

ZEMSTVOS THE RUSSIAN RURAL POST

INTRODUCTION TO THE ZEMSTVO POST EXHIBIT

IN 1862, CZAR ALEXANDER II FREED THE 45 MILLION SERFS FROM BONDAGE, AND DIVIDED WESTERN RUSSIA INTO 38 GUBERNIAS OR PROVINCES (STATES), EACH OF WHICH WAS THEN SUB-DIVIDED INTO MUNICIPALITIES TERMED ZEMSTVOS (*ZEM = LAND*). THE ZEMSTVOS WERE MUNICIPAL FORMS OF GOVERNMENT, ESTABLISHED TO MANAGE THE VARIOUS AREAS SO CREATED. HOWEVER THESE AREAS WERE NOT PROVIDED WITH ANY POSTAL SERVICE, WHICH THE CZAR RETAINED AS HIS PRIVATE DOMAIN

Pages 3-12 The early or Vagabond Issues

WITH A DESPERATE NEED FOR POSTAL SERVICE, BY 1865 THE ZEMSTVOS BEGAN ISSUING THEIR OWN STAMPS, CONTRARY TO THE ROYAL DECREE, AND BY 1870 THERE WERE 28 SUCH AGENCIES OPERATING. WITHIN FIVE YEARS THE CZAR RELENDED, AND THE ZEMSTVO POST WAS SANCTIONED IN AUGUST 1870.

WITHIN THE NEXT DECADE ABOUT 150 ZEMSTVOS WERE ISSUING POSTAL STAMPS AND BY THE TIME OF THE BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION OF 1917, WHICH ENDED THIS SYSTEM. OVER 3,000 POSTAL VARIETIES ENCOMPASSING STAMPS, WRAPPERS AND ENVELOPES HAVE SINCE BEEN IDENTIFIED.

Pages 13-24 The Single & 2 Design Issues

RESEARCH INDICATES, THAT ABOUT 30% OF THOSE ZEMSTVOS WHICH BEGAN THEIR OWN POSTAL SERVICE OPERATED FOR VERY SHORT PERIODS, EITHER BECAUSE THEY WERE SUBSEQUENTLY SUPPRESSED BY THE CZAR OR WERE INFLUENCED TO CLOSE FOR OTHER REASONS. AS A RESULT THESE POSTS ISSUED ONLY ONE OR TWO DESIGNS OF STAMPS.

Pages 25-36 Unique Issues & Designs

THE INITIAL FACILITIES AVAILABLE FOR THE PRODUCTION OF STAMPS IN MANY AREAS WAS VERY LIMITED, HENCE MANY ZEMSTVOS HAD VERY SIMPLE DESIGNS, AND SOME USED A HAND STAMPING PROCES TO PRODUCE THE STAMPS ON A MIXED VARIETY OF PAPERS. SOME AREAS UTILIZED A NUMBERING SYSTEM TO CONTROL BOTH THE REVENUE AND DELIVERY OF ITEMS, IN SOME CASES UTILIZING A TALON OR STUB TO TRACK THE ITEM.

Pages 37-48 Later & State Printed Issues

AS ZEMSTVO GOVERNMENTS MATURED, THE RUSSIAN RURAL POST BECAME MORE REFINED AND SOME AREAS RECOGNIZED AS ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS OF THE ROYAL RUSSIAN POST, WERE ABSORBED INTO THE ROYAL MAIL NETWORK. OTHER AREAS BEGAN TO IMPLEMENT THEIR OWN SYSTEM WHILE OTHERS EXPANDED, LEADING TO THE DESIGN AND PRINTING OF SOME STAMPS BY THE STATE PRINTING OFFICE IN ST. PETERSBURG.

Pages 49-60 Special Studies

THE METHODS USED TO PRINT SOME ISSUES WHICH RESULTED IN THE CREATION OF TETE-BECHE PAIRS AND A VARIETY OF SIMILAR CONFIGURATIONS, THERE WAS GRADUAL BLURRING OF STAMPS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF CONSTANT MARKS OCCASIONED BY THE CONSTANT USE OF THE DIES ALL OF WHICH PROVIDED UNUSUAL MATERIAL FOR SOME INTERESTING STUDIES.

SCHLISELLBURG



THE FIRST ZEMSTVO TO ISSUE A
STAMP IN **1865**

THIS POST WAS SUPPRESSED IN 1866

EXAMPLES OF POSTAL HISTORY FOR ZEMSTVOS ARE SCARCE, POSSIBLY BECAUSE THE AREAS OF OPERATION WERE VERY REMOTE AND THE LETTERS WERE NOT RETAINED, OR AS WAS OFTEN THE CASE THE POSTS LEAVING THE AREA ALSO BORE THE ROYAL MAIL STAMPS. ONCE COLLECTORS REMOVED THESE ITEMS, THE RESULTANT REMNANTS OF ENVELOPES WERE POSSIBLY DESTROYED. IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE THAT THE 1917 REVOLUTION RESULTED IN THE DESTRUCTION OF MUCH OF THIS ASPECT OF THE POSTAL HISTORY.