

Synopsis: Estonia Stamp Centenary Commemorative 1940

Collecting Challenges

Although the printings only number four for each value, they are challenging to find and identify. Imprint blocks with printing dates and quantities are only found on the first and second printings and they are scarce with only a few blocks available per year. Blocks without imprints are equally difficult to find with the challenge being to differentiate between the third and fourth printings.

Finding commercially used covers in good condition from this period has been difficult. Relatively little commercial mail was produced during this period due to reduced commercial activity from the war and collectivization of private enterprises, and little has survived.

Scarcity of Postal History Material

Most commercial activity occurred in Tallinn, the capital of Estonia. There was little commercial activity outside the capital of each province with most of the rural population engaging in farming. In the discussions of postal history below, I have used the rankings of *common*, *uncommon*, *rare* and *very rare* to denote the degree of scarcity of material.

Solo and Mixed Frankings

Solo frankings are most often seen on covers dated prior to postal rate increases of December 6, 1940. Solo frankings of the middle values, 10s and 15s, are common. Solo frankings of the 3s and 30s are very rare according to Hurt and Vambola. Mixed frankings with Soviet issues are known from December 6 and were to officially end January 31, 1941, however use of Estonian stamps continued to the end of Soviet Occupation in July 1941.

Highlights

- 3s solo frankings (very rare)
- 10s letter July 23, 1941 (late use)
- 15s on English paper (Michel 162x)
- 15s postcard to Japan (very rare destination)
- 30s solo frankings (very rare)
- 30s imprint blocks

Postal Rates	Estonia 7/30/40 to 12/5/40	Soviet 12/6/40 to 7/31/41
Letter: Domestic	15s	30k
Letter: Finland, Sweden	15s	50k
Letter: Foreign	30s	50k
Postcard: Domestic	10s	20k
Postcard: Latvia, Lithuania	10s	30k
Postcard: Foreign	18s	30k
Printed Matter: Domestic	3s	20k
Registration: Domestic	15s	30k
Registration: Foreign	20s	80k

Official exchange rate: Estonia 1 senti = Soviet 1.25 kopeck. In practice: 1 senti = 1 kopeck.
Mixed frankings of Estonia and Soviet stamps were valid from 12/6/40.

Chronology

1940	February 22	First printing all four values
1940	March 1	Final postal rate changes of Estonia as independent nation
1940	June	Soviet take over of Estonia
1940	July	Destruction of regular issues portraying former President Constantine Pats lead to acute shortages of stamps and hastened the release of Stamp Centenary Issue.
1940	July 10	Second printing 10s and 15s values
1940	July 30	First day of issue
1940	July 31	Second printing 3s and 30s values
1940	August 30	Third printing of all four values
1940	November 23	Fourth printing of all four values
1940	November 30	Announced last day of over the counter sales but sales continue
1940	December 4	Last delivery of 10s and 15s values to post office
1940	December 6	Soviet postal rates imposed (published December 11)
1941	January 31	Announced last day of validity but genuine use continues to summer
1941	July	End of Soviet Occupation and beginning of German Occupation

Bibliography

Best Overview:

Hurt, Vambola, and Elmar Ojaste, *Estonia Philately and Postal History Handbook Catalogue*, 1986 (stamps pages 185-187, postal rates pages 407-411).

Detailed Studies:

Lukaschewitz, Heinz, "Die Taubenausgabe Von Estland Zur 100-Jahr-Feier Der Ersten Briefmarke Im Mai 1940," *Estonia Philatelist*, Number 36 (1996) pages 199-213. (Translated title: "The Dove Issues of Estonia for the Centennial Celebration of the First Stamp in May of 1940").

Mandvere, Vello, "Postal Tariffs in Occupied Estonia 1940 – 1944", *Estonian Philatelist*, Number 30 (1984) pages 235-243.

Ojaste, Elmar, "Estonia Postal Rates 1918-1940", *Estonian Philatelist*, Number 21/22 (1977) pages 115-123.

All of the above publications are available from the APRL.