



Filatelistų draugija LIETUVA

Lithuania Philatelic Society

2014

No. 242



The Lithuania Philatelic Society Journal Receives a Gold Award

APS STAMPSHOW

August 8-11, 2013
Milwaukee, WI

Lithuania Philatelic Society Journal
No. 239, 240 and 241

Lithuania Philatelic Society



Gold

Robert P. O'Sullivan

Jury Chairman

I want to take this opportunity to extend a very sincere word of thanks to:

Dr. Vytautas Doniela, Dr. Vitaly Geyfman, Andrew Kapochunas, Raimundas Marius Lapas,
Richard Lizdenis, Julija Normantienė, Dr. John Neefus, Violeta Rutkauskienė, Arunas Sakalauskas,
Jonas Variakojis, and all who contribute to the award winning Journal.

Audrius Brazdeikis, Editor

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Postal Links of the German *Grenzschutz* in Lithuania in 1919

Dr. Vytautas Doniela, Sydney, Australia

EN

The emerging independent Lithuanian postal system in the immediate post-WWI period (1919) was not the only postal network at work there. The need by Germany to safeguard its eastern frontiers had necessitated the forming of voluntary border guards units, that is the *Grenzschutz*, together with a relatively small number of Feldpost services. At one level, the activities of the reborn Feldpost did not officially interact with the work of the newly created Lithuanian post offices; at another level, however, some members of the *Grenzschutz* at times availed themselves of the nearby Lithuanian postal facilities, especially of their links with Germany. Moreover, some members of the *Grenzschutz* were intrigued by a philatelic novelty – the stamps of the newly established state of Lithuania, and in fact a considerable proportion of a rare early Lithuanian philatelic material owes its survival to some German soldiers being keen collectors. Indeed, for a reconstruction of the early stages of Lithuania Post some understanding of the workings of the Feldpost of the *Grenzschutz* can be of considerable value.

Situation on the Eastern Front

Germany's surrender to the Allies on November 11, 1918 involved the withdrawal of German troops from occupied territories. On the Western Front (France and Belgium) the Allies' demand that the German armies, within a short time, be taken as far back as the right bank of the Rhine was carried out in a fully disciplined manner.

By contrast, on the Eastern Front (Russia and the Ukraine) the occupying German forces had been badly depleted by continuous transfers of manpower to the West and were reduced to a disintegrating and demoralised condition. German commanders in the East were faced with a somewhat self-contradictory

task: their formations were ordered to withdraw, to demobilise, and yet simultaneously to provide some sort of defence line against the Red Army before it broke into East Prussia. In addition, border problems arose with the recently re-created Poland.

As a result, German higher commanders in the East were faced with the urgent need for reinforcements, and this included recruiting volunteers from among returnees from the Western Front.

The first to suggest enlisting of volunteers was the German Tenth Army which, due to a failed truce with the Soviets, had moved on in February 18/19, 1918 from Lithuania further into Russia. On November 18, 1918, German High Command ordered the retreating Tenth Army to help itself by forming volunteer units. Soon, and for several months, they came to be based in and around Kaunas/Kowno and Grodno.

Within a few days a similar procedure was put into effect by Army Group Kiev which had spread widely over the Ukraine and had to make its way back to East Prussia partly by fighting. In Estonia and especially Latvia, the disintegrating German Eighth Army also called for volunteers, both from Germany and from the local German settler population.

Formation of *Grenzschutz Ost*.

Within a few weeks, as the Red Army kept advancing through Latvia, Lithuania and northern Poland towards East Prussia, and as fighting broke out between the Germans and the Poles who laid claim to some territories which the Germans regarded as theirs, German High Command formalised the existence and activities of the new volunteer units by naming them *Grenzschutz Ost* (Border Guards East). Their overall command was entrusted to the *Oberkommando Grenzschutz Ost* resident in Kolberg (Pomerania). The responsibilities on the Eastern Border soon split into two



Fig. 1. Postal needs of members of *Grenzschutz* were serviced free of charge by their military postal facilities. But occasionally they chose to make use of nearby Lithuanian civilian post offices. This letter, mailed by a member of Volunteers Battalion 40, was posted at the Lithuanian P.O at Alytus by paying 60 skatikai, the fee for a foreign letter.

The history of the largest known block of the 1935 Vaitkus Transatlantic Flight overprint

Dr. Vitaly Geyfman, Scranton, Pennsylvania

EN

In September of 2011 an award winning collection put together by the late Charles Matuzas was auctioned off in Manhattan. It was one of the biggest sales of Lithuanian philatelic material in history. One of the centerpieces of this sale was the block of 12 overprinted stamps dedicated to Lt. Felix Vaitkus transatlantic flight of 1935.

Since this multiple of 12 stamps is currently the largest known in existence, I decided to try and piece together the history of this philatelic rarity...

In June of 1949 the former Secretary of the Lithuanian Aero Club, Mr. Vincas Steponaitis brought an accumulation of Vaitkus overprinted Airmail stamps to the United States of America. While escaping the Soviet occupation, Mr. Steponaitis tried to save the philatelic belongings of the Aero Club in Kaunas. Among other material he picked up the mint overprinted stamps and saved them through the years spent in the Lithuanian DP Camp in Germany and immigration to the United States. It was with the significant financial support from Kazys (Charles) Matuzas who was also Mrs. Steponaitis' relative, the immigration process could take place. The entire Steponaitis family, including his parents and daughter came and settled in Boston, Mass area. It is probably also important to note that Charlie (as he was better known in philatelic circles) Matuzas had sponsored at least 100 other Lithuanian

families after WWII and thus enabled them to come to America from refugee camps in Germany. At that time, in order to come to the USA, people had to "be sponsored" by an American citizen who would guarantee that they had a job and housing once they arrived in the country. According to some reports, at times Charlie had more than several Lithuanian immigrant families living with his own family until he could find them jobs or placements. Matuzas did a tremendous amount of effort to help Lithuanians leave the refugee camps and settle in the United States of America. In 1953 Steponaitis family welcomed a baby boy Vincas P. Steponaitis.

Before his passing in 1966, Mr. Steponaitis wanted to leave the stamps for his son. His son, Vincas P. Steponaitis, was just a teenager at that time. Vincas' older sister lent the large block of the overprinted stamps to Richard Lizdenis - Lithuanian philatelist and current member of the Lithuania Philatelic Society, who lived nearby. Richard kept the block in his safe for a few years until eventually the younger Vincas reclaimed the block in 1968. Since the young man had no interest in Philately, he initially offered stamps to Mr. Lizdenis, but Richard was not extremely enthusiastic about purchasing the large multiple and referred Mr. Steponaitis to Charles Matuzas.



Fig. 1. Vaitkus block.



Vincas Steponaitis
(1904-1966)

Darius and Girėnas Crash Covers

Audrius Brazdeikis, Houston, Texas

EN

A long time contributor to the journal, Mr. Richard Lizdenis has asked me to assume the responsibility of reporting to LPS any new discoveries of covers of with overprinted triangular stamps, carried aboard the 1933 transatlantic flight to Lithuania by Darius and Girėnas.

Mr. Lizdenis thoroughly collected information on all flown covers since 1980s and reported periodically in this column.¹⁻³ We greatly appreciate his contributions to our journal.

Here, I present recent findings of two official flight committee issued covers No. 667 addressed to

N. Sanabria in New York and No. 692 addressed to Aero Club in Kaunas. The latter example appears to have stamp removed. Also shown are recently acquired two private issue covers signed by pilots addressed to W. Krinsky and T. Champion.

For your convenience, I also included scan of cover No. 683, earlier reported by Mr. Bechstedt.⁴

Exactly how many covers with overprinted triangular stamps (Sc. C58-C62) were carried on the tragic transatlantic flight to Lithuania is unknown, but we can point out that the number already exceeds 50.



Coll. Geyfman



Coll. Brazdeikis

The Maps and Mapmakers that Helped Define 20th-Century Lithuanian Boundaries - Part 1: Administrative Boundaries of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania Just Before the Partition of 1772

Andrew Kapochunas, Jersey City, New Jersey

EN

The leader of Russia, upon the pretext of protecting minorities' rights in a supposedly anarchic neighboring country, occupies and annexes land belonging to that sovereign nation. A primary driver of Russia's action: fear that Western-European thinking in the now-partitioned nation might spread, and cause problems at home. I'm not talking about today's headlines, but late 18th century reality.

How Lithuania went from being part of one of the largest countries in Europe in 1772 to one of the smallest after World War I is the subject of a series of articles in which I hope to explain the role that maps and their makers played in determining, for instance, that Palanga wound up in independent Lithuania, while Trakai, Vilnius, Lyda and Gardinas didn't.

As Steven Seegel says, writing about the late 18th century in "Mapping Europe's Borderlands:"

"The tensions between Imperial Russia and Poland-Lithuania ensured an early modern purpose to Europe's maps – that maps would be tools of governance. But for Europe's margins, maps also structured 'historic' claims to land and promises of progress through territorial aggrandizement... Long before the drawing boards were opened in January 1919 at the Paris Peace Conference, maps were invaluable means of claiming land and structuring political power in the borderlands of East Central Europe."¹

I originally thought that the first installment of this series would cover Russian Empire administrative boundaries applied to lands acquired from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (*Lietuvos Didžioji Kunigaikštystė*) in the Partitions of 1772, 1793 and 1795. But what I found – in the literature, on the Internet, and at my site (<http://www.lithuanianmaps.com/>) – to my surprise, based on 21st century commentary by specialists on the relative accuracy of those maps – were significant differences in how the best 18th century mapmakers defined boundaries in the Grand Duchy, compared with how makers of historical maps, from the 19th century to today, have defined those boundaries in historical atlases and in maps specifically created for, and posted on, Wikipedia/Wikimedia. My learning: while it's always good to go back to the original sources, expect that, in an age before accurate surveys – even in lands that have been extensively mapped for over a hundred years – errors and assumptions will have been

repeated and copied so many times as to pass for fact.

So this first article in the series hopes to establish a valid visual starting point for the dismemberment of the Grand Duchy within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Future installments will cover how the Russian Empire mapped their Grand Duchy territorial acquisitions, the role that 19th and 20th century ethnographic and historical maps and their makers played in establishing boundaries after WWI, and the struggles of 20th century mapmakers to accurately depict newly independent Lithuania's boundaries.

First, who was at the table carving up the Commonwealth pie, and what did that pie consist of?



Fig. 1. Sayer: "Le gâteau des rois," from Jonathan Potter: jpmaps.co.uk

Personalized U.S. postage stamps and cachets designed by Lithuanian Cultural Saturday school children for the occasion of the 80th Anniversary of Darius and Girenas flight across the Atlantic

Laima Apanavičienė, Chicago, Illinois

EN

Marijus Gudynas, the Consul General of Lithuania in Chicago, in the fall of 2013 called a meeting of representatives of Lithuanian-American organizations and Lithuanian school leaders to discuss the upcoming 80th Anniversary of the trans-Atlantic flight by the Lithuanian-American aviators Darius and Girėnas and how to best commemorate this historic event. There were many suggestions. John Variakojis, President of the Lithuania Philatelic Society, suggested to issue personalized U.S. postage stamps and covers, on the theme of the flight of Darius and Girėnas. Ms. Laima Apanavičienė, the Director of the Chicago Lithuanian Cultural school and also the Director of the Čiurlionis Art Gallery, both in Chicago, suggested that a postage stamp design contest be organized among the elementary school students of the Lithuanian Cultural Saturday schools and the best designs be selected to print the stamps and covers.

Three organizations took up the task of organizing this competition: 1. The Cultural Council of the Lithuanian Community, 2. The Lithuania Philatelic Society

and 3. The Čiurlionis Gallery. Lithuanian Foundation, Inc., was the sponsor of this project.

The objective of the organizers was to remind the young students about the anniversary of this significant event in Lithuania's history; to portray the importance of the Darius and Girėnas trans-Atlantic flight through art; and to encourage them to study the history of Lithuania. All Lithuanian Saturday schools in the USA were advised about the project and urged to implement the contest.

Students from nine Lithuanian Cultural Schools submitted their drawings for postage stamps and covers. These schools were: Aleksandra Kazickas in New York, NY; *Baltijos kelias* in MI; Chicago Cultural in Chicago, IL; Dr. Vincas Kudirka in Elizabeth, NJ; Gediminas in Mundelein, IL; Maironis in Lemont, IL; *Saulutė* in St. Petersburg, FL; St Casimir in Cleveland, OH; and *Tėvynės žiburėliai* in Mentor, OH. Forty-nine entries were received by the end of April, 2013.

Continues on page 42

