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A Philatelic Tour of Prague

By Mrs. Jos. F. Sterba, Jr.

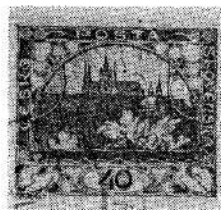


Fig. 1

This is the first of a series of articles that will take you upon a philatelic tour of Prague, the site of the 1978 International Philatelic Exhibition, Praga 78.

In the western part of Bohemia, not far from the town of Cheb, lies a stone marker designating that spot as the precise midpoint of the European continent. Therefore Czechoslovakia can justifiably claim that it lies in the heart of Europe. Prague is the capital of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, is the heart of the Republic and is referred to as "Maticka Mest," Mother of Cities.

For more than a thousand years Prague has stood on the banks of the Vltava River. Under Charles IV, Prague was the capital of the Holy Roman Empire. He created Gothic Prague, a town of slender spires and vaulted ceilings. Here he founded the first university in Central Europe (Charles University—1349) and invited young master builders to construct ramparts, build a new bridge (Charles Bridge) across the Vltava River and began construction of the great cathedral, St. Vitus. The lovely city of Prague became known as the city of over a 100 spires.

The streets of Prague are streets of history. Despite the violence that raged throughout Prague in succeeding centuries. Religious wars, peasant revolts as well as foreign influence, have all contributed to the city's beauty. Prague is now a showplace of the architecture of ten centuries: gothic churches, renaissance basilicas, baroque palaces, all with their own stories of victory and defeat. Down through the ages, poets, artists, royalty and the common man have praised the beauty of this city. If you cannot personally visit Prague and Praga-78, travel with us on this philatelic tour of Prague, one of the loveliest cities in the world.

An unforgettable picture of Prague is the panoramic view of the Charles Bridge, Hradcany Castle and the Cathedral of St. Vitus. This view has appeared on many of the stamps issued in Czechoslovakia and to stamp collectors of the world, it is known that Hradcany Castle and St. Vitus Cathedral are shown on the first stamp issued in the Republic in 1918, figure #1. When the famous Czech artist Alfons Mucha designed the first Hradcany stamp, he painted a beautiful sunrise as the background for the spires of St. Vitus Cathedral. Did he notice or realize that it is impossible to view the sun rising behind the spires of St. Vitus? The sun rises in the east and St. Vitus Cathedral is situated on the northern horizon of Prague. In spite of the fact that this misrepresentation occurred, the people were so elated and enthusiastic about the stamp, that it was accepted and proclaimed an enormous success. They viewed the rising sun as the political symbol of their new national freedom, so recently acquired. The sun represented the historical ideals and goals of Czech rulers from the past, while giving birth, freedom and independence to the Czechoslovak people.

In 1955, commemorating an International Stamp Exhibition held in Prague, a special souvenir sheet was issued, figure #2. Appearing around the coat-of-arms of the City of Prague, the engravers and designers portrayed the following historical and picturesque views in Prague. On the 30h stamp is the view of the rotunda of the Holy Cross (Sv. Krize) located in Stare Mesto (Old Town). It is one of three surviving Romanesque buildings, built at the turn of the 11th and 12th centuries. The bronze, Singing Fountain in the garden of the king's summer palace, Belvedere, is featured on the 60h stamp. Built in the Renaissance period, 1535-1560, the view from Belvedere is one of the loveliest spots to admire the beauty of Prague Castle. On the souvenir sheet, the 45h stamp pictures the Staromestka Moestecka Vez (Old Town Tower Bridge) erected in the second half of the 14th century. Built for defence and fortification, as well as beautification, the Charles Bridge is the actual entrance-way leading toward Prague Castle. In the foreground of the 1.60 Kes.

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Mrs. Joseph F. Sterba, Jr., Editor, 6624 Windsor Ave., Berwyn, Ill. 60402

Managing Editor Harlan W. Miller

Melvin F. Klozar, Manager of Collection of Advertising
913 Spring Road, Elmhurst, Ill. 62106

Dick Major, Sales Agent, For Sale Through the Specialist
P. O. Box 4074, Arlington, Va. 22204

President, H. Hahn, 2936 Rosemoor La., Fairfax, VA 22030

Vice Pres. and Circuit Mgr., W. Fritzsche, P. O. Box 8, Canandaigua, NY 14424

Secretary, E. Lisy, 87 Carmita Ave., Rutherford, NJ 07070

Treasurer, H. Samek, Jr., 138 Burlington Ave., Paterson, NJ 07502

Librarian, J. T. Carrigan, 12448 Over Ridge Rd., Potomac, MD 20854

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Fig. 2

stamp, the Charles Bridge is prominent. This bridge replaced the earlier Judith Bridge, which was destroyed by floods. Construction of the Charles Bridge was completed during the 15th century by the famous architect, Peter Parler of Gmund. The legend sets forth that in order to make the Charles Bridge strong and resistant to the mighty power of the Vltava River, King Charles IV decreed an order to all the cities, villages and citizens of the Bohemian Kingdom, to assist and contribute to the construction of the Charles Bridge. The village of Kocourkova sent wagon loads of eggs for use in the bridge construction. In order to prevent the eggs from breaking, during their long journey to Prague, the eggs were boiled and upon arrival in Prague were also utilized in the foundation of the bridge. The approximate length of the bridge is 1,706 feet long, from tower to tower and consists of 16 supporting arches. The bridge gained European fame when 30 statues were erected upon the bridge. An explanation and identification of the statues would be too lengthy for this article but for those members interested, the author will furnish a plan of the statues erected on the Charles Bridge. (See editor's note in the Editor's Gazette.)

The final stamp shown on the Praga-1955 souvenir sheet is the 75h stamp. Unless unforeseen future plans will effect present arrangements, some of the philatelic material to be displayed at Praga-78, will be located in the Exhibition Palace "U Hybernu" shown upon the stamp. "U Hybernu" is a well designed Empire building founded in the latter half of the 17th century by Irish Franciscan monks. During the 18th century, the church and the attached monastery was suppressed by Emperor Joseph and became an army barracks. Following World War II, the building was adapted to serve as an Exhibition Palace. "U Hybernu" is located diagonally across the square from the "Prasna Brana" the famous Powder Tower.

(to be continued)

Editor's Gazette

By Jane Sterba, 6624 Windsor Ave., Berwyn, Ill. 60402

The Closed Book.

During the summer holiday period, our long time member Arthur I. Kessler (membership #47) passed away. Three days later his beloved wife also passed away. The Society for Czechoslovak Philately, as well as the philatelic world, has lost two good friends. On behalf of the officers and members of our Society heartfelt sympathy is extended to their immediate family.

A chapter completed, A page turned,
A life well-lived, A rest well-earned.

Balpex-77.

As you have been informed in previous Specialists, our Society is holding our annual convention at Balpex-77, September 3, 4 and 5, at Baltimore's Hunt Valley Inn.

Dick Major, chairman of the show has planned a special commemorative cover to honor this convention. Appearing on the cachet envelope, under the Society's name, will be the Society motto—the Czech Lion—together with an enlarged picture cachet of the Czechoslovak 2Ks mourning stamp issued in 1937. A special rubber stamp cancellation, patterned after the cancellation used in Czechoslovakia at the time of Masaryk's death, also has been prepared for the show. This cancellation is in commemoration of the 40th Anniversary of the death of T. G. Masaryk. Further information about ordering this special souvenir envelope will appear in our next Specialist.

Editor's Note.

To obtain a xerox copy of the history and description of the statues erected on the Charles Bridge, it will be necessary for you to send the editor a self addressed, stamped envelope.

K-Line.

George Kobyłka, our member and long time Specialist subscriber has completed printing of K-Line pages—Czechoslovakia, 1974-1976. The pages are printed in his usual artistic and informative style. Those members using these pages for their stamp collection, can order directly from K-Line. See advertisement for address.

Announcement.

Due to the lengthy special supplement, "Stamps with a Portrait of T. G. Masaryk," enclosed with this September Specialist, it has been necessary that the column "From the President's Stock Book" be omitted and your Editor's Gazette condensed into a very brief form of special announcements. Looking forward to seeing many of you at Balpex-77.

ATTENTION! SALES CIRCUIT RECIPIENTS

In order to be able to mail our circuits as Insured 3rd Class mail, we have to obey the rules as laid down by the post office department.

From now on, no longer WRITE in the spaces from which you take stamps, instead, use a rubber stamp of some sort, if possible with a number or some design. Of course when you send me your report sheet you have to indicate on it what type of rubber stamp has been used by you.

From now on make NO entries on the backs of the books but be sure to send me your report sheet PROPERLY filled out and mail it to me at the same time you mail the circuit to the next on the list.

We urgently need books with good Czech material. Many have ordered and received blank books but have not as yet filled them. Now is the time, summer is over, and its humidity and vacations are behind us.

If you have postal stationery for sale, just send these items to me loose, not in a book, write the sales price for each item on its right lower corner in pencil.

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	Minimum bid:
1. 2 stampless covers (CZ territory) -----	9.00
2. 41 cards and covers (CZ towns) before 1918 -----	10.00
3. Austrian stamps with cancellations of CZ towns on album pages, about 155 -----	20.00
4. Similar lot in envelope, all CZ cancels on Austria, 98 diff. stamps -----	15.00
5. Scout stamps * -----	8.00
6. Same used -----	8.00
7. Provisorni Vlada, set up to 1K (15 values) -----	14.00
8. Same, II. set -----	14.00
9. Same, 3 values on piece -----	10.00
10. Budejovice, 21 values used -----	21.00
11. Levec, 3 values on cover -----	4.00
12. HRADCANY, 3h complete sheet of 100 * -----	6.00
13. Same USED -----	7.00
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16. 10h, 20h, 30h IMPERF all signed -----	55.00
17. 10h pink paper block, imperf. -----	5.00
18. Set up to 1000h * -----	5.00
19. 2000 all used, interesting lot -----	20.00
20. Another lot of 800 -----	8.00
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22. 22 waste prints, some perf. -----	6.00
23. 15 used plate varieties -----	6.00
24. Ab. 500 stamps all on pieces with SPECIAL cancellations, NOT all different -----	15.00
25. Cz collection on album pages plus some cards and covers -----	45.00
26. Box with all kinds of sheets, part sheets, duplicates, covers, and cards, well worth \$40 -----	40.00
27. Posta 1919, long set of 57 mostly different some *, some used -----	25.00
28. Scott #B19, vf copy (\$30) -----	10.00
29. 4K dark olive, Scott \$30 -----	10.00
30. Porto 5K blue, vf, Scott \$25 -----	8.00
31. Porto provisorie Sc. B58, 1 heller (\$15) -----	5.00
32. Maria Theresia, vf, Scott B59 (\$80) -----	38.00
33. Scott B60, blue, "Franta" (\$75) -----	30.00
34. Orange "Franta" -----	30.00
35. 3 fil and 60 f TURUL, Scott 50 -----	25.00
36. Zita, 50 fil (Scott \$30) -----	12.00
All these stamps are genuine and signed	
37. Legionarske 1919 compl. set on cover (reg) -----	2.00
38. Some better grade perf. -----	10.00
39. 75 heller 11½:13¼ -----	6.00
40. 100h block with plate number -----	5.00
41. Mixed lot of about 100 also blocks -----	10.00
42. MASARYK issues: 1920 compl. * -----	5.00

43. Same, used -----	1.00
44. 1925 compl., 7 values * -----	6.00
45. 1.200h essay in red imperf. -----	45.00
46. Congress, vf * -----	25.00
47. Same USED -----	25.00
48. SLET compl. vf * -----	22.00
49. Same used -----	22.00
50. Vertical watermark compl. 1K to 5K used -----	10.00
51. Kde Domov Muj, carton paper on pieces, used -----	15.00
52. Same * -----	15.00
53. Masaryk 1930 with TOP coupons * -----	6.00
54. Same with bottom coupons * -----	6.00
55. Agriculture, compl. set 100 to 600 * -----	8.00
56. Same IMPERF * -----	25.00
57. Dove and Rep. compl. set tete beche * -----	45.00
58. 8 values dove and rep. IMPERF -----	30.00
59. 60h Stefanik blue * -----	4.00
60. Same block of four vf * -----	15.00
61. 16 cards (Benes) postal Stat. * all diff. -----	5.00
62. 100 Praga blocks all mint (Scott \$250) -----	45.00
63. 100 Masaryk blocks (Scott \$350) -----	68.00
64. 100 Independence blocks (Scott \$300) -----	58.00
65. AIRMAILS Scott C1/3 comp. vf (\$57) -----	20.00
66. Scott C4/6 vf (\$90) -----	35.00
67. Scott C7/9 (\$11) -----	4.00
68. Scott C10/18 (\$13) -----	3.00
69. Scott C19/27 (\$11) -----	3.00
70. SIBIR Scott 1/3 perf. 11½ * -----	20.00
71. Same imperf * vf -----	25.00
71. Same imperf * vf -----	25.00
72. 1/3 perf 13¾ -----	3.00
73. Scott 4/5 both vf -----	4.00
74. Scott 6/14 (\$180) -----	75.00
75. Postcard in brown, scarce -----	12.00
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77. PORTO compl. set J1/14 vf (Scott \$40) -----	10.00
78. BOH Moravia, first set compl. 1/19 * -----	12.00
79. Same used -----	12.00
80. Compl. country on album pages * -----	23.00
81. Compl. country in envelope, used -----	23.00
82. Leaves in gutter pairs (8) -----	5.00
83. Porto compl in GUTTERS -----	12.00
84. 1939/40 NY Worlds Fair. Bratislava sheet -----	2.00
85. 1939/40 NY Worlds Fair. Praga sheet -----	2.00
86. Nearly compl. the entire set of 41 sheets, some used, very scarce .	55.00

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