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LAJKONIK - A Legend Fulfilled!

By W. KOLAKOWSKI



The story behind a set of three stamps issued by Poland in 1955 (SG 924 - 926, Scott 684 - 686) is one of great interest. While many Poles, historians, and philatelists are perhaps aware of the legend of Lajkonik from Kraków, few know the modern sequel to the story.

Every year on the day of the Corpus Christi celebration in June, tourists come from all over Poland to participate in a colorful national carnival. When the bells in 100 churches stop ringing after the religious procession, a boisterous parade issues from Zwirzyniecka Street. A gaily costumed man in a high black cap and a long black beard rides a wooden horse covered by a brilliant mantle. The whole figure is the creation of Stanisław Wyspiański and represents

Lajkonik, a Tartar leader of an invading force which attacked Kraków in 1281. A band of followers in similar costumes produce squeaky, unpleasant noises on primitive tifes and drums announcing to the citizens that Lajkonik the Tartar is capturing the town. With his sceptre the leader pokes mad jabs at the crowd around him, producing joyous shouts because by superstition the touch of Lajkonik brings good luck. The Tartar band dances grotesquely along the street to the unmelodic rhythm of the simple instruments, as the crowd shouts and stamps their feet. Lajkonik is greeted by the Mayor of Kraków and offered wine, an offer which is repeated at restaurants along the way.

The role of Lajkonik must by

tradition be played by a member of the family of Włoczków. At the time of the invasion, one of this family of loggers rode into the city and ordered the gates closed, thus warning of the approach of the Tartars. At the same time, from the turrets of the castle, trumpeters had just started to play the evening Call to Prayer. One of the Tartars, thinking the call was an alarm, shot an arrow through the throat of the trumpeter just as the highest note was reached. From that time until today, every day at noon, from the bell tower of the church of the Virgin Mary, the same trumpet call is played, up to the highest note, then broken off. This call is broadcast over radio.

The legend is well known in Poland, but the modern chapter of the story is known only to a few. Far away in Samarkand, a group of Polish soldiers arrived in 1941. Among them were some students from Kraków who knew the legend of Lajkonik. The local people wondered how to treat these strangers, and held an investigation to determine if they were really sons of Lechists, as the Tartars called the Poles. They knew that the Lechists are Christians and the Tartars respected their belief in God. The time was June and as the religious holiday of Corpus Christi approached, some trumpeters among the soldiers won permission from local authorities to play in honor of their national holiday. They were invited to play in the

market place, facing Mecca.

A huge crowd jammed the market place on the appointed day. The trumpeters made their way to the center, where they played their traditional calls: Reveille, Call to Colors, and Call to Prayer. The last call was ended abruptly on the highest note. A strange and deep quiet came over the listening Tartars who seemed turned to stone. The Polish soldiers departed, and one by one the people walked away.

In Samarkand it was well known that Lajkonik had joined the Tartar invasion of Poland and had penetrated all the way to Kraków, then the capital of Poland, where they were defeated. They knew that one of their soldiers had shot the Polish trumpeter as he played the Call to Prayer and their priests had taught them over the centuries that their defeat came as a punishment from God. The priests told the people that they must no longer attack outside of their borders or they would be completely destroyed and their temples would lie covered by moss. For centuries it had been prophesied that their punishment would be ended and their future brightened only when the trumpeters from Lechistan came to Samarkand and played in the market place the same Call to Prayer so profanely interrupted in 1281. This prophesy was known to Mongolian people from Pamir to the Caspian Sea.

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NEW OFFICERS ELECTED

At the May 28th meeting of Polonus, elected were the following officers: Chester Schafer, President; Arkadiusz Walinski, Vice President; Fred Szebel, Treasurer; Chester Schafer, Acting Secretary;

Stefan Czarniecki, Stanley Dobrzycski, Edward Blicharski and Franciszek Skrypko, Directors. Ex-officio Roman Strzelecki stays on as Director. The new officers will be installed at the June 25th meeting.

NUMERAL POSTMARKS OF CZARIST RUSSIA IN POLISH LANDS IN THE 19th CENTURY

By JERZY TOKAR

Polish philatelic literature is quite poor in the area of Czarist Russia mail in Polish lands particularly after 1870. Our predecessors who were great philatelists did not concern themselves widely with this area partly due to their ill will toward the partitioner and partly due to the fact, that it was familiar to them through direct observation. However Poles had to use as a matter of fact, the services of the post of the partitioner and thus occurred a gap in the continuum of postal history in this part of the country. I would like to encourage the experts on this subject to fill this gap and to undertake complex investigations concerning the organization of the Russian post, its network and its postal paraphernalia from 1870 until the end of the activities of the czarist post in Poland during World War I.

I am treating the subject of Russian numeral postmarks in Polish lands as an addition to the Philatelic Encyclopedia (Polish Philatelic Society, Wydawnictwo Naukowe, PWN, Warsaw, 1993 (in Polish)). It contains the listings of Polish and Prussian numeral postmarks but the Russian numeral postmarks are not there. This subject concerns two question areas:

1. Russian numeral cancels in the Russian Partition.

Soon after the first Russian stamps were issued (1-13 January, 1858) (Translators note: two dates are given due to differences in the Russian and Gregorian calendars),



the Russian post started to introduce the dotted numeral postmarks. For Petersburg: No. 1. Moscow: No. 2 (postal announcement of the postal department No. 138 of February 26—March 10, 1858).

For areal (gubernial) and district post offices border town post offices, and railroad post offices by the order #147 by the general postal administration of May 31—June 12, 1858.

For the postal departments and postal stations with the order by the chief postal directorate of August 17—29, 1858.

The two orders quoted above contained samples of patterns of the dotted postmarks which differed for the six categories of post offices and for their assigned numbers in this first attempt.

To the Russian partition which was limited in the east to lands located within Poland's borders between the two World Wars were assigned numeral postmarks with patterns 1 through 6:



Pattern 1



Pattern 2

Pattern #1: round, for areal (gubernial) and district post offices: 5—Wilno, 11—Grodno.

Pattern 2: hexagonal, for Petersburg railroad train post offices numbers 12, 14, 15, 16 to Wier-

bołów and to Warsaw. These are the best known because they occur on the Poland #1 stamp. The specialized catalog of stamps of Polish Lands 1990 lists also the postmark #11.



Pattern 3

Pattern 3: oval, for border post offices:

- 1—Brześć Litewski
- 2—Włodzimierz Wołyński
- 7—Radziwiłłów (Wołyń)



Pattern 4

Pattern 4: rectangular, for county post offices:

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| 36—Wilejka | 109—Słonim |
| 37—Dzisna | 110—Sokółka |
| 38—Lida | 126—Dubno |
| 39—Oszmiana | 128—Krzemieniec |
| 40—Święciany | 129—Kowel |
| 41—Troki | 130—Łuck |
| 104—Białystok | 132—Ostróg |
| 105—Bielsk | 134—Równe |
| (Podlaski) 250—Nieśwież | |
| 106—Wołkowysk | 251—Nowogródek |
| 107—Kobryń | 252—Pińsk |
| 108—Prużana | 612—Korzec, from Jan.24.1861 |



Pattern 5

Pattern 5: rhombus with cut off tops, for the postal districts:

- 3—Wołodeczno
- 4—Różana
- 5—Druskieniki
- 6—Zelwa

Pattern #6: triangle with cut off corners, for postal stations:



Pattern 6

- 22—Wysokie Litewskie
- 23—Woronów
- 24—Dołhinów
- 25—Dokszyce
- 26—Zaborze (Zaborje)
- 27—Radoszkowice
- 28—Soleczniki
- 29—Smorgonie
- 30—Szczuczyn (near Lida)
- 70—Rogoźno
- 71—Uściług, from 19.XII.1858
- 94—Bereza Kartuska
- 95—Wasilków
- 96—Drohiczyn
- 97—Zapole
- 98—Zdzięcioł
- 99—Kleszczewo
- 100—Kuznica until IX.1863 later Antopol
- 101—Miłowidy
- 102—Czemeły
- 103—Janów
- 115—Hulcza until 19.XII.1858
- 116—Datyn until 21.III.1860
- 119—Klewarń
- 120—Kołki
- 121—Korzec until 24.I.1861
- 126—Młynów
- 127—Niesuchojeże until 21.III.1860
- 129—Ratno until 21.III.1860
- 131—Rogoźno
- 132—Rożyszcze
- 134—Tarczyn
- 136—Uściług until 19.XII.1858
- 212—Horodyszcze
- 220—Łyszczy
- 221—Lubiąż
- 222—Mir
- 224—Kleck
- 225—Nowy Świerżeń
- 227—Siniawka

232—Czerwiszcze (at Lubieszowa)
672—Ołyka since 1861, later
Poczajów from 3.XI.1862

The numbers quoted above are based on official records of the Russian mail and were recorded by Rachmanow in 1936 (without the postmark #11) (reference 1). However the official listing ended at No. 847 while in the 1870's there were according to some sources over 1700 postal stations in all of Russia. Lists of postal stations with numbers higher than 847 are unknown therefore their inventory can only be made on the basis of preserved mail. This is not an easy task because such mail is rare and high numbers in the postmarks are usually difficult to decipher which may cause erroneous

determinations.

Of the high numbers in the Russian Partition currently only two cancellations of the pattern 6 are known. They were assigned in the late 1870's to postal stations in the Wilno area:

1330—Landwarów (Landwarowo)

1444—Głębokie (Glubokoje).

II. Russian numeral cancellations in the Kingdom of Poland.

To the majority of collectors their use is virtually unknown. They are not mentioned in "Polskie Znaki Pocztowe" in both editions: 1935 and 1960. They are not mentioned in the specialized philatelic catalogs of Polish Lands or in the works by W. Polanski and M. A. Bojanowicz. Only W. Rachmanow



FIGURE 1.

Russian dots cancellation with unreadable number on the stamp Russia, Michel #14 on a letter from Opole at Lublin to Warsaw (a part of the cover with the second 5 kop. stamp is missing). It was mailed on February 19, 1871. Such an early use of the Russian cancellation suggests that Polish numeral postmarks could be used by postal stations only until 1870. The mailing postmark of the postal station is on the front. On the reverse is the arrival postmark of Warsaw: red, Russian, one ring 20 mm diameter with the three lines date: "20 / FEW. / 1871."



FIGURE 2.

Russian cancellation "1019" on the Russian stamp Michel #15 mailed December 11, 1874 on a letter from Blaszkki to Kempno in the Poznań district in the German partition. On the reverse are: the mailing postmark of the postal station, this transmit postmark from Kalisz of December 12, 1874, and the arrival postmark of Kempno, No. 2, December 25 (without the year). On the address side are German postmarks "Aus Polen" (the postmark indicating the country of origin on letters from abroad) and "Franco" (paid in full at mailing).

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 496-11)

20th Anniversary of the Pontificate of Pope John Paul II 1978-1998

By ARKADIUSZ WALINSKI

(Continued from previous issue)



Zory - October 16, 1998

Commemorative postmark. Pope John Paul II in mitre with pastoral cross. — XX ROCZNICA PONTYFIKATU PAPIEŻA / JANA PAWŁA II / WYSTAWA / ZORY 1 ZORY 1 + 16.10.1998.

(20th anniv. of the Pontificate of Pope John Paul II. Phil. Exhibition.

Gostyn Poznański - October 16, 1998

Commemorative postmark. Pope John Paul II in mitre with pastoral cross in blessing gesture. — WYSTAWA - 20 ROCZNICA PONTYFIKATU PAPIEŻA JANA PAWŁA II / 16.10.1998 / GOSTYŃ POZNANSKI / (Phil. Exhibition - 20th anniv. of the Pontificate of Pope John Paul II.

Kędzierzyn-Koźle - October 16, 1998

Commemorative postmark. Rosary and world globe. XX ROCZ. PONTYFIKATU PAPIEŻA JANA PAWŁA II / 16.10.1998. / Kędzierzyn-Koźle 1 / (20th anniv. of the Pontificate of Pope John Paul II.

Namysłów - October 16, 1998.

Commemorative postmark.
Pope John Paul II.
20 LAT PONTYFIKATU
PAPIEŻA JANA PAWŁA II /
WYSTAWA / NAMYSŁÓW
16.10.1998. /
(20 years of the pontificate of
Pope John Paul II).



Wadowice - October 16, 1998.

Commemorative postmark. Coat of arms of John Paul II. Museum of History building. — 20 ROCZNICA / PONTYFIKATU J. PAWŁA II / WYSTAWA FILATELISTYCZNA / MUZEUM HISTORYCZNE / WADOWICE 16.10.1998.

(20th anniv. of the Pontificate of Pope John Paul II. Phil. Exhibition in the Museum of History.

PONTYFIKATU JANA PAWŁA II



Gdańsk - October 22, 1998

Commemorative postmark. Pope John Paul II among children of various nations. 20 LAT PONTYFIKATU JANA PAWŁA II / WYSTAWA FILATELISTYCZNA / 22.10.1998 / Gdańsk 1 / 20 years of the pontificate of Pope John Paul II. Phil. Exhibition.



Rybnik - October 16, 1998

Commemorative postmark. Pope John Paul II in blessing gesture and his coat of arms. — XX ROCZNICA PONTYFIKATU PAPIEŻA JANA PAWŁA II / POCZTA SAMOLOTOWA / RYBNIK 1 + 16.10.1998. (20th anniv. of the Pontificate of Pope John Paul II). Plane post.

Rubber stamp applied on mail dispatched by a small plane from Rybnik to Kraków. — PRZEWIEZIONO POCZTA SOMOLOTOWA RYBNIK-KRAKOW. (Coats of arms of Rybnik and Kraków).

Chrzanów - October 16, 1998.

Commemorative postmark. Pope John Paul II and the statue of Our Lady of Fatima. — XX-LECIE PONTYFIKATU JANA PAWŁA II / POCZTA DYLIŻANSOWA / CHRZANÓW 1. 16.10.1998.

(20th Anniv. of the Pontificate of John Paul II. Stage coach mail).

Additional non-postal stamp applied on mail carried by stage coach. PRZEWIEZIONO "POCZTA DYLIŻANSOWA" / NA SZLAKU DEKANATU CHRZANOWSKIEGO / PO- WOZIE TYPU WIKTORIA / WOZNICA: FRYDERYK LATKA / 16.10.1998. (Carried by stage coach mail on the Chrzanów Deanery route Carriage: type Victoria. Coachman: Fryderyk Latka).



POSTAGE METER STAMPS WITH SLOGAN CANCELLATIONS

Ciechocinek - September 12, 1998:

Pope John Paul II in mitre with pastoral cross in blessing gesture. XX LAT / PONTYFIKATU / JANA PAWŁA II / WYSTAWA / GRUPY / CIECHOCINSKO- / WŁOCŁAWSKIEJ / KLUBU / "ŚWIĘTY GABRIEL" / CIECHOCINEK 1 / 98 09.12 / AG / (20 years of the pontificate of John Paul II. Exhibition of the Ciechocinek-Włocławek St. Gabriel Group).

XX LAT
PONTYFIKATU
JANA PAWŁA II

WYSTAWA
GRUPY
CIECHOCINSKO-
WŁOCŁAWSKIEJ
KLUBU
"ŚWIĘTY GABRIEL"

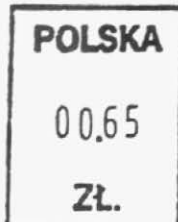


Łódź - October 21, 1998.

ŁODZ 58 / 21.10.98 / 14 --- Same type of postage meter stamp and slogan as used in Ciechocinek).

XX LAT
PONTYFIKATU
JANA PAWŁA II

WYSTAWA
GRUPY
CIECHOCINSKO-
WŁOCŁAWSKIEJ
KLUBU
"ŚWIĘTY GABRIEL"

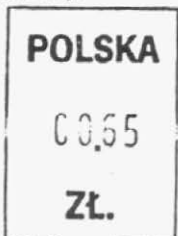


Łódź - October 16, 1998.

Pope John Paul II in mitre with pastoral cross in blessing gesture. XX ROCZNICA / PONTYFIKATU / PAPIEŻA JANA PAWŁA II / 16.10.1998.r. ŁODZ 58 / 16.10.98 / 14. (20th anniversary of the pontificate of Pope John Paul II).

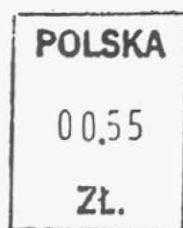
XX LAT
PONTYFIKATU
JANA PAWŁA II

WYSTAWA
GRUPY
CIECHOCINSKO-
WŁOCŁAWSKIEJ
KLUBU
"ŚWIĘTY GABRIEL"



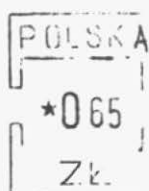
Włocławek - October 29, 1998.

87-800 WŁOCŁAWEK 1 / 29.10.98 / WL-52 / Same type of postage meter and slogan as used in Ciechocinek.



Kielce - October 16, 1998.

John Paul II with folded hands. — XX-lecie / PONTYFIKATU / JANA PAWŁA II / 1978 - 16.10. 1998 / KLS / 20th anniversary of the pontificate of John Paul II).



(TO BE CONTINUED)

mentioned them casually in 1936 (reference 1), and recently in a more thorough manner Z. Mikulski (reference 3). However nobody mentioned the fact that postal stations in the Kingdom of Poland which previously used Polish numeral cancellations also received Russian numeral cancellations. Rachmanow thought erroneously that only newly formed postal stations received them.

As is known, Polish numeral cancellations (four concentric rings) were introduced starting in April, 1858 on the basis of the order No. 5951 of March 15-17, 1858 issued by the Postal District of the Kingdom of Poland in Warsaw. They were used before the stamp Poland #1 was issued on January 1-13, 1860 and after its withdrawal on April 1-13, 1865 until about 1870-1872. After the withdrawal of Polish numeral postmarks, Russian mail assigned in Congress Poland, Russian numeral postmarks, of pattern #6 with high numbers. According to Z. Mikulski (reference 3) they were used 1871-1877. There is no information concerning corresponding orders.

As was mentioned above, the official indexing from #848 up is not known. Recently the Canadian Monthly "The Post Rider" (reference 4) listed the inventory of Russian postal station numbers deciphered to this date from 849 to 1663 but did not give the dates of their usage. This list refers also to places in the Kingdom of Poland but contains numerous errors and inaccuracies.

Some names are misstated to such a degree that it is difficult to see which place is meant. All postal stations in Congress Poland mentioned there, used Polish num-

eral cancellations when the Kingdom of Poland was independent. I am presenting separately the listing of currently determined Russian numeral cancels in the Kingdom of Poland with my own additions and corrections and give in brackets the numeral of the Polish cancellation which a postal station used earlier. This listing may contain some errors due to poor legibility of cancellations.

Concerning cancellations which were not deciphered, one can assume that all numbers from at least 993 to at least 1208 concern Congress Poland. Thus it is difficult to understand why, with considerable delay, Gończyc received the number 1290 and Główna — 1351, since both postal places existed earlier in the Kingdom of Poland. One should clarify that numbers 1208, 1290 -- 1351 and higher occur in different parts of Russia. This is the case because cancellations with high numbers (in our case higher than 848) were assigned as need arose chronologically regardless of location. The bunching of numbers assigned to the majority of postal stations in Congress Poland was the result of the replacement of Polish numeral cancels during the Russification of posts in the Kingdom of Poland.

The earliest use of a Russian cancellation in Congress Poland known to me is February 19, 1871 (photograph 1) which indicates that these cancellation devices were received by postal stations at the start of 1871 or slightly earlier (thus the bunching of numerals). Since Mikulski (reference 3) did show the latest Polish cancellation as being of Szczuczyn (near Gajew) dated January 30, 1872 one could judge, comparing these dates, that the transition from Po-

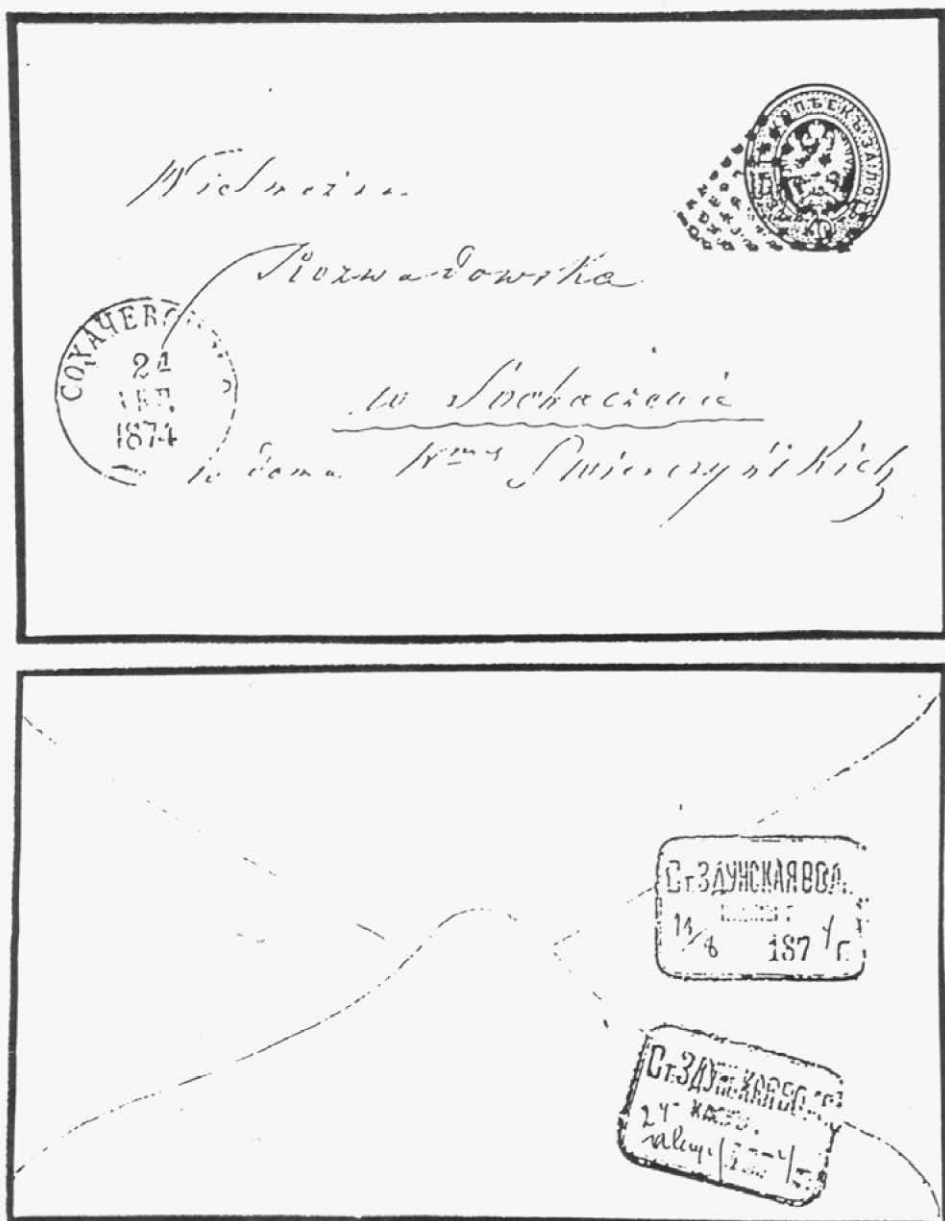


FIGURE 3.

Russian postal stationery of 1872 with the imprinted 10 kop. stamp Michel #U 16 (its dimensions 140 x 81 mm not noted in Michel) with the Russian postmark "1027" of Zduńska Wola, mailed August 23, 1874. On the reverse are Russian postmarks with "Zduńska Wola" in Russian. The arrival postmark of Sochaczew of August 24, 1874 is on the address side.

only at postal stations. It is also likely that Russian cancellations took approximately one year. However this cannot be done because Szczuczyn, judging from its one ring postmark typical for post offices was not a postal station thus did not receive a Russian numeral canceller. One should clarify that in the 1870's Russian post offices already did not use numeral cancellations and did cancel stamps with a normal postal datestamp. The numeral cancellers remained known that the Kingdom of Poland was annexed to the Russian postal system since 1871 as result of the loss of its autonomy in 1865 after the collapse of the January Uprising.

All letters with Russian numeral cancellations from Congress Poland are very rare, according to Z. Mikulski much rarer than letters with Poland #1.

Such letters are rare also from Russia. One can judge it from the fact that of the 815 postal stations with numbers 849 to 1663 only 10% are known with such cancellations.

In conclusion an appeal to owners of mail with readable Russian postmarks numbered 848 & higher from Congress Poland as well as from the Russian partition to send me copies. My address:

Jerzy Tokar

Al. Kościuszki 118, m. 35,
90-446, Łódź, Poland.

LITERATURE:

1. W. Rachmanow, Rosyjskie kasowniki numerowe na ziemiach polskich, Ikaros 1936, nr. 54/5, s. 85
2. W. Rachmanow, O wprowadzeniu kasowników numerowych w Królestwie Polskim, Ikaros 1938 nr. 80-81/7-8 s. 106.
3. Z. Mikulski, O cenach i unikatach walorów Królestwa Polskiego Filatelistyka 1997, nr. 2, s. 83
4. A. Artuchow, The Great Dot and Numeral Hunt, The Post-Rider No. 41, November 1997, s. 60.

List of Russian numeral cancels in the Kingdom of Poland determined so far. After the town's name is the "gubernia" followed by the number of the Polish cancellation used until about 1870. A question mark indicates doubt concerning the Russian numeral. In the case of number 1204 it is doubtful that a postal station existed in Suwałki. Being a gubernial capital it should have had a post office.

- 993 Brześć Kujawski, Warszawa ("243")
- 1004 Osiężyny, Warszawa ("245")
- 1005 Ostrowy, Warszawa ("310")
- 1006 (?) Pniewo, Warsz. ("304")
- 1011 Sanniki, Warsz. ("324")
- 1016 Ciechocinek, Warszawa ("240")
- 1017 Jabłonna, Warszawa ("2")
- 1018 (?) Bałdrzychów, Kalisz ("237")
- 1019 Błaszki, Kalisz ("193")
- 1021 Warta, Kalisz ("195")
- 1026 Dąbie, Kalisz ("229")
- 1027 Zduńska Wola, Kalisz ("197")
- 1030 Kleczew, Kalisz ("222")
- 1031 Kłodawa, Kalisz ("227")
- 1034 Ozorków, Kalisz ("236")
- 1041 Sompolno, Kalisz ("226")
- 1042 Turek, Kalisz ("224")
- 1043 Uniejów, Kalisz ("225")
- 1044 Ceków, Kalisz ("192")
- 1045 Szadek, Kalisz ("198")
- 1046 Aleksandrów Łęczycki (Łódzki), Piotrków ("270")
- 1051 Zawiercie, Piotrków ("172")
- 1052 Gorzkowice, Piotrk. ("189")
- 1053 Żarki, Piotrków ("167")
- 1058 Kłomnice, Piotrków ("161")
- 1060 Konstantynów (Łódzki) Piotrków ("342")
- 1067 Rokiciny, Piotrków ("183")
- 1071 Tomaszów Rawski (Mazowiecki), Piotrków ("187")
- 1078 (?) Złotorya (Złotoria), Łomża ("297")
- 1080 Zwoleń, Radom ("145")
- 1089 Klimontów, Radom ("306")

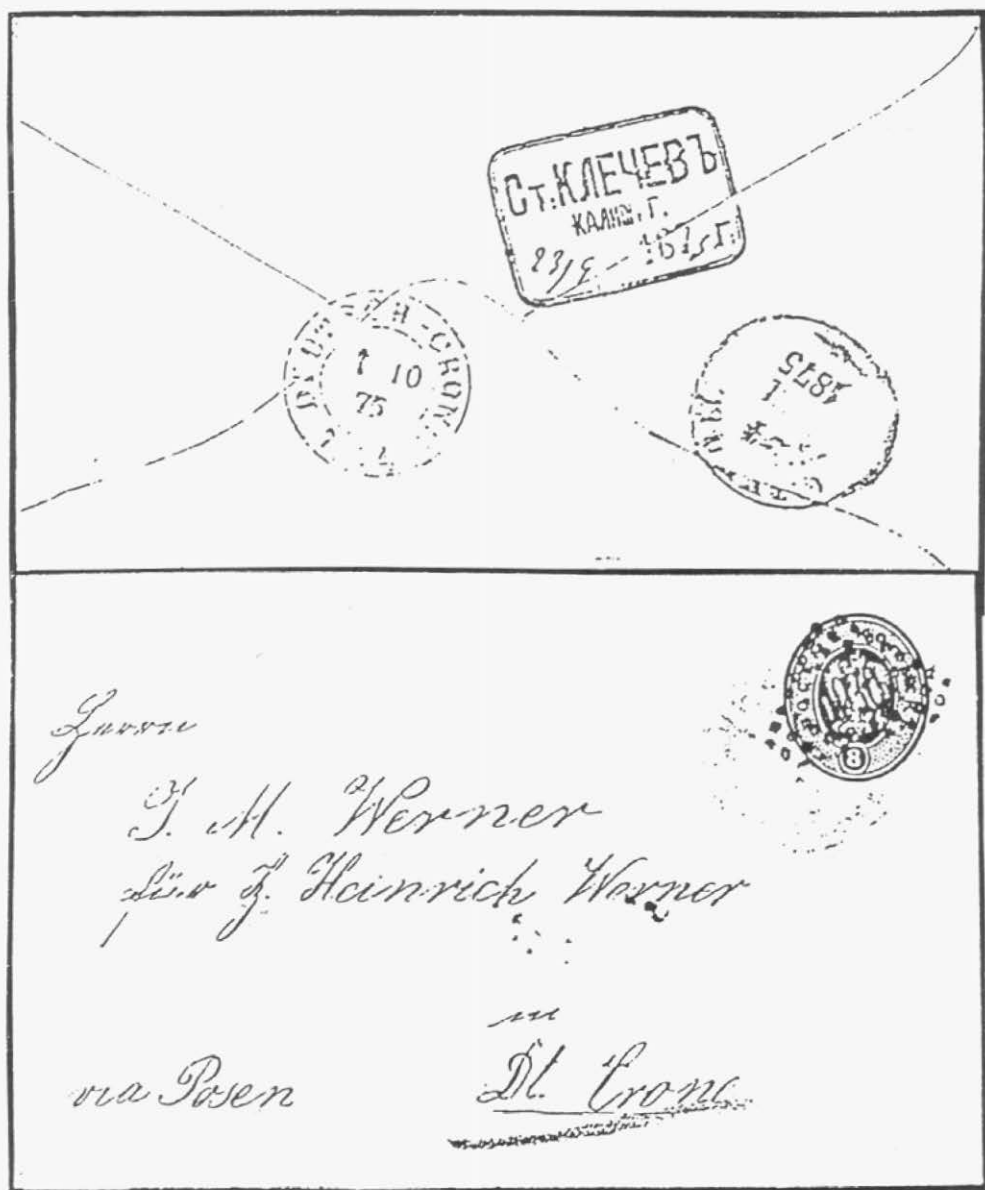


FIGURE 4.

Russian postal stationery of 1875 with the 8 kop. imprinted stamp, Michel #U 22 (its dimensions 142 x 81 mm are not noted in Michel) with the Russian "1030" of Kleczew on the stamp. On the reverse is the mailing postmark of Kleczew, of September 23, 1875, the transit postmark of the border post office in Slupc of September 24, 1875, and arrival postmark of Deutsch-Crone (Walcz) dated October 1, 1875.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1091 Przysucha, Radom ("153") | 1144 Szczeczeszyn, Lublin ("300") |
| 1097 Szydłowiec, Radom ("151") | 1180 Małkiń (Małkinia),
Warszawa ("316") |
| 1101 Wolbrom, Kielce ("133") | 1201 (?) Sejny, Suwałki ("30") |
| 1103 Działoszyce, Kielce ("274") | 1202 (?) Sereje, Suwałki ("32") |
| 1106 Koszyce, Kielce ("119") | 1203 (?) Sopoćkinie, Suwałki ("321") |
| 1109 Pilica, Kielce ("171") | 1204 (?) Suwałki, Suwałki ("28") |
| 1115 Chmielnik, Kielce ("122") | 1208 Wysokie Mazowieckie,
Łomża ("42") |
| 1116 Tomaszów (Lubelski),
Lublin ("100") | 1290 Gończyce, Siedlce ("67") |
| 1135 Opole (Lubelskie),
Lublin ("95") | 1351 Głowno, Piotrków ("212") |
| 1142 Frampol, Lublin ("285") | |

Translated by Stanley Kronenberg

BUILDING A GOLD AWARD WINNING COLLECTION OF POLAND'S 1921 CONSTITUTION ISSUES

By CHESTER SCHAFER



The three different designs of the seven values of the Constitution Issue.

When I first started collecting stamps, my field was the United States. This occurred in 1940, my first year of high school when I inherited the family collection passed down from my brothers. On my way to and from school, I would pass a small shop on North Western Ave. in Chicago where, eventually, I stopped and bought some U.S. material. My best purchase there was the White Plains sheet. Fred Anhalt, the old Bavarian who owned the shop, asked me my nationality. He then turned to his Poland stock book showing me the Sobieski at Vienna stamp, Wit Stwos, the Pulaski-Washington-Kosciuszko stamp of 1932 and Poland No. 1. He told me that Poland had the most colorful his-

tory of the countries of the world, better than that of Germany. "This is what you should be collecting," he said. Anhalt sold me on Poland and I've been collecting it ever since.

My specialty is Poland 1918-1939, the period "when Poland was really Poland" (Kiedy Polska była Polską). This period includes the Polish Constitution Issue released May 2, 1921 on the occasion of the birth of the new Polish Constitution, voted upon and accepted by the Polish Sejm. The set of seven stamps was typograph printed in sheets of 100, perf. 11 or 11½. The issue was in circulation for 15 months, being withdrawn June 13, 1922. (In the bulletin of the Polish Philatelic Soc-

ity of Great Britain, the author claims the perf. 11 stamps are worth 50% more.)

The most valuable stamp in this collection is the 4 mark carmine error, which according to RUCH was printed accidentally. The error is only known mint and never got into circulation. I spotted it in the stock book of Liberty Stamp Shop in downtown Chicago. The owner was not aware of it. I purchased the whole set, including the error, so as not to arouse suspicion, paying the regular price. Today the error catalogs \$200 in Scott's. I was then lucky to purchase a block of four from Roman Burkiewicz who had a stamp store in Chicago some forty years ago.

A famous Poland collector before my time was Vincent Domanski of Philadelphia, PA. When he passed on, Mr. Burkiewicz went to Philadelphia and bought his Poland collections. That's when I got most of my holdings of the Constitution issue.

When the Pol. Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs decided on this issue, they first held a national competition of the designs. From the original drawings submitted by famous artists, the ministry officials chose three drawings. These were then printed up as essays. Proof impressions were made in various colors. Those in my collection came from the Franklin D. Roosevelt collection sold by H. R.

Hermer & Co. in New York. I purchased them from Burkiewicz and from Mikulski of Switzerland.

Mr. Domanski's collection included blocks of four of plate varieties. I was able to get more blocks from J. Bieniecki of Granite City, IL. Most of the postally used covers came from V. Domanski's collection.

When Polonus honored the 200 anniversary of the May 3rd Constitution at POLPEX 91, I exhibited this collection. My efforts paid off as the judges awarded me a Gold Medal.

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