

BULLETIN OF THE ROSSICA SOCIETY OF RUSSIAN PHILATELY



Number 23 SUMMER 1996

Scarce Numeral Markings

Numeral cancellations on covers, postcards, or on loose stamps have frequently excited collectors. The numeral markings of France and Great Britain quickly come to mind as well as Russia. Perhaps it is the simplicity of their appearance that attracts attention, followed by the challenge they often present, especially for completion.

in *Rossica Journal* #61, 1961 as a trial marking, in use from the end of January through most of February 1858. Mr. Liphschutz had a cover dated 10, Feb. 1858 and Russia collector M. Dobin has a piece dated 11, Feb. 1858.

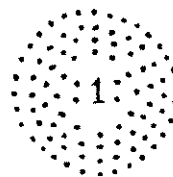


fig. 1



fig. 2

Russia's numeral cancellations include the well known numbered dot cancels in six distinct forms; circle, oval, rectangle, hexagon (points up and down), hexagon (points left and right), and a truncated triangle. There are also the circular markings of the St. Petersburg City Post with geometric figures within the circle with a number. The Moscow City Post used ovals with dots and numbers within as well as ovals with a geometric figure and number within. Perhaps we should also include the small circles with diagonal lines and box with number used by the Finnish carriers and found on Russian stamps.

On May 31, 1858 the Russian postal administration announced the preparation of circular dotted numeral cancelers for all the provincial post offices, military post offices and the St. Petersburg and Moscow offices. Number 59 was designated for the city of Shemakha, the capital city of the Shemakhin province.

In a short note in *Filateliya*, No. 9, 1995 by V. Kalmykov, several rather rare numeral cancellations were given, worth repeating.

According to a Russian encyclopedia and geographic statistical dictionary of the time, Shemakha was the provincial capital since 1846, but on May 31, 1859 the city was virtually destroyed by an earthquake. As a consequence the provincial administration was transferred from Shemakha to the city of Baku, Baku province. Shemakha was demoted from a provincial capital city to a district city.

In figure 1 he shows the numeral 1 in four concentric circles of dots for St. Petersburg. More commonly found are the three concentric circles of dots with numeral 1, with or without the additional 4 dots at the sides of the numeral. The four circle dots marking was described by the late Michael Liphschutz

Thus the Shemakha dotted circular marking No. 59 existed from May 1858 through May

1859 (fig. 2). The author feels anyone seeing a cover with this marking is indeed fortunate.

The dotted oval numeral markings Nos. 1-8 were used at the border or frontier post offices. Whereas No. 6 from Odessa, Kherson province is rather common, the rarest is No. 4 from Kekhta, Transbaikal region (fig. 3).

Railroad cancels are favorites of many. The Russian railroad lines used hexagon shaped dotted numeral cancels (points up and down). Among the rarest are Nos. 12-17, those of the six offices of the Nikolaevsk railroad line in Poland from St. Petersburg (fig. 4). Cited was an article in Filateliya USSR No. 12, 1969 by Miroslav Boyanovich of London, whose exhibit "Kingdom of Poland" won numerous international awards in the 1960's.

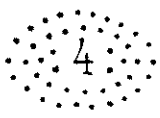


fig. 3

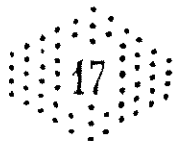


fig. 4



fig. 5

Starting in 1880 the St. Petersburg City Post used circular markings with geometric figures with numerals within for its branches. They were used up to 1905. The branch using a plain circle with roman numeral XVII began operation in January 1903 (fig. 5). The short period of use accounts for its rarity.

In 1899 the 31st St. Petersburg telegraph office had two markers to cancel mail posted at that office. Their limited use accounts for their scarcity as well (figs. 6,7).



fig. 6

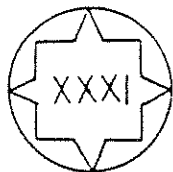


fig. 7



fig. 8

One might add to Mr. Kalmykov's scarce markings examples of Russian stamps and covers used in Finland with the small

numbered circles of the Finnish carriers, fig. 8. Perhaps members can supply additional information about any of these markings.

PACIFIC 97 Update...

Now that the deadline for submitting entries to PACIFIC 97 is past, members will remain on edge until they learn whether their entry was accepted. In the USA, it required at least a vermeil level award in a national World Series of Philately show to be eligible to enter.

The Rossica Society has scheduled a meeting at PACIFIC 97 for Sunday June 1, program to be announced later. The Ukrainian Society plans a Friday June 6 meeting.



The bourse is two thirds full already, with many foreign philatelic agencies, dealers as well as nearly every prominent American dealer. There will be something for everyone in the bourse, as long as your pocketbook lasts. Admission to PACIFIC 97 will be free.

PACIFIC 97 has contracted with eight San Francisco major hotels with 4000 rooms near the exhibition site. Daily rates will range from \$101 to \$182 per night depending upon type of accommodation. (Be warned that there is also a city room tax of about 12% added to the room rates. Ed.) All reservations for the official PACIFIC 97 hotels must be made through the San Francisco Convention and Visitors Housing Bureau with a deposit. For a three page description of hotels, rates, and reservation procedure, send a SASE to this bulletin.

For other accommodations see your travel agent. May-June is great in San Francisco.

Help Wanted on Expertization Marks...

Member George B. Welch recently acquired a nice piece of imperial St. Petersburg postal stationery envelope which shows a green marking on the reverse side in the lower lefthand corner. It appears to be some initials under a crown, as shown in the greatly enlarged photocopy below.



Is this an expert's mark or vendor's mark? Send your comments directly to Mr. Welch and to the bulletin so that we may share the information.

Quite often one obtains items with markings on the back, usually described as signed items or expert's marks. In most cases our own knowledge confirms the genuineness of an item. Nevertheless, we are still curious who applied the marks.

Some of the Soviet Philatelic Agency markings were discussed in a translation in *Rossica Journal* No. 106/107. These marks primarily pertained to those applied to Soviet issues. But one frequently finds marks on imperial stamps and covers with no clue when they were applied and by whom.

It may be useful if we could compile a listing of the various marks on such items, time period, and what members feel about their authors.

For starters, who can tell us about Dr. Jem, Richter, Ross, Eichenthal, letter S in a circle in black, letters S.A., letters M.A. in a circle in red, a shooting star (star with streamers), oval with Paris at the bottom, and --HALS-- above. Is the Romeko Paris marking considered an expert's mark or simply a marking of the vendor as Stolow markings appear to be? What about a fancy script letter

K or H within an oval in red? Or a circle with an arrow attached in red, or a larger circle with arrow attached and three line tail in blue? Another looks like a wide letter U and narrow letter H in red.

When one finds such marked items, there seldom is a certificate with it. One doesn't know if a certificate was ever issued for the item. On the otherhand, if these markings are indeed genuine experts markings, it may help eliminate the urge to have an item reexamined, especially if the item in question is not of great value. It is always a source of amazement to find marks on stamps with catalog values of a few cents.

Postal Stationery Addenda...

Member **Patrick Eppel** reminds us that in the brief overview of Imperial postal stationery in Bulletin 21 no mention was made of the extraordinary rich field of Zemstvo (rural or local) postal stationery. From nearly two dozen districts there are envelopes, wrappers, and registered envelopes. Are they hard to find? You bet!

Those familiar with the Higgins and Gage postal stationery catalog may know that their listing of Zemstvo postal stationery was made on the basis of the collection of the late *Rossica* member Dr. Heinz von Hungen of California. The doctor made his collection years ago when the material was essentially unknown and unwanted, but available. Now it is occasionally seen in auctions. Perhaps along with the deluge of unusual material coming out of Russia these days, the Zemstvos will appear as well.

Member **David Jay** sends photocopies of the Address Table postal cards of Moscow, St. Petersburg and Warsaw that were mentioned in Bulletin 22. The formats of the printed texts differ in detail for the different cities and time periods. In general, the cards are the

usual imprinted 3 kop. postal cards and reply cards with added special text. However, it is indicated on them that their cost was 9 or 10 kopeks which included the cost of reply requested of the Address Table of the particular city. The reply card was 3 kopeks, so there was a 3 or 4 kopeks service charge.

Although one would not expect to find a used card addressed to the Address Table (most likely destroyed by the office after the reply made), Dr. Jay sent a photocopy of a reply card from the Address Table to a requester. The card is canceled with a familiar St. Petersburg numeral 1 within a box within a circle with the additional double circle St. Petersburg Ekspeditsiya 1 marking. The photocopy was too dark to reproduce here.

Varieties...

The serialized catalog of Soviet issues shows many varieties. Here are some to look for.

On Scott No. 2170 with overprint "Victory of the USSR Basketball Team. - Chile - 1959, the usual overprint Type I has the first letter " Ч " of the first word in the last line beneath the letter " О " in the line above. Type II has this letter beneath the letter " М ", whereas the Type III variety has the first letter beneath the space between the letters " О " and " М ." The Types II and III are valued 15 and 10 times Type I.

The 1963 issue commemorating the writer V. V. Mayakovsky (Scott No. 2756) was issued perfed 12 1/2. There is also a perf 11 1/2 valued 50 times greater. In addition, due to improperly operating perforation machines, one can find various combinations of perfs such as 11 1/2x11, 11x11 1/2, 11x11 1/4, 11/1/4x11 3/4, etc, all valued as the 11 1/2 variety.

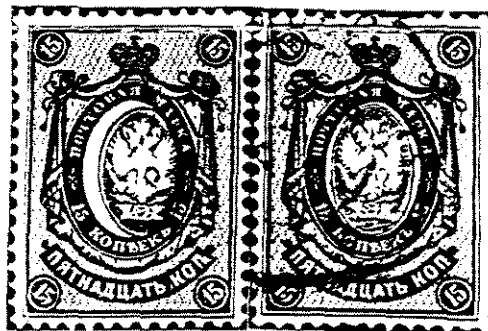
Check the stars between the hammer and sickle on your 1964 Tokio Olympics sheets.

There are two shapes of stars, Type I with more or less normal shaped star, and Type II with the upper point of star fattened to the right. Does it occur on the green sheet, too?

The 1959 diamond shaped set of 4 (Scott Nos. 2262-65) offers a special challenge. The set is perfed 12 1/2. However, all values can be line perfed or comb perfed. The line perfed 10 kop., 60 kop., and comb perfed 25 kop. and 40 kop. values are the inexpensive common varieties. Valued 25-65 times more are the comb perfed 10 kop., 60 kop., and line perfed 25 kop. and 40 kop. stamps, according to the listing in this new catalog of Soviet issues.

To tell the difference, it is suggested one examine corner pairs with margins or blocks. As you know, comb perfs will not extend into the margins, and intersections of the perf lines in the center of a block is perfect, whereas with line perfs, intersections can be rough and perfs will extend into the margins.

An Odessa collector observed an unrecorded variety of the 1904 14 kop. Scott No. 61 as shown below. The normal stamp on the left has two dots after the word " К О П " at the bottom. His variety on the right shows no dots. Note, too, that his normal stamp has a center shift of about 1 mm and that the numeral 5 in the lower left corner is broken at the bottom, and his variety has a break in the outer frame at the upper right. Ah, fly specks.



Member Alex Sadovnikov continues to furnish the Russian journal with varieties. A neat one is Scott No. 715 with a spot in the second "C" of "СССР", making it look like an "O."

GULAG Overprints?...

In the March 1996 issue of the Russian journal "Filateliya" there was a very interesting note. Russian collector V. Aloits in Svetogorsk observed a strange overprint on a 1929-31 5 kop. watermarked definitive, Scott #417. Overprinted in black along the left vertical edge and facing left were the letters "У Л О Н". There is a small break or indentation at the lower left serif of the letter "Л" and underlining dashes beneath the letters "Л", "О", and "Н". Unfortunately, the illustration is too poor to reproduce here.

The overprint is shiny, appears in relief on top of the paper. The stamp was doubly canceled and indecipherable.

Mr. Aloits proposes this stamp concerns the history of the GULAGS. He feels it is possible that "У Л О Н" is an abbreviation of the name of a camp, beginning with the letter "У", and that "Л О Н" stands for "lager osobogo naznacheniya" (special designation camp.) He says this should be compared to "С Л О Н" which stands for "Solovetskii lager osobogo naznacheniya" (Solovetskii camp of special designation.) Mr. Aloits feels it is possible the overprint was made for correspondence control.

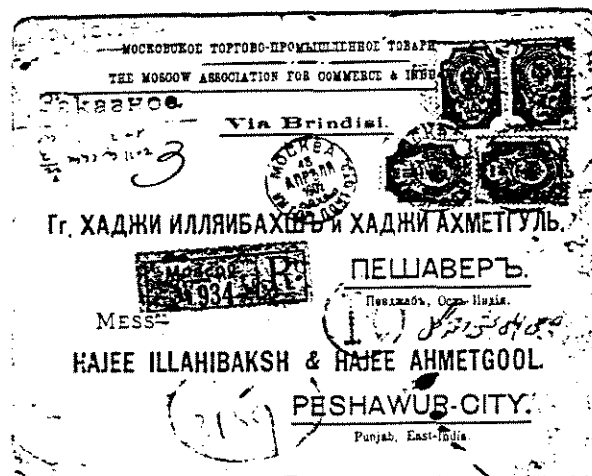
The "Filateliya" journal editor asks for readers comments about this marking. We concur.

Many will recall that Soviet dissident Alexander Solzhenitsyn wrote a lengthy expose of the Soviet political prison system in his book titled "GULAG Archipeligo" where GULAG is an acronym for an expression that means "main administration of correctional work camps". The subject matter was heavy and depressing and to difficult to remember whether Solzhenitsyn made any mention of special overprinted postage stamps. Nevertheless, one should be on the look out for such overprinted stamps until an

explanation is verified. For an interesting article on GULAG postal history, see the article in The American Philatelist, January 1944 by Vladimir Boyko titled "Letters from Behind the Barbed Wire."

Rossica Members in the News...

Member **Dhirubhai Mehta** of Bombay, India was a member of the jury panel at CAPEX '96 in Toronto, Canada last month where he says it took 5 1/2 days to judge the more than 3800 exhibit frames. Mr. Mehta is assembling a postal history exhibit of covers from Imperial Russia to India which he hopes to have ready for the exhibiton in Moscow in October 1997, a chilly time of the year there. The routes of letters to India in that period are varied and exotic. A sample of his cover collection is shown below.



Members efforts in philatelic writing have appeared in The American Philatelist. Vice President **Peter Michalove** has a nice article titled "The Imperial Russian Post in Dagestan" in the Sept. 1995 issue and British member and noted author **Philip E. Robinson** with articles titled "How To Become an Expert", Apr. 1996, and John Knowlitt's Hand-Illustrated Envelopes", June 1995.

Michael Ercolini's fine series on the 1913 postal history of the Romanov jubilee series continues in the Stamp Collector newspaper.

Mailing Suggestions...

Correspondence with foreign collectors oftentimes leads to fine additions to one's collection and to lasting friendships. But it only takes one or two missing letters or letter contents to sour the experience. This is especially true when one tries to correspond and exchange with collectors living in countries of the former Soviet Union. Letters disappear or arrive without their entire contents.

Member **David White** has been carrying on an exchange with a fellow collector in Ukraine who suggests the following methods be used in correspondence to countries of the former Soviet Union..

All correspondence containing philatelic material or banknotes must be sent registered or insured. Even this is no guarantee since mail handlers in the postal service may try to open letters and extract valuable contents.

To protect the contents, in addition to the glue on the envelope, add a glue impervious to steaming (perhaps a solvent based glue, like Duco cement or airplane model glue, Ed.).

Before sealing the envelope, place some of the special glue on one side of the container with the valuable to stick it to the inside of the envelope, so that the container cannot be removed without destroying the envelope. The container should be cardboard or a double post card. If a folded card is used, the fold should be towards the open flap so that the container cannot be extracted or contents fall out even if the envelope is opened.

Avoid envelopes that can be opened at the side. Use large labels or tape with the special glue to seal and reinforce all seams and edges.

Thieves oftentimes make neat cuts along a section of the envelope's folds and attempt to

extract contents with tweezers. Possible countermeasures include wrapping contents with layers of brown paper.

Mr. White says registered mail is the best method of correspondence, even for ordinary letters without valuables. On the other hand, Mr. White's other correspondent in Moldova claims registered mail is not required to and from that country because their mail goes abroad via Germany, quickly and safely (but what about the mail handled within Moldova? Ed.)

Mr. White feels the best way to pay for such exchange items is to deal with people who have American partners so one can pay by check, or with those who have bank accounts here so you can wire a transfer from your account to theirs. There is a fee for that service, but at least the funds should arrive safely.

(Editor's note: Whereas these suggestions are very worthwhile, there is still an element of risk. Fortifying an envelope in the described manner certainly will attract attention. Until the economies of these countries are stabilized so that ordinary working people can earn a living wage and survive without resorting to thievery, there will always be some risk in sending letters containing stamps, covers, or banknotes. However, the contacts one makes in such correspondence is oftentimes well worth taking the chance. Have other members any similar experiences to share?)

To Members Missing Bulletins...

If you are missing bulletins for the year in which you joined the society, please send me a card. I'll send copies immediately. I may be slow in keeping the mailing list current.

George V. Shalimoff
5820 Ross Branch Road
Sebastopol, CA 95472 USA

Rossica Medalists - Congratulations to all!

CAPEX 96 in Toronto, Canada

- Paolo Bianchi "Imperial Russia" Gold
G. A. Ackerman "Via the Red Skies - The Development of the Soviet Airmail Service" Gold

FILATELIC FIESTA in San Jose, California

- M. R. Renfro "Russia Used Abroad: The Far East" Gold, Rossica Award
"Estonia, The Imperial Russia Period" Vermeil

SPRINGPEX '96 in Springfield, Virginia

- George Shaw "Soviet Advertising/Propaganda Cards 1927-1934"
Silver, Rossica President's Award

WESTPEX 96 in San Francisco, California

- Ray J. Pietruszka "Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic November 1917-June 1923" Silver

Alaska Philatelic Exhibiton in Anchorage, Alaska

- George A. Hall "Russian Studies in the Arctic" Gold and Reserve Grand

NAPEX in Tyson Corners, Virginia

- David M. Skipton "Postal Censorship in Imperial Russia" Gold, Rossica Award
Michael J. Carson "Hard Times in Russia: The Inflation Era" Vermeil, Rossica President's Award
Ray J. Pietruszka "Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic" Silver
Peter A. Michalove "The Soviet Republic of Georgia" Silver

PIPEX in Salem, Oregon & The Plymouth Show in Plymouth, Michigan

- George Shalimoff "Romanov Tercentenary Issue of Russia" Gold, Rossica Award at PIPEX
Silver at The Plymouth Show

NOVAPEX in Redding, California & COALPEX in Walnut Creek, California

- George Shalimoff "Varnish Lozenges on Some Issues of Russia and Soviet Russia"
Gold at NOVAPEX, Gold, Grand Award at COALPEX

Literature Sources...

- Available from **J. Barefoot Ltd. P.O. Box 8 York YO3 7GL England**, all prices are postpaid surface mail, add 30% for airmail.
"Field Post of the Czech & Allied Forces in Russia 1918-1920" by W. A. Page, (1994), in English, illus., 55 pages, \$15.00.
"Baltic States Revenues" by J. Barefoot, 2nd ed. (1988), in English, illus. 40 pages \$6.00 .
"Baltische Postorte 1858-1916" by Harry von Hoffman, 1st ed., in German, 186 pages, \$36.00.
"Latvia Map Stamps" by J. Barefoot, 2 ed. (1987) in English, 36 pages, \$4.50.
"Russia Zemstvos" by A. Chuchin, 2 ed., (1988) in English, illus., 92 pages \$14.00.
"Zemstvo Postage Stamps of Imperial Russia" by Alex Artuchov, 3 vols., (A to N so far), 1st ed. (1995) illus, in English, 600 pages, \$80.00, with more volumes to follow for completion.
"Russian Postmarks" by Kiryushkin & Robinson, 1st ed. (1989) illus., in English, 110 pages \$15.00.

We Are Falling Behind - A Challenge

For the most part, the Soviet philatelic journal "Filateliya USSR" from the early 1960's to 1990 fed us a few interesting philatelic tidbits about stamp varieties or postal history, often not mentioned in western sources. But since the collapse of the Soviet regime, Russian philatelists have been bombarding their journal (now titled simply "Filateliya") with articles, compilations, and catalogs that have a lot of new information for western collectors of Russian and Russian-related material.

American stamp collectors rely on the Scott Stamp Catalog which is notoriously poor for the serious collector. The British Stanley Gibbon's Catalog is a magnitude better, and the German Michel another magnitude better.

For example, if you are interested in the civil war "local" issues, forget Scott, Gibbon's has a few, and Michel is the best available, but written in German. For instance Michel tells us there are three 1918 local overprints for the city of Sochi. This catalog says the overprints are black handstamps "60" in various types and sizes. But according to an article in "Filateliya" May 1992, there are 7 different types of overprint and two printing errors.

If you collect this issue, isn't this the type of information you would like to know? Perhaps this isn't the best example, but the point is that there is a lot of information being published in Russian that simply is not being translated for the benefit of non Russian-reading collectors.

Numerous new catalogs appear in this Russian journal covering the imperial, soviet, civil war, local issues, labels, cinderellas, etc. in serialized form as well as articles dealing with topics such as the consular airmails. Perhaps the listings are redundant with information we have already elsewhere, but unless an effort is made to check line by line, useful information will fall into the cracks.

It requires a dedicated effort by someone who can read Russian and willing to write down what they read. Other societies have study circles that do this sort of thing. We don't.

I know the problem is one of time that one can devote to any project. This writer is guilty as much as anyone in being slow in assisting Geb Seiflow in his effort to get out a complete RSFSR catalog. Rossica's effort to translate the Azerbaijan handbook which came out nearly 20 years ago is still in process, which I find embarrassing, though I do not know the particular circumstances of those working on this effort. But there is all kinds of information on postal stationery, Zemstvos, postal history, as well as stamps and labels that is not available in English, information that should be reviewed for corroboration, added to what we do know, or challenged.

Are there not enough Russian-reading members who can take on a few tasks? Isn't our purpose to share information about our collecting interests? Shouldn't we be monitoring the works published in Russian by Russian philatelists? Your comments, please.

Rossica on World Wide Web...

For those of you who are now spending as much time in front of your personal computers as well as your stamp albums, much to the chagrin of the other members of your household, Rossica is now on the web. Just punch in the following:

<http://hercules.geology.uiuc.edu/~peterm/rossica.html>

There is information on membership, the journal, and Rossica publications for sale. You can call up a copy of the membership form for your friends. And if you have something nice to say to our treasurer/editor or vice president, there are instructions to reach them on e mail. How times have changed!