

BULLETIN OF THE POLONUS PHILATELIC SOCIETY



Meets Every 2nd & 4th Friday at St. James Clubroom, 2424 N. Mango, Chicago, Ill.

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"POLAND IN 1920" THEME OF POLPEX 1970

Thirty years ago, in 1940, the Polonus Philatelic Society held its first Polpex. Since then the society grew, dedicated to the promotion of Poland's philately here in America.

From the Polish historical anniversaries occurring this year, two great events were selected: the Fiftieth Anniversaries of "The Miracle of the Vistula", when Poland defeated the Bolsheviks at the gates of Warsaw on August 15th, 1920, and "Poland United To The Sea", as General Józef Haller declared Poland's rightful access to the sea on February 10th of that same year.

POLPEX 1970 will take place February 28th and March 1st at the St. James Auditorium, Mango at Fullerton Ave. in Chicago. The exhibition is open to all collectors of Poland, Polonica and associated material. Especially welcome will be material related to this period of Poland's history. Plan without delay your participation by mailing the entry application to R. H. Strzelecki, 1439

N. Bell Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60622. The entries close February 16th, 1970.

The dual theme souvenir sheets and set of two different Polpex covers were designed by Alfred Szebel and will be on sale at the exhibition at 50c per set for the sheets, and 30c each per cover, or by mail from J. P. Rux, 6136 Addison St., Chicago, Ill. 60634.

There will be a U.S. Postal Station at Polpex along with a special cancellation. You will have the opportunity to purchase the latest in U.S. commemoratives.

Admission to the Polpex is always free. Income is derived from the sale of seals, covers, bourse tables to

dealers and from patrons and ads in the program catalog to pay the ever increasing expenses of putting on a stamp show. You can help by becoming a Polpex Patron. Send one dollar in the enclosed remittance envelope.

The program catalog is in preparation. It will contain a list of the ex-

(Continued on last page)



A Polish Set That Did Not Please Everybody

By RON NEGUS

Reprinted from PHILATELIC MAGAZINE

During the opening months of each year, the winter sports season begins in earnest. The enthusiasts who can afford it descend on St. Moritz and other Alpine centers to pursue their energetic pastime in the bracing wintry sunshine. For the majority, such luxuries are beyond their means and the daily trek to and from work remains their main exercise. However, those who are collectors can still savour the delights of winter sports in stamp albums, for many countries have issued stamps devoted to this theme.

In such a collection, a pre-war Polish set is certain of inclusion. The four stamps (Scott 335-338) that make up the set were issued in February 1939 to commemorate the World Skiing Championships. Each stamp bore the same design featuring a local skier outlined against a background of the Tatra Mountains.

These mountains, which are the highest in Europe east of the Alps, are a favorite winter sporting center in Poland. The higher peaks are snow-capped all year round and at high altitudes large lakes add to the scenic charm. One of the most famous lakes in the region, the Morskie Oko, was featured on one value of the 1938 Polish pictorial series (Scott 295), and later in the 1953 Tourist set (Scott 609).

The World Skiing Championships were held at the village of Zakopane. This center became a pre-war winter holiday attraction, catering for 200,000 tourists each season. Nearby, one of the largest cable railways in Europe carried visitors to the summit of Mt. Kasprowy Wierch, which was pictured on the 1957 airmail stamp (Scott C-49).

The 1939 Championships were the cause of considerable postal activity



The enlarged illustration of the 25 gr. printed against the background of the letters "F.I.S." on the souvenir sheet.

in the Zakopane area. The authorities opened fourteen temporary post offices to handle the extra mail. In addition, 50 extra pillar boxes were erected around the Championship site, and six special mobile post offices were provided to serve the spectators.

These six mobile post offices were made from converted buses and were specially designed. The interior had space for two telephone kiosks as well as for the counter clerks. Shutters over the windows folded back to make seats for those customers waiting to be served. In spite of these modifications, each bus could still travel at 70 m.p.h., if required.

From a philatelic point of view, the stamps were the chief interest. One million copies of each value were issued, recess printed on smooth, white wove paper without watermark. The mountaineer pictured in the design can be seen wearing the richly hand-embroidered costume for which this region of Poland is noted.

The stamps were placed on general sale throughout the country on February 6th, 1939, five days before the actual Championships began. When the event started, however, a special

commemorative cancellation was applied at the Zakopane main office, and this continued throughout the Championships which lasted nine days.

This postmark showed the Championship emblem of a pair of skis and a "shield inscribed with the letters F.I.S.," together with the Polish flag in the form of a ribbon. The letters "F.I.S." in the emblem, which also appears at the lower left-hand corner of the stamp, are the abbreviation for "Federation Internationale de Ski," the governing body who organized the World Championships each year.

A small number of souvenir sheets were also produced in connection with the event. At the head of these sheets an enlarged illustration of the 25 groszy stamp was printed against a background of the letters "F.I.S." Below this design, the four stamps in the set were affixed, and each cancelled with the special Zakopane postmark dated on the first day of the Championship.

The most interesting feature of this set of stamps was the reaction of a small minority of Polish philatelists, who published a series of attacks on it through the columns of the leading stamp journals in the country. One correspondent wrote to express the views of a group of dissatisfied collectors by saying "...we hesitate to believe that there is a shortage of artists capable of recognizing the bonds between sketching and philately. It is time to break with the tradition that Poland must be out-distanced by other nations. Prompt action without prolonged meditation should be undertaken to assure the adoption of reforms which will place the Postal Department at least on a par with other nations."

Another journal ran an editorial saying "...the F.I.S. stamps are inappropriate for any propaganda scheme. This issue is not in keeping with the trend of the times." This editorial concluded with an attack on

the designer of the stamps, W. Boratynski, who had been the artist who designed the four previous Polish issues. This rebuke said of the stamp, "...coming steadily from the hands of the same artist, what more is to be expected."

Naturally, these criticisms did not pass unheeded, and many Polish collectors announced their complete satisfaction with the design and their confidence in the artist. The editor of one newspaper summed up their views by writing "...the criticisms are unwarranted, as we all know that Boratynski is one of our leading artists, famous for his unlimited talent, and his past creations attest to his artistic qualifications."

It is obvious that Boratynski's opponents were not listened to by the postal authorities, since in August 1939 they used another of his designs when they issued the single value to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Polish Legion. This latter stamp, of course, was the last produced by Poland before World War II began.

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Early Polish Stamps In Historical Perspective

By EUGENIA EVART

Reprinted from LINN'S STAMP NEWS

The Polish Postal Service has a long and rich history, but it is not our intention to dwell on it now. Nevertheless, let us remember that in 1558 King Sigmund Augustus of Poland established a uniform rate for deliveries of letters (four groszy per letter), which was the first of its kind. At that time the postal rates all over the world were in direct proportion to the distance between the locality of the sender and that of the addressee. The year 1764 might be considered as a milestone in Polish postal history, as it was the year when postal cancellations were first introduced in Poland.

At the end of the 18th century, Poland, weakened by long lasting internal struggles, and whose unfortunate geographical situation had it squeezed between its three powerful neighbors, Tsarist Russia, Holy Austro-Hungarian Empire, and Germany, was finally partitioned between them and occupied for about 125 years.

During this period the Polish postal service became non-existent, as each of the annexing countries imposed its own in those parts of Poland which were incorporated into them.

Consequently, when stamps were introduced in the middle of the 19th century, only Russian, German and Austrian stamps circulated in Polish territories.

There was only a short period when in 1860, the Russian Tsar, who had added to his titles the one of "King of Poland", gave permission to issue a Polish stamp (Scott No. 1). The design and the size of the item were based on the Russian contemporary varieties. The Polish design was made by Henryk Mayer, an engraver in the Polish Bank, and approved by the Russian authorities.

About three million of these stamps were printed in the Warsaw print works. They were destined for corres-



Poland No. 1

pondence inside the country and with Russia. The stamps were in use for five years. When in 1865 they were taken out of circulation, 208,515 of them were destroyed.

The first stamp can still be found mint, used, or on covers. It appears that its counterfeits started in 1935, when the price of the stamps went up sharply, and have probably never been discontinued, which explains the considerable number of counterfeits. The value of an original one, mint or used, changes depending not only on the condition of the stamp, but also on the color of its center; a red one is considered more valuable than a rose one, and the intensity of the color has also its importance in the evaluation.

When Poland regained its sovereignty in November 1918, one among the numerous problems the newly-formed Government had to resolve immediately, was the postal one. There were no Polish stamps, but it happened that in 1916 were issued some local Warsaw stamps, called "Monument stamps", depicting some of Warsaw's most famous monuments.

These stamps were never used, their circulation being barred by the German occupant of the city. Surcharged with changed denominations, and overprinted "Poczta Polska" they became the first to be used after the recovery of independence (Scott 11-14).



1918 Issue, Scott 11 to 14

The problems of the postal service were complicated by another difficulty, and a very serious one. The southern part of Poland, with Cracow as its capital city, had been annexed by Austria. Consequently, the currency and the denominations of stamps were in hallers and kronen.

The northern part of Poland, with the capital city Warsaw, was occupied during the First World War by Germany, and had currency and stamp denominations in fennigs and marks. Only in 1920 did the currency become unified for the whole of Poland, in marks at that time. The currency in groszy and zloty became official on May 1, 1924.

When the German and Austrian occupants fled after their defeat, they left in Poland some of the stamps which were used there previously. In the northern part of the country, which was occupied by Germany from 1915 to 1918, the occupying forces used German stamps overprinted "Gen. Gouv. Warschau".

These stamps were immediately taken over by the Polish Post Office, overprinted "Poczta Polska", and surcharged with changed denominations on top, and with four black lines barring the inscription of "Gen. Gouv. Warschau".

The stamps were put in circulation on December 1, 1918 (Scott 15-26).

There are many variations, many imperfections, and also some inversions in the words "Poczta Polska" and in the figures.

In the southern part of Poland the Austrians left, among others, some of their Welfare stamps of the Austrian Field Post. They were taken over by the Polish Post Office, overprinted in black "Poczta Polska", denominations surcharged, and the portrait of Emperor Charles in the middle of the stamp overprinted with the Polish Eagle (Scott 27-40).

Next, on January 10, 1919 came a series of stamps, known as the "Cracow Issues". These were again Austrian stamps, taken over and overprinted by the Polish Post Office. They were issued in Austria between 1916 and 1918, and taken out of circulation in that nation in October 1920.

The denominations went up from 3 hal. to 10 kronen, which was an unusually high value for that time.



10 kronen Cracow Overprint

It is startling to study the differences in amounts of stamps issued for different denominations in the same series. They vary from 440 stamps for the 10 kronen, up to 90,275 for the 1 kronen denomination. And in between we find such disparate figures, as for instance 1100 stamps issued for the 25 hal. or 58,230 for the 5 hal.

Today it is a quite valuable and expensive set. Stamps on covers are particularly sought for, as the set was hardly two months in circulation (Scott 41-55). Also many counterfeits exist.

An addition to the Cracow Issues is a set of four stamps, which came out one week later. It consists of four Austrian newspaper stamps, issued in 1916, called "Mercury" stamps, a small Mercury head being in the center of the stamp (Scott 56-59).

The first set of stamps issued in Poland appeared in February 1919. It is known as the "Polish Liquidating Committee" issue (Scott 67-71). The stamp printing facilities were still inadequate. Except for one stamp, the 1 kronen, which had two colors (a grayish blue and rose), all the others were in one color.

They had no gum and no perforations; they were lithograph printed on a cellulosic yellowish gray, not smooth paper, or on some bluish rag paper; denominations were in hallers and kronen.

In the beginning of January 1919 the Polish Post Office started preparing two identical sets of five stamps, the difference between them being only in currency. One set destined for the southern part of Poland, had denominations in hallers and kronen, the other one, for the northern part, in fennigs and marks. Both sets were issued perforate and imperforate (Scott 81-108 and 109-132).

With these stamps for the southern part of Poland ended denominations in Austrian currency, and up to 1924 the currency for the whole of the Polish territory was in marks.

Notwithstanding the still difficult conditions of life in the country, the first Philatelic Exhibition was held in Warsaw in May 1919. To honor it, the Post Office overprinted already issued stamps with the inscription "Polska Wystawa Marek" and added a 5 fen. surtax for the benefit of the Polish White Cross, creating thus the first Polish semipostals (Scott B1-B10).

A series of stamps was issued on June 15, 1919 to coincide with the opening of the Polish "Sejm" (Parliament), first, after an interruption of 125 years (Scott 133-139).



Polish "Sejm" Issue, Scott 133-139

Among the seven stamps of the set, there is one with the portrait of Marshal Pilsudski, Chief of State, and on another we see Ignace Paderewski, the famous pianist and composer, who was then Polish Prime Minister. The stamps are of different colors, but always in a single color.

Some other stamps were issued during those first years, but we will not mention them now, as they do not present any special interest in this historical perspective.

In 1923-1924 Germany was at the height of its currency inflation. And the Polish Mark, being based upon it, suffered also a depreciation of its value. Thus, stamps issued in 1923 to commemorate anniversaries of two Polish scientists, Copernicus and Koperniski, had denominations going from 1000 to 5000 marks.

And at the end of 1923 and the beginning of 1924 a provisional issue of stamps had overprints up to 50,000 marks. A few months later, an issue with the large eagle, had as its highest denomination, 2,000,000 marks!



Inflationary Eagle Value, Scott 169B

It was urgent for the Polish currency to become independent from the German Mark, and this was achieved in 1924. The first set of Polish stamps, with denominations starting with 1 gr. up to 50 gr. was issued May 1,



New Currency Value, Scott 225

1924. And this started another period in the history of Polish philately, a period which ended September 1939.



50 gr. Kosciuszko Lublin value, Scott 342

In 1944, after the liberation of the city, the first three stamps of the Polish People's Republic came out in Lublin. The transformation from these ungummed, imperforate, poorly and hastily printed stamps, to the present beautifully designed, multicolored and carefully printed stamps, is quite startling. But, as Kipling's wise cat said, this is another story.

ON STAMP RARITY AND COST

By David G. Phillips

A friend gave up stamp collecting the other day. He tossed in his tongs with the comment that Stamp Collecting has become a rich man's hobby, mainly concerned with the chase after rare stamps and covers at steadily increasing prices.

Well, we had to admit knowing of a few millionaire collectors who are competing for a handfull of rarities in the philatelic market, but we could not resist pointing out a basic error in our friend's approach to stamp collecting: RARITY and COST are not synonymous — there are always a great many truly rare stamps, cancels and covers that are not expensive.

The fact is that the catalogs list many stamps known to exist in quantities of ten, twenty, fifty or less than one-hundred copies, and these stamps are within the price range of the average collector of modest financial means.

Perhaps the greatest thrill of collecting comes with the knowledge that one owns a stamp or cover that few others own or can own, and many a collector takes nearly as much pleasure in telling (and retelling) the story of how he succeeded in the hunting and the tracking of the gems which grace his collection.

The longer and more difficult it is to "Nail the Coonskin to the Wall", the sweeter is the possession.

NO, many, many stamps, cancellations and covers are not that expensive; but they still are Rare. Rare Rare! The avenues of collecting and the opportunities for pleasure through stamps are limited only by the imagination, patience and persistence of the collector.

We hope our friend reconsiders.

Reprinted from THE HOLLYWOOD PHILATELIST, journal of the Hollywood, Florida Stamp Club.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Friday, January 23rd, 1970 —

Election of Officers. Polpex Business Meeting. 8:00 PM.

Friday, February 13, 1970 —

Program Meeting — Dr. Miet Kamienski of Scarborough, Canada will speak on "Stamps Used On Polish Territory up to 1923". This includes pre-stamp covers, Russian, German & Austrian issues, Poland No. 1, O.S., Marienwerder, Olsztyn, Central Lithuania, Bialystok, Grodno, Kowel Western Ukraine, Locals, the first Polish issues and a mention of the Kraków overprints. He will show color slides of stamps and bring along his collection. Beeba to follow. Meeting begins promptly at 8:00 p.m.

Friday, February 27th, 1970 —

Polpex Mounting Nite.

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— Annual Dues are \$2.50 —

POLPEX (Continued from first page)

hibits, historical and philatelic articles as well as patron listings and ads. Place an ad in which you can extend your greetings or list your wants — the rates are very reasonable. An ad contract is also enclosed with this Bulletin.

We are in need of articles for our Bulletin, program catalog and other philatelic publications. Mail your articles to Chester Schafer, 864 N. Ashland Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60622.

Time is running out. Let's all put in our efforts pulling them together for a successful POLPEX 1970!

—Alfred Szebel
Secretary

STAMPS FOR WOUNDED NITE

The last meeting of 1969 held by Polonus was Stamps For The Wounded Nite. It was with great pleasure to secure all the stamps, catalogs, publications and cash donations.

I would personally like to thank the following members who were most generous: George Jezioranski, Alex Juszkowicz, Stanley Madro, Chester Schafer, Thomas Gobby, J. P. Rux, Roman Reinowski and Anthony Florczak.

Stamps For The Wounded Nite at Polonus was a great success!

—John Bor,
Regional Director