

## Without Numbers, We're All Lost

ACCORDING to Guinness Book of Records, the practice of numbering houses began in 1463 on the Pont Notre Dame, Paris, France.

Of course, roads and streets had names long before that, but presumably people looking for a particular home just had to start out and keep asking until they came to it.

It might be assumed that by now the practice of numbering homes and business places is universally used, since it is specified by law in most localities. But there are many gaps.

Unless a house number is large enough to be seen and located where it can be found, much of the benefit may be lost. Thousands of homes still use numerals of a size suitable for pedestrians, rather than for motorists.

Many of the numbers seem to have been posted in the daytime, apparently with little consideration given to the possibility that somebody might try to find the number after dark. Frequently, they are placed where the porch light cannot

possibly shine on them.

Shopping centers and stores probably surpass homes in the proportion lacking street numbers. Perhaps owners assume large business signs are adequate, but they may be overlook the frustration a new customer may have in locating a store without a number.

Finding an obscure business number may be most difficult where stores are strung out along a busy thoroughfare. Small numbers might be there, but motorists have a hard time locating them in the midst of parked cars, huge signs and fast traffic.

Street numbers often are adopted as names for office buildings. This might not be colorful, but it certainly is helpful.

The size of street signs used is becoming larger and some are being mounted above traffic lights for easy viewing. Too many still are in letters three inches high, facing the wrong way.

Hospitals have reached a genuine service for patients and visitors by

switching to large numerals for floor and room numbers, as well as big letters for other directions.

People would need telephone directories, even if they did not have phones. The directory gives us street addresses, provides postal zip codes and tells us where streets are located.

It also is used to look up telephone numbers, but because there are so many, it is unlikely that big type will be used. The larger the city, the smaller the type.

However, the telephone company says it is all right to circle phone numbers that you might want to call again. This makes them easier to find, unless markings are obscured by doodles and scribbles, it said.

We are living in a numerable age, we are living longer and moving faster. Probably the ultimate in recognition of these trends is reported by Don Ferrell in his Lincoln County News. He says the zip code for Perkins, Okla., is painted on a sign in front of the post office in numerals that "must be five feet tall."