

THE CZECHO-SLOVAK SPECIALIST



OFFICIAL MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE
THE CZECHO-SLOVAK PHILATELIC SOCIETY OF NORTH AMERICA

Co. yright 1942. The Czecho-Slovak Philatelic Society of North America
Editor Frank Kovarik, 2502 So. Kedzie Ave., Chicago, Ill.

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EDITORIAL

I am well aware of the fact that the Specialist is the most important item which the society can offer to members and that the publication is of absolute necessity to all but especially to our out of town members.

For this reason the society has in the past seen to it that the Specialist is edited by such members who are well qualified for the job.

I believe to be fairly accurate when I state that our first editor, Mr. Raper, was a very capable man. Unfortunately private circumstances prevented him from holding his post for long.

His successor, Mr. Kreischer, made splendid use of his opportunities and his resignation, due to circumstances of war, was regretted by all but especially by those who had the pleasure of his personal acquaintance and those who collaborated with him in editing this magazine.

Today we have to announce that our present Editor, Mr. Horechny, is compelled to resign though he held the post only for a short time. Just as in Mr. Kreischer's case, he too, is forced to take the step due to being engaged in war production.

As his successor and our fourth editor, we introduce Mr. Frank Kovarik of Chicago. We have known Frank for a number of years, quite some time before our society came into being and we would like to tell you something about his qualifications. On the other hand we know that he does not seek publicity nor praise and we therefore will adhere to ethics. Nevertheless we can say this: Frank has specialized in the

stamps of Czechoslovakia since its first issue came out in 1918. It follows that he knows a deal about them. I am also definite about another thing and that is—in him we have found a man who will be on his post for quite some time to come.

J. W. Lowey

NEW MEMBERS

We extend a sincere welcome to:

#101—Carl J. Schroeder, 732 So. Fairview Ave., Appleton, Wis.

#102—Richardson L. Spofford, Morris Hall E 32, Harvard Business School, Soldiers Field Sta., Boston, Mass.

NEW CZECHOSLOVAKIA CATALOG

We have just received several copies of the 1942 catalogue which lists Czechoslovakia, Eastern Silesia, Siberia, Carpatho-Ukraine, Bohemia-Moravia and Slovakia and which has been compiled by Mr. Kessler. The Price for this handsome copy is \$1.00. Mr. Kessler is making the kind offer to send a copy free of charge to those members who can not afford to pay the price. Those who wish to take advantage of this generous offer will send their request to Mr. Arthur I. Kessler, 551 5th Avenue, New York, N. Y. Needless to mention that Mr. Kessler is an old member of our society and has through his full page advertisements over a period of months generously supported our organization.

SALES AND EXCHANGE DEPT.

Manager: Wolfgang Fritzsche
P.O.B. 175, Valley Stream, N. Y.

Circuits Nos. 8 and 9 have been re-tired recently from circulation. Sales were very satisfactory. Out of \$107.66 of No. 8 \$53.10 were realized and out of \$87.66 of circuit No. 9 \$45.97 were sold, showing a sales percentage of 49.3% and 52.4% respectively.

One of the circuit members resorted to a very cheap trick by taking from a book a very good copy of U. S., No. 327 (Louisiana Purchase 10c used) and replacing it with a poor specimen, this being a crumpled copy and one missing corner having been repaired.

It is the first time such a thing has happened. In order to prevent such occurrences I propose the creation of some sort of insurance fund. We could, for example, take from each book, one per cent in stamps for this purpose. I would hold these stamps and when someone is to be compensated for loss I would submit to him taken out copies so that he can select something to make up for his loss.

If no claims should be filed with me for a certain length of time the stamps taken out for the insurance fund would become property of the society and sold at one of our conventions for the benefit of our treasury.

What is your opinion about this plan? Members of the circuit are asked to send me a card and state their views, and if possible, make additional suggestions.

Wolfgang Fritzsche

Our treasurer, Mr. Greenawalt, who is an official of the U. S. Patent Office in Washington, has been transferred with his Department to Richmond, Va. His new address can be found in the membership list published in this issue.

With this issue members will find their cards for 1942 unless such were sent to them previously by the secretary.

Buy War Bonds & Stamps!

THE HRADCANY ISSUES

by Frank Kovarik

To the people of the Czechoslovak Republic, the word Hradcany means more than an implication that that is the seat of their government; it means liberty, equality and the chance to live their own lives in the pursuit of happiness, in adoring God in their own way and in exercising the prerogatives of a free and independent people. It is no wonder then that when Alfons Mucha was approached by a committee consisting of postal officials and philatelists of Prague just a few days before the bloodless revolution which ended the three hundred year domination of the Czechs and Moravians by the Hapsburgs and the almost one thousand year servitude of the Slovaks under the Magyars (Hungarians), that the renowned artist chose the Hradcany as the design for the first postage stamps of the country. The Hradcany consist of the National Palace and the Cathedral of St. Vitus and dominate the city of Prague. To fully exemplify the regained liberty of an oppressed people, the artist considered it proper to place a sun and its rays behind the chhrcn, but this symbolical description was not understood by some critics who asserted that astronomically this was incorrect and later drawings show the rays only.

Czechoslovakia proclaimed its independence on October 28th, 1918 when Mr. Mucha was not yet ready with his designs. He was forced to complete his work in a hurry and the design, according to his own statement, was finished over night and rushed to the Czech Graphic Union of Prague, a printing establishment which did creditable work of printing, but was not prepared to cope with an order such as this. It was imperative that stamps appear, stamps which can announce to the world a re-birth of a nation. The officials of the Unie (as the Czech Graphic Union is generally known) used zinc plates, a cheap and fast process of printing commonly known as book printing, and considering everything, performed a fair job. The speed, the process, the newness of the work by an establishment not outfitted for work such as this is the reason for so many plate and printing varieties which make a big

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field for the specialist. Therefore, though prepared by an artist of world reputation, the stamps do not present a pleasing effect and have not been studied outside the country of their origin by philatelists.

The first stamps to make their appearance were the 5h and the 10h values of the so called "first drawing", December 18th, 1918 and were followed shortly by other denominations. Because of the criticism directed at the stamps showing a rising sun west of St. Vitus spire, the design was redrawn and we have four separate drawings. These are not types as some call them, but actual changes of the entire design.

The first design consists of the vignette enclosed in a semi-circular frame with the legend "Posta" at top, "Cesko" at left and "Slovensko" at right in small capitals. On the lower values (3h to 40h) the lettering is in white on a colored background while the higher values (100 to 400h) the lettering is colored on a white background. In a rectangular box at the bottom of the stamps we find an oval enclosing the numerals of value without any marking of coinage, (which is "haleru" throughout the issue) flanked on the sides by doves and hearts. On all values we find the artist's name below the bottom frame line at left in small capitals "Mucha."

In the second drawing (as also in the third and fourth) the words "Cesko-Slovenska" was placed between the vignette and the rectangular box in large capitals. The word "Posta" was also in large capitals in the same place as on the first drawing. The vignette in this drawing has been changed somewhat; the bushes in the foreground are uncolored. The 1h and 50h, violet, were the only stamps of this drawing.

The third drawing, consisting of 60h, 80h, 300h and 1000h, had the bushes in the foreground colored. The criticized sun has been removed.

The fourth drawing, which took in the balance of the stamps, namely: 5h, 10h, 15h, 20h, 25h, 30h, 50h blue, 75h, 120h and 500h shows the most radical changes. Not only has the sun disappeared altogether, but the bushes have also been eliminated and the cupola of the church of St. Nicholas was brought forward and so made more prominent.

Scott recognized only two issues of Hradcany—the first drawing is known

as the 1918-1919 issue, the other three drawings as the 1919 issue. In a way they are right, only a specialist would look for the variations.

Up to the time the Hradcany stamps appeared, Austrian stamps were valid for postage in the ancient kingdom of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia and Hungarian stamps were valid in Slovakia. Unofficial overprints of these stamps of the dual monarchy were made by some stamp dealers and the government, not yet having postal adhesives of its own, accepted them for mailings but as soon as sufficient quantities of the Hradcany types were on hand, the use of these stamps was prohibited.

The most interesting covers of the new state are those showing Czechoslovak Post cancelations on Austrian and Hungarian stamps from October 28th, 1918 when the Republic was proclaimed up to February 28, 1919 when these stamps were proclaimed invalid. It is known however, that even after this date, Austrian stamps were used in offices which were not fully supplied with the new issue. Covers showing mixed franking, that is showing Austrian or Hungarian and Czechoslovakian stamps are most interesting.

Paper

The early printings of these stamps were on a rough, porous, brownish paper; later printings were on a thin white or thick white paper. Yellowish and grayish papers were used, thick and carton paper, ribbed paper (perhaps the scarcest) is known on the 3h, 5h, 10h, 20h, 25h and 200h of the first design and on the 500h and 1000h. Carton paper on the 5h and 10h of first design and on the 15h and 1000h.

Gum

In the first printings the gum used was made of a very poor quality, sour in taste, yellowish and brownish in color. This had a tendency to discolor the entire stamp. In the later printings the gum was of a much better quality, more evenly applied and of a light almost colorless appearance.

Colors

We know that during the war our country's stamps were printed with inks of very inferior quality, in fact, so poor was the ink that plates fairly

disappeared under them and we were forced to resort to offset stamps instead of engraved ones. It is no wonder that in a city like Prague even poor inks were scarce and we find ranges of shades which would put to shame our own 3 cent Stuart Washingtons. When the subject of color was brought up a few months ago a well known specialist said that it would be far better if we collected stamps instead of the color on stamps, yet, in spite of that, we find these colors most intriguing and in the case of greens, reds, blues and violets, we try to get as many pronounced shades as possible. In the 5h redrawn we find a light apple green, very similar to the 10h and going deeper until we reach a real grass green. The same is true of the 15h which ranges from a brick red to almost carmine red. The 60h goes from yellow to orange, while the 200h which should be ultramarine is found in almost every shade of blue. There is really only one definite color variety of the Hradcany issue and this appears on the 25h of the first drawing. It was originally decided to print this stamp in an ultramarine, but the shade did not please the authorities and so the color was changed to blue. The entire output of ultramarine was sold to members of the Czech Philatelists Club and were never sold at the post office. As these were used for postage and accepted as such they are included in every listing of Hradcany stamps. Care should be taken to get the ultramarine because some of the shades of blue almost reach an ultramarine appearance.

Plates, Plate Varieties and Other Varieties

The stamps of this issue were printed in sheets of 400—but not always was the same denomination used. In other words, while sometime 4 one-hundred subject plates of one denomination may have been printed at one operation we know definitely that at other times two different values and even types of stamps have been put on the press at the same time. It is here that we find the so called "gutter between stamps" variety, often improperly termed "Tete Beche". In the hurry of those early days the 400 subject sheets were sometimes guillotined only once instead of twice and sheets of two hundred were sent to post offices. Here collectors bought

them showing gutter between and these are today highly prized. Of some denominations only a few exist and these bring rather fabulous prices when they occasionally find themselves on the auction block. It is even possible that complete sheets of 400 came to some post office and we should not wonder if at some future date an estate will be offering for sale center gutter blocks. An article on these gutter stamps appeared serially in *Filatelisticka Revue* in 1938 from the pen of the editor, Mr. Frank Novotny. A translation of this article will appear in a future issue of the *Specialist*.

The plates used for the stamps of the Hradcany issues were not numbered but the plate makers placed markings upon them which show them to be different. The plate marking catalogue of Ekstein as well as the catalogue "Sberatel" (1940) give a very good description of these markings.

As has been stated before, the speed and incompetency of the printers has resulted in many plate and printing varieties. In our country we recognize only plate varieties, varieties which can be duplicated and pay little attention to varieties caused by improper inking or slipping of plates.

Creased papers are very numerous but collectors like them and every such variety found by collectors is prized highly. Just another proof that only collectors pay big money for the mistakes of others.

Perforation varieties—that is, varieties caused by slipshod perforation are also much sought by specialists in Europe.

We must also mention another variety which the specialists overlook—there go for in a big way—offsets. We know that when a sheet of stamps is printed it is picked up by the printers assistant and placed upon a table. The next printed sheet is placed over it and others follow in the same way. Sometime, especially if the air in the printing room is somewhat moist, the ink does not dry fast enough and the design either partly or entirely offsets itself on the back of the sheet placed over it. We have these varieties on the flat press stamps of our own country but we hardly notice them. In Europe collectors are really different.

(To be Continued)