

BULLETIN OF THE ROSSICA SOCIETY OF RUSSIAN PHILATELY



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Postal Stationery

In the chronology of our stamp collecting, most of us began by saving stamps. We then learned about stamp catalogs and about all the stamps issued, showing the big holes in our collections. With time we possibly filled the holes and eventually discovered the stamp varieties, proofs, and essays. Eventually we progressed to collecting covers or the postal history of the stamps we collected.

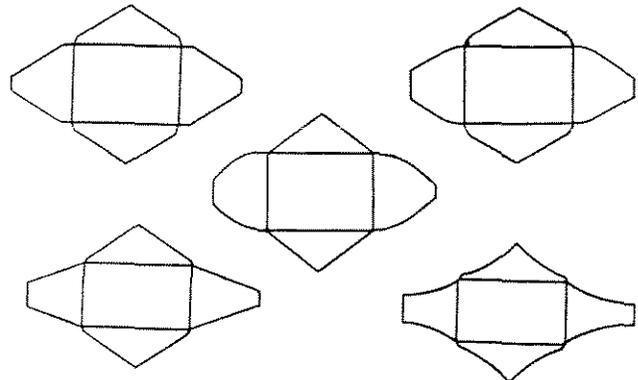
As we dug through dealers boxes of covers, we often came across pieces of postal stationery which were usually cast aside because we really didn't know anything about them nor was information about them given in our stamp catalogs. But postal stationery is an important adjunct of philately. Actually, in the case of Russia and Finland, postal stationery preceded the issuance of postage stamps by many years. The chase to obtain every stationery item can be just as challenging as it is for stamps. And today exhibits of postal stationery rank equally with exhibits of postage stamps and postal history.

Let's look at the postal stationery of the Russian Imperial period.

Briefly, postal stationery is defined as printed forms of some type or another issued by the government postal authorities for some type of correspondence. For the most part, these forms will have a printed "stamp" or indicium. In Russia this consisted of some form of the coat of arms, posthorns, and a value

corresponding to a postal rate for that particular type of correspondence. There are envelopes, postal cards, letter cards, wrappers for commercial papers, all with imprinted stamps. For Russia, there are also what are called formular cards. These are postal cards issued by the postal authorities without an imprinted indicia, but instead with a printed place to affix a postage stamp. These obviously were issued after stamps were in use.

The first Russian postal stationery envelopes, issued in 1845, were handmade in various sizes. The term "knife" is used to define the shape of the envelope if an envelope was completely opened as shown below. Various "knives" were used.



The first envelopes were made for the St. Petersburg City Post. The blue indicium was in the normal upper right position, but later appeared in the lower left position inverted. The cost was 5 kopeks for postage and 1 kopek for the envelope. The great rarities of the early issues are envelopes with an attached

letter sheets. Quantities of issue were only 3000 and 10000.

Similar envelopes were prepared for the Moscow City Post in 1846 with a vermilion indicium. Six thousand were issued but most were soon destroyed, those making these envelopes very great rarities, too. Paper color, envelope size varieties, and postally used examples are added incentives in the quest. Envelopes were also issued for use in Kiev, Kazan, and Odessa with the 5 kopek +1 indicia red violet.

Commencing in 1848 the stamp was embossed on the flap of the envelope. Two types of eagle are noted, one with a tail much broader than the other. Also the paper was now watermarked in three different types, one of which is shown here. Color varieties of the indicia and paper varieties abound.



In subsequent issues of printed envelopes, an interesting aspect is that any particular value is found in several different size envelopes. One gets the feeling that custom dictated that certain types of correspondence required an envelope of a particular size.

The postal cards of the Imperial period are plentiful. It is relatively easy to find all 28 issues. There are a few instances where the position of printed text on the card varies with printing or the length of an inscription varies, all of which also add to the completion chase.

There are only 6 distinct formular cards without an imprinted stamp. Similarly, there are only 6 wrappers for newspapers and commercial papers, valued at 1 or 2 kopeks

each. The three issues of the 2 kopek values each occur in two different overall sizes.

Quite interesting are letter cards. These are folded cards that are gummed along three edges with perforations about a quarter of an inch away from the gummed edges. Unfolded, one would write a letter within the area of the perforations, fold and seal the letter, exposing the face of the letter card with printed text and indicium on which the address was written.

There are subtle differences in the way these letter cards were perforated as well as different perforation sizes on individual early issues.

Collections of postal stationery include 5 printed money order forms with imprinted stamps and 36 change of address cards. The latter used the postal cards of the period but had forms printed on them. They were used in St. Petersburg, Moscow or Warsaw for the registry of addresses. These change of address cards are not common. This writer is not sure he has ever seen one. Perhaps someone can shed some light on this for Bulletin readers.

And if this isn't enough, we can find postal cards, letter cards, envelopes and wrappers for use in the Russian Offices in China and postal cards and letter cards for use in the Russian Offices in Turkey.

Postal stationery issued for the Romanov Jubilee in 1913 had indicia made with the same dies and colors as the Romanov postage stamps instead of the usual coat of arms.

Unfortunately, this material is not universally cataloged. There is the 1928 Ascher "Grosser Ganzsachen Katalog" which lists these items, the Higgins and Gage "Priced Catalogue of Postal Stationery of the World, Section 15" which is periodically updated, and the 1928 catalog "Basic Russia (Imperial Russia, RSFSR, and USSR)." edited by F. Chuchin. Some of the issues were discussed in the Russian journal "Filateliya" in recent years.

A Note From Our President

Rossica President David Skipton announces that in commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the British Society of Russian Philately a joint issue of the Rossica Journal and the British Journal of Russian Philately is planned for 1997. Tentatively, each society would print the same texts but in their own formats. The combined issues are to acquaint members of both societies and others to one another and to the respective societies.

Articles are being solicited for this special issue. If you would like to be part of this novel effort, please contact the Rossica President, David Skipton, 50-D Ridge Road, Greenbelt, MD 20770 USA.

The president would also like to know who among Rossica members are planning to attend the international exhibition PACIFIC 97 to be held May 29 to June 8, 1997 in San Francisco, California. If enough Rossica members plan to attend, a Rossica general meeting may be scheduled at this event.

Funny Games, Again

Varro E. Tyler, well known chronicler of fakes and forgeries, along with Cosma Dan wrote in Linn's Stamp News about "Detecting (nearly) perfect Moldova forgeries." In short, it goes as follows.

When Moldova became independent in 1991, it overprinted USSR definitives with the word "MOLDOVA (in English) with new values. On the overprinted sheets of 100, with the exception of the 10 ruble overprinted value, one line of overprints is inverted. On the 6.50 ruble overprint, only 5 stamps of a row are inverted. Therefore for most values, there is a vertical setenant pair, one with a normal overprint, one with an inverted overprint. With the 6.50 ruble overprint, there can be an additional horizontal setenant pair.

Tyler reports that crafty workers at the Moldova Printing Works decided to prepare additional quantities of the scarcer inverted overprints on stolen stamps. The original inverted impressions of the lithographed plates were turned around, creating a totally normal printing plate. However, the stamp sheets were turned around when printed, such that the entire sheet has inverted overprints.

Consequently, individual stamps from these sheets have inverted overprints that are indistinguishable from the original printing. However, a vertical pair of these inverted overprints is a forgery, according to Varro Tyler. Confusing?

With respect to such new issues of the independent republics, locals, etc. of the former USSR, member Barry Keane writes that the confusion that exists about this deluge of issues does not diminish their value as collectibles. He correctly indicates that all of these emissions are part of the history of the times, whether or not all issues are eventually determined to be "legitimate" or cinderellas. Barry believes that too much about conditions there that spawned these emissions is still unknown.

This editor and, I believe, Rossica does not tell anyone what they should or should not collect with respect to Russian philately, but I think most would agree that there should be some awareness about what one may be getting into when it comes to spending a lot of money for some of these things.

In line with this, a recent full page ad shows new local issues from Batum commemorating The Beatles, Elvis Presley, Charlie Chaplin, and Marilyn Monroe, issues from Abkhasia with The Grateful Dead (rock music group), Michael Jackson, Lisa Marie and Elvis Presley, and issues from Touva with many Hollywood stars. All are obviously noted personalities in these localities. Disney stamps appear quite tame in comparison.

Get Out The Magnifiers

Whenever stamps are overprinted, printing varieties can occur. For the most part, these varieties never reach catalog status unless there is a gross error such as a misspelling or missing letter. Nevertheless, even the small fly speck differences in overprints are interesting to the specialist collector.

In the Russian journal "Filateliya" No. 4, 1995 G. Volostnykh and D. Rylkova of the Popov Central Museum of Communication indicate they have carefully examined 3 full sheets and a block of the overprinted stamp which commemorates the Victory Celebration of 9 May 1945 (Scott Cat. # 992). They found many constant printing defects among the 4 lines of the overprint, too numerous to list here. It seems one could plate loose stamps from their information. If you look carefully among your own copies, you, too, will find some of these small anomalies.

On the other hand, another set of small variations in overprint did achieve catalog status in the Catalog of Postage Stamps of the USSR 1918-1991, printed serially in the Filateliya journal these last few years. On the overprint commemorating the first soft landing on the moon, which reads - "Luna 9" - On the Moon, 3.2.1966 - in two lines, four specific overprint types are given with variations in the lengths of the lines and positions of the letters with respect to one another in the two lines. The illustrations below show enlarged details of the four types.

Type I
A-9⁶⁶ - HA Л
3.2. 1966

Type II
A-9⁶⁶ - HA Л
3.2. 1966

Type III
A-9⁶⁶ - HA Л
3.2. 1966

Type IV
A-9⁶⁶ - HA Л
3.2. 1966

The differences are small and subtle and will require careful observation since the overprint is made in silver ink on the dark stamp. This catalog also indicates that two sheet varieties are known, one containing types I, II, and III, the other containing types II, III, and IV.

Similar displacements of letters on one line of an overprint with respect to letters on other lines are found on Scott Cat. #'s 2170, 2174, 2336, 2369, 2462. Details in the next bulletin.

New Kitai Variety

Member William N. Jones shares with us his recently expertised variety of the 2 kopek value of the 1899-1904 issue for Offices in China with red К И Т А Й overprint. Whereas the normal stamp is printed on watermarked horizontally laid paper, Mr. Jones' copy is printed on wove paper with a slight vertical mesh, similar to the paper used for the 1909-1918 issues. The stamp is weakly canceled so that its place of use is unknown.

The unoverprinted stamp without watermark and laid lines is listed in the Lobachevski catalog as used with an R (rare) rating. Mr. Jones' copy with overprint could be at least an RRR rating according to the expertiser.

The issue was normally printed in sheets of 400, that is with four sheetlets of 100 consisting of four panes of 25. This means that other copies could exist. Check your albums carefully. And if you're interested in Mr. Jones' copy, write him at the address given in your Rossica membership list.

Whealers and Dealers

This bulletin editor gets solicitations for Russian and Russian-related material, both from here and abroad. I have offers from Ukraine for their new issues at reasonable prices, and an offer of Zemstvo stamps and covers. Please contact me if interested.

Strange Overprint

Some time ago, new member David E. Race posed an interesting question in Linn's Stamp News about an overprint on Russian stamps. Satisfactory explanations did not appear so we pose the same question here. The stamps are overprinted with the word "ULTRAMAR".

David sent photocopies of this overprint on the 5 and 10 ruble arms issue and also on the 3, 5, 7, and 10 kopek semipostals of 1905. The latter are also overprinted with the letter "Ц" of the cyrillic word "О Б Р А З Е Ц Ъ" (OBRAZETS) for specimen. Two examples are shown here.



If you have any ideas about this overprint, please send them to the bulletin.

Goodies From the Past

Reading past issues of the Rossica Journal, one is impressed with the diligent studies many authors made of their stamps. They closely examined their stamps and duplicates in minute detail and were able to make numerous discoveries about these stamps, many years after their issue. I also recall a visit with Dr. Alfred Wortman of Great Britain who said he had studied literally thousands of the 7 kopek red and gray definitive while serving long lonely hours as an air raid warden in England during World War II. His listing of the tiny plate varieties of this issue is

a monument to detailed philatelic study (BJRP 11, 1953). Let's look at a few others.

The Stackelberg Retouch (Rossica 55, 1958) shows a deformed button or ornament below the central oval on the 10 ruble value of the 1915 issue. It appears at position 49 of the perforated sheet of 50.



Stackelberg Retouch



Huddy Flaw

The Huddy Flaw (BJRP, No. 23, 1958) is known on imperf copies of the same 10 ruble arms stamp. This variety shows a break at the bottom of the red oval line surrounding the center coat of arms, positions 35 and 42 of the sheet. The underlying yellow line is present.

Both of these are readily visible to the naked eye, more so with slight magnification. Both are readily found if one perseveres. However, the following variety on the 5 ruble value of this issue has been elusive for this writer for more than 20 years.

The Peel Variety shows a large letter "A" in the word "ПОЧТОВАЯ" (ПОЧТОВАЯ) for postal at the top.



Peel Variety

Happy hunting!

Rossica Medalists

Finding Rossica medalists for Russian related exhibits is getting harder. Most philatelic newspapers do not cover stamp show medalists as news events. They only list winners if a list is forwarded to them by the show. This doesn't always happen so oftentimes we miss a winner. Our sincere apologies when that happens.

COLOPEX 95 in Columbus, Ohio, WESTPEX '95 in San Francisco, California and ARIPEX 95 in Tucson, Arizona

G.A. Ackerman "For the Red Air Fleet - Soviet Air Fleet Semiofficial Stamps, Labels and Propaganda Postcards"

Gold at all three shows, Rossica Society Award at first two shows,
Air Mail Society Award at last two shows, and Amer. Phil. Soc.
Award of Excellence-Best Research at WESTPEX

WESTPEX '95 in San Francisco, California

Michael J. Carson "Hard Times in Russia: The Inflation Era"
Vermeil and Rossica Society President's Award

WISCOPEX 95 in Madison, Wisconsin

Daniel G. Hammell "The Soviet Union in Space"
Silver, American Philatelic Society Post 1940 Medal, and
American Topical Association Silver

Nashville Stamp Show in Nashville, Tennessee

R. J. Pietruszka "Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic 1918-1923"
Gold and Modern Postal History Award

VAPEX 94 in Virginia Beach, Virginia

John L. Briggs "Stalin's Russia" Vermeil and Rossica Society Award

Filatelic Fiesta in San Jose, CA

M. R. Renfro "Russia Used Abroad: The Far East" Vermeil

G. V. Shalimoff "The Romanov Tercentenary Issue"
Silver, Rossica President's Award, and AAPE Award of Merit

Philatelic Show 95 in Boxborough, Massachusetts

Roger P. Quinby "Russia's Ethnic Finns and the Quest for Reunion 1919-1922"
Gold and Scandinavian Collectors Club Silver

Novapex in Redding, California and Coalpex in Walnut Creek, California

G.V. Shalimoff "The Romanov Tercentenary Issue"
Gold in both shows, Best of Show at Novapex

ARIPEX 95 in Tucson, Arizona

Alfred F. Kugel "Allied Intervention in Russia 1918-1925 (Excluding U.S. Forces)"
Gold

FINLANDIA 95 in Helsinki, Finland

Roger P. Quinby "Russian Stamps and Postal Stationery Used in Finland" Vermeil

Timo Bergholm "Different Types of Imperial Russian Railway Postmarks" Vermeil

Alfred F. Kugel "The American Intervention in Russia" Vermeil

Ivo Steyn "Siberia 1918-1924" Vermeil

Joe Taylor "Allied Intervention in Russia" Large Silver

Congratulations to all. This is a fine showing. Hope to see some new names on this list soon.

FINLANDIA 95

Overall, one must say Rossica members did quite well at the FINLANDIA 95 World Exhibition for Postal History and Postal Stationery. A couple of members were multiple winners with other exhibits besides their Russian-related exhibits.

There was a World Symposium for Collectors of Russian Philately at the show. Rossica member Al Kugel presented a paper at this symposium. Perhaps we can impose upon Mr. Kugel to repeat his talk with an article in Rossica Journal. A summary of the entire symposium would be of interest to Rossica readers, too. Any takers?

The Deluge Continues

For years the USSR was among the most prolific producers of new stamp issues, usually numbering around 120 or more per year, with mini-sheets, souvenir sheets, and stamps with labels. In 1993, Russia issued a comparatively modest 89 issues, 19 less than the USA. But taking up the slack were Moldova with 56, Uzbekistan 39, Lithuania 36, Azerbaijan 35, Tajikistan 29, Estonia 24, Belarus 23,

Kazakhstan 19, Latvia 16, Turkmenistan and Ukraine 16 each, Armenia and Georgia 15 each. And then there are the too numerous to mention local issues, some so local that they defy one finding them on a map.

A Letter to the Editor writer in Linn's Stamp News, perplexed over the lack of postal usage on cover of many of these local issues, invited residents of one of these areas to write to Linn's explaining the situation. Good idea, but how many residents of Gagauz, Moldova subscribe to Linn's Stamp News.

A purported local issue of Grodno, Belarus was printed on an old membership dues stamp of a seaman's society called The Society of Salvation on the Waters. Sample shown below is a blue 10 kopek dues stamp with overprint of 45.00 something. Overprints of 300.00 and 900.00 are known, too. Some philatelists in Moscow consider this a privately produced bogus issue.



From the Mailbox

Letters in my mailbox indicate Rossica members are reading this bulletin, which justifies the effort. You may recall that in our note on exhibiting in an earlier bulletin, member John Briggs' innovative historical way of exhibiting Soviet material brought comments from judges that he could at most expect a vermeil level award. Well, John writes to say he took the Grand Award at the show in Austin, Texas this year after reworking his exhibit, obviously to the judges liking. That's encouraging news for other collectors of Soviet material who hopefully will try their hand at exhibiting, too.

Old time member and frequent contributor to Rossica Journal in times past, J. Lee Schneidman, writes to comment on the note on inflation rates in the last bulletin. He correctly indicates that he had published several definitive articles on Soviet rates in the Rossica Journal.

His first article was "An Aspect of Soviet Postal Administration 1917-1923" Rossica, 78, (1970) pp. 7-47. Later when it was discovered that a postal increase ordered by the Narkompochtal was never put into effect, he wrote "The Case of the Missing Million Rubles: Soviet Postal Rates Dec. 1, 1922 to Jan. 10, 1923" Rossica 80 (1971) p. 48.

Dr. Schneidman adds that the 1923 rates were based on gold rubles, but the only money and stamps available were in non-gold ruble values. While the rates remained constant, the amount one had to affix to a letter varied with the exchange rate. He wrote about this in Rossica 84, (1973) pp. 53-54 in an article titled "Postal Rates and Foreign Exchange, July-August 1923."

This letter points out the wealth of information that is available in our literature. Check the Rossica library for sources of information.

There is also the American Philatelic Research Library in State College, PA and the Western Philatelic Library in Sunnyvale, CA. Your whole outlook on philately and collecting changes when you discover the literature that exists beyond the usual catalogs.

Another letter from Taipei, Republic of China indicates that additional information about the stamps of Bukhara, which we highlighted in the last issue of the bulletin, is found in The Cinderella Philatelist, January 1990. The article is titled "Bokhara Stamps: Continuing Mysteries" by L. N. Williams. The writer also asks for information or catalog listings for the Transcarpathian Ukraine (1944-1946) and Ghilan (a Persian Soviet type republic in 1922.) Can readers help here? Write to the bulletin editor.

Member Elliott Burfitt's letter has an excellent suggestion. It seems he often runs across references or reviews of new books on some phase of Russian philately but no mention where one may obtain them. He suggests Rossica put together a resource page indicating where such things can be obtained and their price.

Rossica Journal certainly mentions its own publications and reviews other publications, but often information about how to obtain other works are lacking. This bulletin is willing to try to accommodate a list of sources but only if the information is sent to this editor. Let's give it a try.

Ricardas Vainora in Lithuania sends an enthusiastic thanks for the bulletin and long time member Asdrubal Prado in Brazil sends his thanks with praise, and compliments for the bulletin. I LIKE THAT! It's my pleasure!

Send your comments, questions, news items, and literature sources to Bulletin editor:
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