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"Barbed Wire Stamps"

by Thaddeus Skowronski

The forming of the postal system in the war prisoner officer camp in Dobiegniew (Woldenberg) was the result of two factors:

The necessity of easing the problem of keeping contact among themselves in the camp, and second, the psychological factor which necessitated the making of life more pleasant as it was before the war. The splendid development of the postage stamp was a means of expression to a beauty in which we once lived. The activity of a postal system was a good means of taking our minds off our imprisonment.

Our camp occupied about 62 acres of land and was the largest camp of Polish officers in Germany; as in the camp there were about 7000 soldiers, of which about 6000 were officers. In this area there were 50 barracks—living quarters, and barracks which included libraries, a pharmacy, a chancery, lecture halls, a gymnasium, a bookbindery, and other halls—in which various circles and groups of men occupied themselves. Well developed was community life and especially on a high plane was placed the exchange of cultural knowledge by

* The author of this article, who was a Polish Army officer, was a prisoner at the Woldenberg Camp. This is a translation of an article that appeared in **PIONIER FILATELISTYCZNY**, Vol. 1, No. 1.



An enlarged reproduction of a stamp of the Widow Issue.

means of correspondence within the camp.

Nor was the psychological factor less important. The small area for so large a population was inclosed entirely with a triple series barbed wire fence, which monotonously interrupted the not less monotonous towers "decorated" like gigantic Christmas trees with searchlights and machine guns—and all around numberless sentries armed with guns and grenades, as a constant reminder of our bad luck.

There was not a spot in the camp where we could not see these barbed wires. Fear, before the psychic break-



The 20 f. value of the Torch set.

down, forced us to defend ourselves, by forming the pretense of a completely normal everyday life. We wanted to forget the barbed wire, learn not to see it, and this proved successful to us. Our will, which stood at the roots of building a camp community, was also responsible for activating our postal system.

Also favoring this, were local conditions. In the camp there existed a net of barrack postal officers for the distribution of letters coming from outside the camp, notifying officers of received parcels, and finally for solving the formality connected with the sending of parcel labels. The existing net of postal officers could perform the functions of a postal agency.

A camp elected Administration for the Widow and Orphan Fund, petitioned the camp commanding officer for permission to organize a temporary postal system for the period of Easter holidays.

Here must be mentioned the institution of which we were justly proud. The Widow and Orphan Fund (FWS) handled the collection and distribution of money to widows of missing and deceased soldiers of the Polish Army, and from this assistance benefited the widows of officers and enlisted men who were reserves and who served overseas. The fund drew means from not only monthly contributions and good will donations, but from income from various shows which were performed in the camp, and from income derived by the postal system. As can be seen, the income



The 15 f. value of the Hetman series.

of the postal system went for a good cause. Further, on the individual stamps can be found small, faint initials "FWS" and knowing the circumstance of the fund to the camp postal system, it can be understood why the first issue of stamps carried the name of the "Widow Issue." This entire first issue was sold out in a few days—with a delivery of about 800 pieces of mail.

This caused the commanding officer in the camp, upon the conclusion of the "FWS," to permit the activity of a permanent postal system in his decision of April 10, 1942. A Postal Commission was formed which organized and activated the postal system. In the sphere of its activity came the printing of these stamps, establishing the postal rates, issuing the necessary information, and besides this, the publicizing of the contest to select the designs for the stamps, postal cards, and the cancellations. The permanent postal activity in the camp began May 7, 1942. From the postal service benefited all the cultural educational organizations, professional groups, official camp organs, and all other groups and circles, besides the officers on a whole with their personal correspondence. The postal activity was larger in holiday periods and on popular names-days.

In the middle of November, 1942, the "FWS" was dissolved by German authorities and the whole organization of the postal system was handed over to the postal Commission.



Postage Due Stamp

The work of the postal Commission from the very beginning, was very difficult as the time of its beginning was in the period when there was an extreme paper shortage. A shortage of printing inks existed as well, and most important, the stamp manufacturers had no experience at all but ambition and good intentions. Because of the paper shortage the first issue was printed on paper collected in a camp paper drive—and from oil colors donated by artist painters. Later regular printing inks were secured, and the following issues were printed with them.

One of the later issues was printed on the margins of German newspapers. The "Torch Issue" has one edge perforated, and a part of the issue was printed on blotting paper. Similarly, on different paper, the issue "Virtuti Militari" was printed. In the end, thanks to the assistance of the International Red Cross and the YMCA, one type of paper was used, and the quantity printed was increased.

The stamps were printed on individual sheets of paper which were trimmed to the required size. Beginning with the issue "Madonna Swarzewska," the paper was trimmed to size first, and then the design was printed on it. On January 27, 1944, the "Assistance Issue" was printed from a plate of four stamp designs on sheets of white paper.

All plates were hand made, and beginning June 10, 1942, a primitive hand operated press constructed in the camp, was used. All stamps were one colored, with the exception of the November 11, 1943 issue "25th anniversary of Independence," which was printed from two separate plates. One plate printed stamps in red bronze, and the other in gray green.

Interests, longings, hope—were all subjects of the stamp designs. Love of fellow-men—the "Widow Issue," a figure of a woman in mourning with a crying child; "YMCA" and "Red Cross" issues. Past history conceived the "Hetman Issue" of Zamoyski, Zolkiewski, Chodkiewicz, and Czarniecki. The likenesses of Paderewski and Gen. Sikorski appear, with that of Kopernik repeated. Commemoration of the battles of Racławice and Zielence, and a special issue devoted to "Virtuti Militari" comprise other subjects of the stamps.

Religion is suggested on the "Madonna Issue" or the "M. B. Swarzewska Issue." A longing for activity is depicted by the "Sport Issue." Remembered also are the ocean, 25 years of independence, and other events.

Independent of regular issues, on May 18, 1942, postal cards were introduced; on September 11, 1942, postage due stamps, and on April 1, 1943, an Official stamp appeared.

The occasion of printing 250,000 stamps of the war prisoner camp postal system, 1000 Stefan Czarniecki stamps of the "Hetman Issue" were printed with an additional inscription on a left wide margin "250,000 War Prisoner Camp Postage Stamps."

On the anniversary of the German shooting of unarmed Polish prisoners, a 10 fen. green stamp of the "Torch Issue" on white paper with a red overprint "5.11.43" was prepared. This stamp was the last and only one which did not go into circulation at Dobiegniew (Woldenberg), and was not cancelled or used at all. On January 30, 1945, the larger part of the camp was liberated by the Red Army and the Polish Army. About 25% of the former prisoners were transported to the West, and probably this stamp may have been cancelled at other prison camps.

At the camp, rubber cancellers were used (3 types). On December 24, 1942, the use of a metal canceller with different numerals, was adopted. On holidays, exhibition days, and anniversaries special rubber cancellations were applied.

In the ending, it should be noted that not only were ordinary letters and cards accepted for delivery, but also registered and "express" mail—these being delivered immediately during the three hours when ordinary and registered mail was delivered twice daily.

POLPEX 1946

Visitors to Polpex 1946 viewed a thorough picture of Polish philately as it was painted by the exhibits of Polonus members. As the background of the displays, the Polish Roman Catholic Museum again proved to be the perfect setting. True, the exhibits of Polish stamps dominated the show, but it was a collection of Heligoland that won the Grand Award. Here was a highly specialized collection which included much research, and deserved to win this honor for its owner, Ben Reeves. The Grand Award, which was donated by Dr. L. P. Kozakiewicz, was an expensive brief case. In addition, the winner also received the S. P. A. Research Award.

The three First Award trophies were given to Stephen G. Rich for his Type Sage Stamps, Lester Jankowski for his Precancels of Austria, and F. E. Wolosewick for his First Issues of Poland. The three Second Award trophies went to Rev. P. W. Piechocki for his Precancels, Bert Powell for his Polish Airmail, and C. A. Schafer for his Central Lithuania. The three Third Award trophies were received by J. J. Domar with his Miscellaneous Poland, C. J. Mikucki with his War Covers, and Dr. M. E. Uznanski with his Al-lenstein.

Honorable mention was given to Dr. L. P. Kozakiewicz's Polish Towns on Austria, M. E. Steczynski's Polish Oddities, Roman Wojciecki's Historical Wilno, A. S. Rybarski's Kosciuszko Collection, Adam Kloskowski's Philippine War Issues, Dr. M. E. Uznanski's Great Britain, John Wendt's United States, C. A. Pulaski's London Issues, J. P. Rux's Flights, and Frank Jan-cowski's Stamp Booklets.

Many out of two members had their exhibits at Polpex. One exhibit traveled from as far as Saskatchewan, Canada to be placed in our show. Among the many visitors were high school students. Arrangements were made whereby they view Polpex during a school day, and heard a lecture by Dr. M. E. Uznanski on the stamps of the exhibit.

Much of the credit for the success of the exhibition is due A. S. Rybarski and his wife. They planned the seal, the program, and attended to the many little details involved in presenting Polpex 1946 which indeed earned them the gratitude of the Society.



THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I cannot, in words, express to you the extreme and sincere gratification I feel at having been unanimously re-elected to serve Polonus Philatelic Society as President for the ensuing year. Your unanimous consent in directing me to continue my work augurs your confidence in my leadership and in your full co-operation in furthering the welfare and progress of the Society.

It must be a source of great satisfaction to all the members of Polonus to know that after twelve months, to which the members gave assiduous and earnest attention, our Society closed its fiscal year without one thought suppressed, or without one suggestion that had not been given due consideration. I believe I am safe in saying and entirely within the truth, that every member had full and ample opportunity to present the thoughts he desired to give expression to, and that our work, discussions and debates were constructive throughout.

Personally, I am especially gratified with the work accomplished. Great tolerance, patience and support was shown in spite of the perplexing problems and tremendous handicaps which confronted the Society. Our meetings were not just gatherings where men indulged themselves in fanciful flights of oratory, having really no basis in philatelic activities, but our discussions were the result of the needs of the day and of the time, springing out of the wants, the hopes and the aspirations of the members of our Society. The meetings were dispatched speedily and efficiently and the business was transacted faithfully and to the best interests of the members and

the Society.

If from our meetings, goodfellowship and sociability have been cultivated;

If from our programs, furthering the cause of Polish Philately and philately in all its branches has been inspired;

If from our exhibits, fine sportsmanship and new ideas as to stamp collecting and displaying have been created;

If from our wants new features have been proposed and inaugurated;

If from our hopes, the services of the Society have been enlarged, then it will be time and labor well spent.

Having concluded our work and come to the point where we have left nothing untouched and undecided as

our best judgement might direct, it was a most happy conclusion.

The coming year will reflect itself in our economic, political, material and moral life. Out of this will come the demands which modern and future philately will make upon the members of the Society.

Your loyalty, co-operation and support will be needed now more than ever before. I feel that each of you is mindful of the fact that we must strive to the utmost to make a record of constructive upbuilding, for our Society, that we may maintain our present enviable position, and strive for greater achievements and be a source of pride to every Polonus member.

Dr. M. E. Uznanski

When I Was In the Western Ukraine

by Adam Kloskowski

Balance of power among the countries of Europe broke down with the final withdrawal of German Imperial troops from the Ukraine and Poland, the Red Revolution of 1917, and the fall of Austria. The organization of Poland's eastern and southeastern borders was threatened with chaos by the various political and military factions whose objective, primarily, was to establish individual provisional governments. Their disregard of the Versailles Treaty, however, made it difficult for Poland to hold its frontiers intact, the most troublesome of which was eastern Galicia, better known as Western Ukraine.

The first military actions against Western Ukraine came in May, 1919. The Western Ukrainians had organized military units of some importance and declared a provisional government, with the city Lwow as their capital. But the military campaign against Western Ukraine was short lived, and the Polish Army of Occupation was obliged to administer the civil government.

The postal administration of this district was left in a derelict condition, and about the only stamps obtainable for public needs were the former Austrian stamps of 1916-17 issue, including the semi-postal and military stamps. The stamps of Western Ukraine were overprinted in three

different localities, namely in Kolomea, Lwow and Stanislowo, each overprint differing in the type and the design of the overprint. Since permanent post offices in the Western Ukraine National Republic were not established, the stamps were not offered for regular public sale. Most of the stamps were in the hands of military authorities, leaving practically none for civilian use.

The overprints on the issue at Kolomea were overprinted on four values of the Austrian issue of 1916-17, the 5sch (Schagiv) on Austrian type A42-15H, bearing the portrait of Emperor Karl I. The three remaining values were surcharged 10sch on Austrian type A37 of the 3h, 6h, and 12h values, picturing the crown of Austria. The overprint at the top of the stamps of numbers one to four, Ukr. N. R. "Ukrainian National Republic," the value of the overprint indicated by a number, namely, the 5schagiv and 10schagiv (100schagiv to one Grivna which was on par with the Russian ruble). This issue of stamps did not appear in many of the localities, and used postage stamps were scarce. It was a well known fact that many of the stamps of this issue, and succeeding issues, were cancelled to order as particular favors to people who had contact with the postal agents. Notwithstanding, the remainders of most issues were not used when the Polish civil government was set up, and

*—Reprinted from STAMPS.

what happened to them will remain a mystery. A large portion of the various issues were destroyed, stolen, and no doubt, eventually lost.

The Lwow issue consisted of another four values in the Austrian type of A37 on four denominations, namely, the 3heller violet, the 5heller light green, 10heller magenta and the 20heller deep green. The issue of Lwow was not seen in Lwow or in the vicinity of Lwow. The overprint of the lion, bordered with words in full, as compared with the abbreviated overprint on the Kolomea issue.

The Stanislowo overprints were overprinted with the same abbreviations as the Kolomea issue, but differed in that the word "Post" was added above the words "Ukrainian National Republic," and at the bottom, the word of value in "Schagiv" and "Grivna" were added. Unlike the two preceding issues having many values overprinted on the regular Austrian issue of 1916-18 and the semi-postal of 1918, the military issue of Austria 1917 was widely used by the Austrian Armies in occupied sections of Poland, Italy and most of the Balkan countries. The scarcity of this issue was one of the drawbacks in trying to obtain genuine cancelled copies. At the time that I was in the various sections of Western Ukraine, I was anxious to obtain many stamps, whether they were revenue, postal or locals, or anything that looked like a stamp, not only to get stamps as a collector, but also as souvenirs. It seemed inconceivable that such difficulty could be encountered in obtaining stamps. The unfriendly attitude of the people of Western Ukraine was disheartening. They treated us as strangers. I had at that time, seen but few of the Stanislowo issue in used condition, the same being true of the semi-postals and the postage due overprints on the Bosnia 1904 stamps used as postage due stamps. This set of stamps from No. 61 to 72 is about the most elusive set to complete.

Another set surcharged on the Austrian military stamps (Nos. 75 to 81) has the same wording as Nos. 10 to 28, but has a horizontal bar across K.U.K.-Feldpost. These are also scarce.

The set of stamps from No. 85 to 103 of the regular Austrian issue of 1917 have a distinct additional overprint in the center of the trident with four abbreviations, one in each corner

of the stamp; the abbreviation meaning, upper left letter WESTERN, upper right UKRAINE, lower left, NATIONAL, lower right REPUBLIC. The trident, which is the center position of the overprint against a black background, was adopted from the coat of arms of Vladimir I, Czar of Russia, better known as Vladimir the Great. The trident symbol is pictured on most of the stamps of the Ukraine and the latter or last issues of Western Ukraine. This last issue is common in mint condition, but seldom seen in genuine cancelled condition.

When the Polish military operations, and occupation of Western Ukraine, ended in the latter part of May, 1919, the stamp issues of Western Ukraine also came to an end.



Our most heartfelt sympathy to the family of Dr. Charles Wachtl, upon the notification of the death of this noted Polonus member.

Dr. Wachtl, who died January 26, was a prominent Polish scholar, author, historian, and editor of a Polish-language weekly newspaper in Philadelphia. He served for many years as Professor of Polish at De Paul University, Chicago, where he received his doctorate. In addition to writing plays, essays, and fiction, he was the author of a history of the Polish people in America.

Solemn requiem mass was held for him at St. Joseph's Church, Camden, Pa. He was 63, and is survived by his wife, Louise, and three daughters.

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CORRECTION

In the January 1946 BULLETIN, on page 8, lines 21, 22, and 23 erroneously describe the 50 gr. stamp of the Krakow Liberation Issue. They should read:

The 50 Gr. brown shows the huge Grunwald monument with the statue of King Jagiello at the top.

Bogus and Counterfeit Stamps of Poland

by Vincent Domanski, Jr.

During my many years of collecting the postage stamps of Poland much has been written about its various stamps, but very little regarding the bogus, forged, and counterfeit stamps that exist. I have acquired and examined many such stamps. As a matter of interest to other collectors of Polish stamps, also for the records, I believe it well to list and chronicle these stamps in accordance with Scott's catalog numbers. In doing so, I will briefly point out the most important points of difference when comparison is made with the authentic originals. I do not claim that this list is complete; no doubt others may exist that I have not seen.

Commencing with the classic #1, issued 1860, very few counterfeits are known. They are much rarer than the originals. In the Stephen G. Rich collection there is one such item, bought from the Faberge collection. It is a hand painted copy, made in 1862, on a cover, to defraud the government. Another remarkably clever counterfeit, likewise in Rich's collection, is one on paper of the proper color and texture, an excellent piece of photolithographic work, and only lacking certain fine details of the original. Perforation is wrong as to size of holes. In 1920 Count Polanski had 500 copies of an accurate reproduction of a block of eight of this classic #1, adhesive, done on a glossy surface, coated paper, in brighter blue and more scarlet red than that found on any of the actual stamps. These can hardly deceive anyone; however, they are sought for by all collectors.

German occupation stamps of 1915-1918, surcharged, Scott's #15 to 26.—Forged overprints were made to defraud the postal authorities. Some of these forgeries are very scarce. They exist with larger face type and appear coarser.

Lublin Issue, Scott's #27 to 40.—Many counterfeit overprints exist. The most common can be recognized by comparison of the eagles and letters. In the forgeries the wings, head, and claws of the eagle all differ; also the "S" in "Polska," leans forward, "Z" in "Poczta," top horizontal stroke is short, the lower one is long, and the

top of A is rounded.

Kra'ow Issues—Austrian stamps of 1916—overprinted—listed #41 to 60, postage due stamps J1 to J12 and newspaper stamps P1 to P5.—The surcharges on these stamps have been extensively forged at many sources. One should be extremely certain that these stamps are authentic. The POLONUS group has two men, Dr. John Gapinski and Mr. F. E. Wolosewick, well qualified as experts for their untiring research work on this interesting group of stamps. Last November while in Chicago I had the privilege of seeing how this work is done, and I was amazed at the thorough methods and scientific means by which these men determine and detect forgeries. Many forgeries of these stamps have been made so nearly perfect that they almost fooled me. One can't be too complacent without having his stamps of this issue checked properly.

Polish Liquidation Commission Emergency Postal Issue #61 to 71.—Forged and bogus copies of these stamps exist printed from zincs, revealing many minor defects in lettering and designs, which are very crude in comparison with the originals. Colors also vary.

To defraud the government at Tarnow, March, 1921, #148, 20 Marks, gray green (Polish Cavalryman) was counterfeited. It is perforated, 11 instead of 9 or 11½ on plain paper, size 22¾ x 28 mm. instead of 22 x 27½ mm. The "0" of the "20" is narrow. Mint copies very scarce, exist only used.

Scott's #195 to 200.—One should be absolutely certain that the surcharges on the various stamps are authentic. Spurious items exist, especially in the inverts and double surcharges. The type and letters are different, coarse and varied in size, printed with dull inks.

At Chicago and New York I examined sheets of #213 and 214. 1,000,000 marks, pale rose and the 2,000,000 marks, dark green, reprinted by the Nazis, who had confiscated the plates during their terrible ravage of Poland. The paper is of a thinner and slightly grayish texture, the gum is streaky and uneven, in general the inks used are similar; however, of a duller shade.

*—Reprinted from STAMPS.

Counterfeits of the 20gr., dull red (Ship of State) #238, appeared about midsummer 1927, in the vicinity of Poznan, crudely executed, lithographed, perforated 10% instead of 12½.

Scott's #251.—The first souvenir sheet issued for the Waraw Philatelic Exhibition at Warsaw was counterfeited, first in Lwow (Lemberg) and later in France. At Lwow, a local dealer had disposed of 500 of them. W. Rachmanow, who threatened to expose the forger, compelled him to purchase many of them back. They are easily detected, poorly executed, of same size as the original; paper thinner, thinly gummed. Color of ink grayish, looks as though executed by photographic process. The eyes are lifeless and dull; in general, very coarsely done.

About January, 1935, there appeared, to defraud the government, #260—25 gr., red brown (eagle) and #265—25 gr., red brown (conventionalized soldiers). These are cleverly executed forgeries in somewhat darker colors, both perforated 11, instead of 12 or 12½. Likewise, #272—25gr., buff and #273—30gr., deep rose (coats of arms) were discovered counterfeited, cleverly imitated in a smaller size, 21½ mm. instead of the 22½ mm. of the original, and rarely seen unused.

The overprint WYST. FILAT. 1934 KATOWICE, Scott's #280 and 281, was forged, being printed in different face type. The special exhibition cancellation was also counterfeited.

Blocks of the 5, 10 and 25gr., of the Pilsudski Mourning issue #287-88 and 289 were imprinted bearing dates "5-XII-1867 * 12-V-1935" on the white blank gutters. They were sheets of 100, in 4 panes of 25 (5x5), separated by a wide white margin. This was done by a private and speculative source, and are bogus.

Scott's #306 and 307.—Counterfeits of the overprint — "GORDON-BENNETT 30. VIII" with 1930 beneath, have been found over the postmarks on cancelled stamps. Can be distinguished by the "1" of "1936" under the period, whereas in the genuine the "1" is directly beneath the "0" of "30." Likewise, differs in type. Originals were printed from electroplates with distinct outstanding letters; fakes are thinner, and from set type.

As to semi-postal stamps, B11 to B14, counterfeits exist, are executed in darker, dirty red, not carmine, with crude crosses and different numerals.

C1 to C9, airpost stamps of 1925.—Counterfeits of these first appeared in Paris, France. The fakes are the same size as the genuine, except that the colors are blurred and ungummed. There is a thin colored line outside the heavy frame line, and they are perforated 11½ and are on a thinner grade of paper. Postmarks appear on counterfeits: WARSZAWA 1-12-11-34. LWOW 8-4-3-33 and POZNAN 2-3-7-33.

Counterfeits of C11, the Overprint CHALLENGE 1934, are crudely done in dark brown red with thicker letters. Rarely seen unused. POSTAGE DUE Stamps J13 to J30 were cleverly made, on white paper and all perforated 11.

Scott's #J35 to J39.—Crude counterfeit surcharges printed in dull and muddy black ink. All inverts and double prints are rank forgeries.

Offices in the Turkish Empire
Scott's #2K1 to 2K12.—Many rank counterfeits of the surcharging exist. They are poorly executed, colors of ink vary from shades in the original's.

#2K13 to 2K19.—Two different types of counterfeits exist, overprinted in darker red, and slightly larger than the originals.

Offices in DANZIG, #1K1 to 1K12.—Crude overprints, especially in the execution of inverts and double surcharges, are bogus.

Types #1K13 to 1K19.—Usually are found counterfeited on horizontally laid paper. #1K23 Inverted surcharges are bogus, never issued.

#1K28 to 1K30 counterfeit overprints are usually made on cancelled and postmarked stamps.

STAMP SHOWS

Chicago Philatelists, as a group, are as fine as they make them and if you lend an encouraging hand you will make many friends and incidentally boost your own stamps in which you have an investment and a decided interest. Plan to attend as many of the following as you can conveniently do so.

March 1, 2, and 3. Beverly Hills Philatelic Society's Annual Exhibition.

March 30 and 31. Austin Philatelic Club's Annual exhibit and Bourse, 241 N. Central Ave., Chicago. There will be a 200 frame exhibit, 17 dealers, refreshments, and entertainment. Everything free. Mark your calendar pad, this will be an outstanding event.