

# The First Russian Postage Stamps in the State Collection of the Postage Notes of Russian Federation

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The 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first postage stamp was celebrated in Russia in 2007. Ministry of Information Technologies, Federal Communication Agency, "Post of Russia", "Stamps producing company", "A.S.Popov Central Museum of Communications" and St. Petersburg Government were celebrating this event by opening of the huge world stamps exhibition "St.Petersburg-2007".

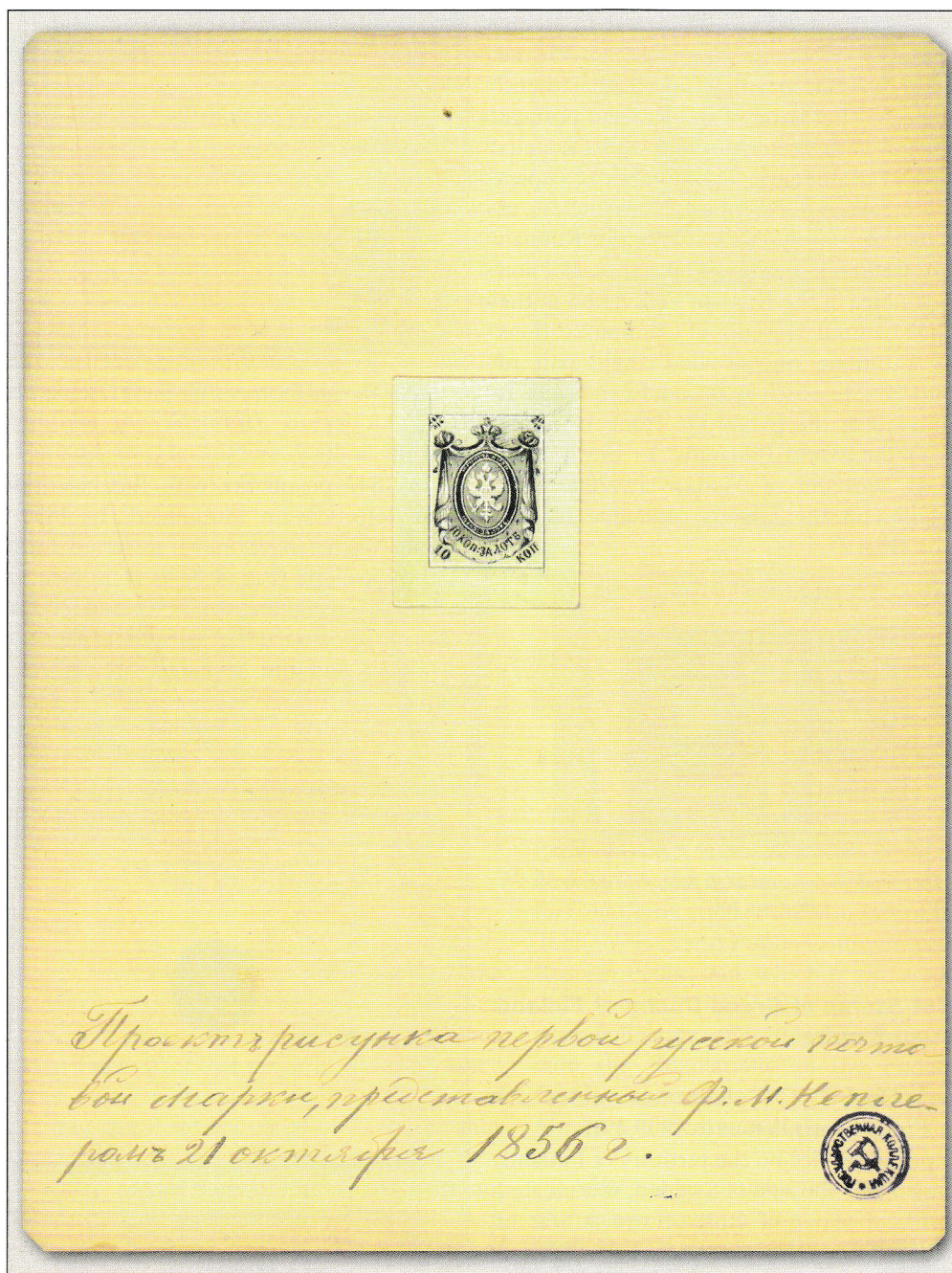
Now a time of the next series of stamp's anniversaries is coming. Grand Duchy of Finland was part of Russian Empire since 1809 till 1917. And the 155-years anniversary of the first Finnish stamp, which is coming in 2011, also connected with the Russian post history.

## **The First Russian Stamp**

In 1851 General Vladimir Adlerberg, the chief of the Post Department, seconded Alexey Charukovskiy, an official of the Department, abroad to study the postage business. During that trip Alexey learned many new and interesting things. In England he visited the printing house of "Perkins, Bacon and Pitch", where postage stamps "Penny Black" were printed, and very carefully examined the entire production process. Charukovskiy visited a printing house in Munich, where the first German postage stamp, which

subsequently was called the "Black One" had been printed in 1849. He also visited a printing house in Leipzig, where a common postage stamp later called the "Saxon Three" was being printed. Charukovskiy learned the postage regulations "About Introduction of Postage Stamps and Procedure for Their Use" in Prussia. In France he closely observed the work of mail van workers. Thus, in London, Munich and Leipzig A.P. Charukovskiy learned the technology of postage stamps issue at a time, when the printing houses printed common postage stamps, such as "Penny Black", the "Black One", and the "Saxon Three" that subsequently became legendary.

Back in St.Petersburg with a great store of impressions, knowledge and information on postage stamps issue, Charukovskiy wrote a note "About the introduction of stamps in Russia". However, the Crimean War that started in Russia in 1853 postponed consideration of his proposals. Only at the end of 1855 was it suggested he resume his work on stamp design. Several versions of the first Russian stamp design were made by specialists of the Expedition for Public Papers Preparation (ESPP). Of them, the version of senior engraver Frantz Kepler was selected, which became the first postage stamp of Russia (Fig. 1).



*Fig. 1: The version of senior engraver Frantz Kepler*

Originals of those designs are presented in the collection of the A.S. Popov Central Museum of Communications and also in private collections acquired from the collection of O.A. Fabergé, which was exhibited at the philatelic exhibition "Finland-88". However, one should not think that appearance of the postage stamp in Russia was a smooth process. It took the government considerable time to solve the problems of issue, accept the form, design and color, and determine a publishing house for printing stamps. Only

on December 10, 1857 the final circular of the Post Department "About Introduction of Postage Stamps for Common Use" was issued, based on which postage stamps were brought into circulation from January 1, 1858 in European part of Russia, and from March 1, 1858 in the Caucasus, Transcaucasus and Siberia. The Annex to the circular contained rules for the sale, storage and use of stamps. Thus, the process of the Russian postage stamp issue took almost seven years. However, Russia faced the difficulties that

the specialists of the Expedition had foreseen: the perforation machine purchased in Vienna arrived with great delay and required adjustment. Therefore, the first issue of the Russian postage stamp No. 1 with nominal value of 10 kopeks per 1 lot had no indents. The number of copies was quite big – 3 million copies. Nevertheless, at present one can rarely come across the Russian stamp No.1 without indents. The state collection of postage notes of the Russian Federation in the A.S. Popov Central Museum of Communications contains a unique unconcealed angle pair of the stamp No. 1, which is in ideal condition. It was exhibited at the exhibition “One Hundred Rarities of the World Philately” in the Stamps and Coins Museum of Monaco in 2000, and was included in the famous catalogue of that exhibition (Fig. 2).

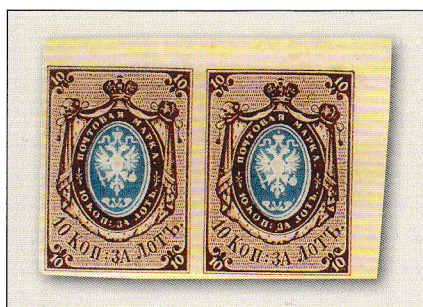


Fig. 2: The unique unconcealed angle pair of the stamp No. 1 “Russian pair”

### The First Stamp of Grand Duchy of Finland of Russian Empire

Grand Duchy of Finland was under the Russian Empire Jurisdiction in 1809-1917.

The postal service on the territory of Finland, which was under the rule of Sweden, was created in 1638. As a result of Russo-Swedish war of 1808 – 1809 Finland became part of the Russian Empire as a Grand Duchy of Finland. In 1812 postal system of Finland was reorganized according to the Russian pattern. Concurrently with that new postmarks with Russian inscription were introduced. Since January 1, 1845 stamped envelopes (“kouverts”) with Russian inscriptions were introduced on the Territory of Grand Duchy of Finland, which were first envelopes on the territory of the Russian Empire. A postmark, featuring the coat-of-arms of the country and the indication of the face value was placed in the left lower corner, at the address side of the envelope (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3: Stamped Envelope of the Grand Duchy of Finland (1845-1850)

In 1847 postmarks with the inscriptions in Latin letters were introduced. In 1850 stamp picture was changed and transferred to the flag of the envelope (Fig. 4 & 5). The face value of indicated envelopes was 5, 10 and 20 kopecks. There are varieties – different paper of the envelopes and the so-called “pearls” in stamp picture.



Fig. 4 & 5: Second Issue of the Stamped Envelope of the Grand Duchy of Finland (1850)

In 2011 there will be some kind of celebration of the 155-years date for the first Finnish stamp. On February 12, 1856 the Grand Duchy of Finland was allowed to issue postage stamps both for internal and for international correspondence. The first series of stamps was issued already on March 3. In this case the stamp picture and the printed methods were retained, which were characteristic of stamped envelopes (Fig. 6). The matrixes were manufactured by K. Mellgroem. Stamps were printed on paper of various colours (white, yellow-white, bluish-white) using the method of typographic printing. Stamps were printed by the Securities Bureau of Treasury of Finland in Helsingfors (called in Finnish *Setelipaino Sedeltryckeriet*).

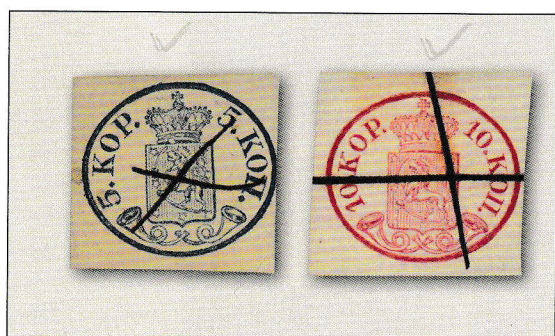


Fig. 6: Postage Stamp of Finland (1856, 5 and 10 kopecks)

Each movement of the press yielded the print of one stamp only. They were printed on thin strips of paper from the left to the right, ten prints in a row; after that the strip was overturned and ten prints more were made in the second row. Thus, the sheet consisted of 20 copies only, which formed 10 tête-bêches. After that glue was applied to the sheets. The sheets were not perforated. The first print run, the face value of which was 5 kopecks, was only 70 thousand of items, and therefore it is a great philatelic rarity. The stamps were first canceled with postmarks, since 1857, with postmarks and pen or with pen only (Fig. 7 & 8).

The stamps were withdrawn from circulation on February 1, 1860. There are no print runs of first Finnish postage stamps, manufactured in 1892 via lithographic printing. The stamp picture of first 5-kopeck stamp of Finland was used for the design of special postmark, which was applied on July, 7-9, 1955 during the congress of Philatelists of northern countries in Stockholm.



Fig. 7: Letter cancelled in 1858, Finland

Fig. 8: Letter cancelled in 1859, Finland

#### State collection of the Russian Federation

All images illustrated of this text are kept in the State collection of postage notes of the Russian Federation and is formed by the Federal Agency for Communication of the Ministry of Information Technologies and Public Communications of the Russian Federation, which is also responsible for their issue and distribution. The custodian of the state collection of postage notes in accordance with the Regulations on the Federal Agency for Communications is the A.S. Popov Central Museum of Communications.

After amalgamation of the Post and Telegraph Departments into a single agency in 1884 - the Main Department for Post and Telegraph Offices within the Ministry of Internal Affairs - the post collections migrated to the Telegraph Museum in St. Petersburg, where a post department was opened. The year 1884 is also considered to be the year of establishment of the state collection of postage notes of Russia, which at present numbers nearly 8 million stock units. At present, the employees of the Museum make an electronic catalogue of the museum's stocks, including those of postage notes. The catalogue provides opportunities for research work with collections, and provides convenient recording and search mechanisms.

**The Museum  
(Fig. 9, 10 & 11)**

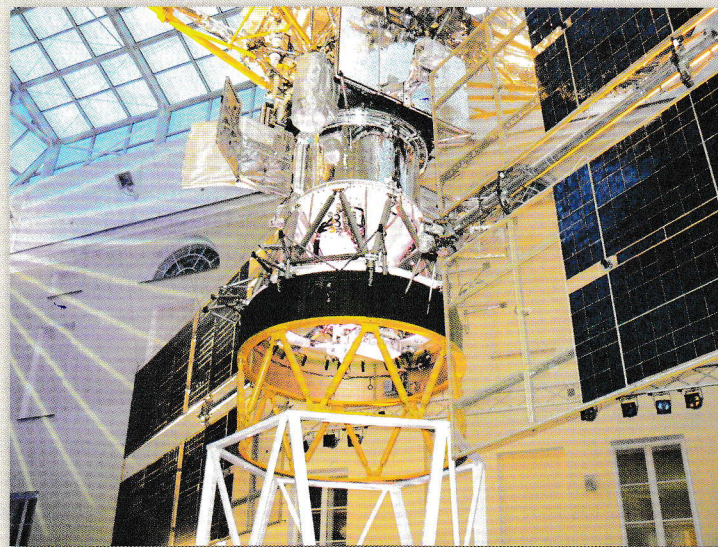
The A.S. Popov Central Museum of Communications founded in 1872 is a unique place, where rare samples of communication equipment and latest achievements in telecommunications, as well as the most valuable philatelic materials and art-innovations of mail-artists are accumulated. Collections of the Central Museum of Communications are national property of Russia. They are included in the State Catalogue of the Museum Stocks of the Russian Federation. The revival of the Museum began in 2000 on the initiative of the Ministry

of the Russian Federation for Communication and Informatization. In December 2003 the A.S. Popov Central Museum of Communications opened its doors for visitors after a thirty-year break and keep it working till now.

The Museum aims at enlargement of the historic collection of postage notes with the exhibits, which originally have not been included in the collection, i.e. by means of filling free spaces from other collections. The Museum plans to create a system of classes and activities with children on the issues of collecting.



*Fig. 9: The façade of the A.S. Popov Central Museum of Communications*



*Fig. 10: Atrium "Museum's services"*



*Fig. 11: Atrium "Evolution of communication services"*

### Storage and Exhibiting

Since 2003 the "Treasury of Russian Postage Notes" (Fig. 12 & 13) has been opened for free access, where 1,300 historic paper-based relics are presented. One can get acquainted with the rarities presented in the Treasury with the help of specialists of the research department upon preliminary orders for small groups of visitors. Equipment for exhibiting and storage represents the best world-level units manufactured in Germany. Special showcases allow the museum to ensure the required storage conditions for the collection, and extend the exhibition space. Specialists have an opportunity to get acquainted with the Museum's collection upon preliminary request with payment for the works at the going rates.

Basic stock storages are located in the main building of the Museum and equipped with modern equipment in accordance with the requirements for the storage of historic paper-based relics.



*Fig. 12 & 13: The Treasury of Russian Philately.*

At present, a general collection of postage notes has been presented in cassettes in chronological order “from the first stamp to the most recent issues” in the general display of the “History of Post” section within the permanent exposition of the Museum (Fig. 14). The equipment was manufactured in St. Petersburg and meets the modern requirements for storage and exhibition conditions; it protects documents from daylight and ensures necessary humidity.

To ensure greater interest of the visitors, interactive methods, multimedia means and operational models are used at the permanent “History of Post” exposition.

### Visitors

Visiting the Treasury is an extraordinary event for every guest of our Museum, comparable in terms of emotions only with a visit to the Golden Treasury of the State Hermitage (Fig. 15). Skilled specialists of the Museum’s postage notes research department host tours on topics concerning the postal circulation of mail in Russia including: the history of the first Russian postage stamp; rarities; Russian postage notes; unissued postage stamps; regional post “Zemstvo”; charity

letters with announcements of the authority of the Empress Maria Fyodorovna; the history of creation of the postage stamp anniversary series dedicated to the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Romanov’s Home; the history of creation of branded products of the Russian Empire; and the creation of postage stamps in Soviet Russia. The subjects of excursions envisage: a review of museum items of the Treasury with museum staff and art criticism bias for students of culture, history and design; a review of museum items of the Treasury for museum workers with demonstration of methods of display and technologies of open storage of postage notes. Visitors of this exhibition are, primarily, collectors of postage notes, including children; publishers and post administration of various countries; dealers and auctioneers; historians and art critics; and researchers. The Treasury is of interest for designers and architects in terms of Hi-Tech design with the use of new exhibition and storage opportunities, as well as students of higher educational establishments for arts, who design stamps and deal with mail design in the process of their studies.

Moreover, combination of custodian and exhibition functions is of permanent interest for representatives of the museum community. You are welcome!



*Fig. 14: General collection of Russian stamps in the open cassette equipment.*



Fig. 15: Visitors of the A.S. Popov Central Museum of Communications

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## RÉSUMÉ - SUMMARY

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L'auteur, directrice du musée des Communications de St. Pétersbourg, analyse la genèse des premiers timbres russes et finlandais, et termine son article par une description enthousiaste de son musée, qui peut servir d'exemple à de nombreux musées postaux européens.

The author, who is director of the Museum of Communications in St. Petersburg, analyses the origins of the first Russian and Finnish stamps, and concludes her article with an enthusiastic description of her museum, which could set an example for many European postal museums.