Postal history

1867 29 September. Postal service established.

1868 1 January. Postal service commenced.

Information from “System collection of documents of Slobodoskoy Zemstvo 1867 – 1900” Vyatka 1901.

1918 The service probably ceased when the Zemstvo was abolished.

Material seen by me:

Local official 4,
Local private 10,
Local insured money letter 1,
Outgoing private 1,

Please see description on next page.
Outgoing heavy letter 2, Outgoing Registered heavy letters 2, Postal documents being receipts for cash paid for insured mail 2.

Few items of insured mail seem to have survived. Most of the private mail contains appeals or complaints which originated in villages (volosts).

Postmarks used by the main Zemstvo P.O. Precise dates of use are not known.

1897 First type 1a, double circle with straight-line between two star bursts, but with UYZEDA instead of UYZED on the bottom line, diameter 33mm. 1897, later month, first type 1b, double circle with straight line between two star bursts and UYZED, diameter 33mm.

1902 Second type, single circle with bold cruciform date, diameter 27.5mm.

1914 Third type, double circle with fancy decoration above a straight line date, diameter 29.55mm.

1917 Fourth type, single circle with bridge and date below a simple decoration - also "POCHTA instead of ZEMSTVO.

More types may exist.

Improvised wrapper (Fig. 12) addressed to the local village of KIRS showing the first postmark of SLOBODOSK ZEMSKAYA POCHTA/ SLOBODOSKAGO UEZD/11 MART 98. (Zemstvo Post/Slobodsk District/11 March[18]98).

Improvised envelope (Fig. 13) which contained a petition from a peasant to the Vyatka court sitting in Slobodskoy.

Endorsed on the reverse; “Accepted by the Lenimskoe Volostnoye Pravlenye for the Zemstvo post, 14 February 1905”.

The letter was forwarded to the main Zemstvo P.O. and postmarked with a single ring circular datestamp; SLOBODSKOY ZEMST / POCHTA / 14. 11. 1905.
Local letter (Fig. 14) endorsed in m/s on the back “Received by the Zemstvo Post at Kaigorodskoe Volost Pravlenye 13 March 1907”.

This statement was signed by the accepting official who duly applied his handstamp.

Local letter (Fig. 15) endorsed in m/s as having been accepted for the Zemstvo post at the village administration of Rakalovsk and bearing the cachet of the Volost Pravlenye office.

Postmarked by the main Zemstvo P.O. with the double ring Zemstvo Post datestamp on 3 July 1914.
Local insured money letter (Fig. 16) containing a Court fee of 80k, in m/s on the back “Received at Glavnokholunitskom Volost Pravlenye by the Zemstvo Post on 4 June 1903. Volost Starshina (Head) .....signed.

A registered letter (Fig. 17a and b) from a peasant to the Vyatka District Court endorsed in m/s on the reverse.

Forwarded on the 15th by the Zemstvo post to the Imperial PO, franked at the 30k. Heavy registered letter rate, that same day.
Endorsement reads:

“Received at Yaroslav Volost Pravlenye for transmission to the Zemstvo Post 11 September 1915 (signed) Volost Assessor”.

(Fig. 18) Two receipts issued by the Zemstvo P.O. for 3k postage and 1k insurance (strakhovikh) in respect of each of the two money letters.

The first, serial no. 5608, contained 149R 33k and the second, serial no.5609, contained 405R.

The insurance charge of 1k appears to be a surprisingly small premium.

As previously stated, in the introduction, little insured mail from the Quartet seems to exist, but a number of these postal receipts were discovered in the Vyatka archive, each has the same date, 14 August 1917.

Fig. 17b: ex the Vyatka District Court Archive. From the collection of T. Page.

Fig. 18: From the collections of T. Page and R. Calvert.
YARANSK District

A purely agricultural district, Yaransk had a town population of around 4,600 in 1900 and a district population of around 425,700. The district covered 5,061 square miles.

Postal service history

1868 1 January. Start of the postal service.

Information from a book Vyatka 1870 “Shortform report about Zemstvo affairs In Yaransk Uezd In 1867, 1868, 1869”

1918 The service probably finished with the abolition of the Zemstvo.

Postal covers noted which seem very scarce

Outgoing registered private 1.
Outgoing official 1.

An outgoing registered letter (Fig.19) (180 mm x 125 mm) sent from the village of Kundysh in Yaransk district, to the Vyatka court in Vyatka city.

It is franked with 3 x 7k blue Imperial stamps and has a Yaransk registration label.

The signed, undated, m/s acceptance (Yaransk), on the back, reads “Received from the Zemstvo Post, (by) Post Office, postman IVth rank”.

Imperial Yaransk P.O. datestamp 20.6.14 and repeated twice, for cancellations.

Received 22.6.14 by the Imperial Vyatka P.O.

The letter was sent by Elena Andreevna Nikolaskava, the wife of Hikolay Ivanovich Nikolsky. He was a State civil servant, ranking as the equivalent to an Army Captain.

He was Chief of the 3rd district (Zemskiy Nachalnik 3 uchastka) and his office was in Kundysh.

Note: Each Zemstvo had such a Chief. Kundysh was the native Mira word for beaver. This seems to be private use of an official envelope.
NOLINSK District

Nolinsk town was well known for its handicraft and the small woodwork articles fashioned there. This district grew grain, flax and hemp, and had dairy farming. The River Vyatka was used by steamers. Around 1900 the town population was approximately 5,300 and that of the whole district was 203,400. The district covered 2,449 square miles.

Postal service history

1867 The service started, with the sale of stamps.

Between 1873 and 1879 not more than 100 letters annually.

1880 Use of stamps discontinued because the sale of stamps with associated administrative costs was not sufficient.

In 1880 an increase to 943 letters, by 1906 the volume had increased to 49,000.

1910 Sale of stamps reintroduced.

1919 Postal service ceased, probably due to the abolition of the Zemstvo.

Postal material seen by me, which seems very scarce

Local official covers 3.

Note: Many items from the Vyatka Court archives have been glued shut, these items seem to have correspondence entered on the inside.

The author used a professional paper and artefacts conservator to open a similar Nolinsk item. Gentle steaming released most of the glue but there was a section, probably with a different glue which would have needed much more expensive equipment to overcome this glue.

It is a shame that the social history has been made difficult to access.
A local official letter (Fig. 21) bearing Ledger number 41, sent by a female teacher (Head?) of the Neman Zemstvo school, to the Nolinsk District Zemstvo Administration. The cover has a circular datetamp, 19 Feb (ruary) 1893, of the Nolinsk Zemstvo post.

On the lower left is a faint oval handstamp of the Nolinsk Uprava which is on the inside. A wax seal on the back is illegible.

Fig. 21: From the collection of S. Ivanov.
SARAPUL District

Sarapul was a busy port on the Kama river. The town was founded in the sixteenth century as a fortress on the main trade route to Siberia. Sarapul was the centre of a farming district; its main industries included food processing plants, distilleries, tanneries and saw mills. Boots, shoes and gloves were manufactured.

Around 1900 the population was approximately 18,100, having grown from 12,367 in 1855. The whole district had 476,600 inhabitants. The district covered 5,759 square miles.

Postal service history

1868 Postal service started but stamps were not used.

1869 Expenses of 150R covering employment of two postmen, stationery and forms.

1893 Introduction of stamps.

Information source from an article by D. Kuznetcov in the magazine "Philately of the USSR" issue no.11, 1979.

1918 Postal service probably finished when the Zemstvo was abolished.

3 covers are known to me, all official.

An incoming official cover (Fig. 22) from Malmizh (district) Police department to Nylgizhiginskoe Volost Pravlenye (Sarapul district). It has the Malmizh Imperial P.O. datestamp 6 July 1882 then the Sarapul Imperial P.O. datestamp 11 July 1882, and was then handed to the Sarapul Zemstvo post on 12 July 1882. The wax seal on the back is that of the Malmizh Uezd (district) Police Department.

Conclusion

It would be interesting to know if members can add private or insured mail for the districts where none has been noted.

Fig. 22: From the collection of S. Ivanov.

References

E. Klempka BSRP Journal issue 101 of 2011, page 5 "The Vyatka Archive Zemstvo".

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