HISTORY OF THE POST AND STAMP

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It is a wellknown fact that every person, next to his daily work, is looking for something that can interest him after his work, thus looking for a "hobby".

Some do painting, others fishing, others woodwork, but from all "hobbies" Philately is the "KING OF HOBBIES" and hobby of Kings, as well.

Philately gives every person the enjoyment to collect what he wants. Some collect a particular country, some only the postmarks of a certain field, some a Thematic collection with the subject they like most.

Philately is so large, that every one can find his particular interest in stamps. But it is of great interest that everyone knows about the History of stamps and what happened with the POST, before stamps were invented.

It is mainly for "beginners" that these notes have been compiled, mainly extracted from the handbook of Dr. J. D. von den Brink, and from Die Post magazines.

Before we discuss the different phases of Philately, it is most interesting to learn what came before stamps came into being, and how the transport of messages and the writing of letters was done.

The first information about the transmitting of messages was made known to us from the Chinese and Assyrian Civilisations. The Egyptians about 4000 years B.C. have also had a more or less organised delivery system of messages, as well as the Greeks and Romans.

The antique letter first written on a tablet of clay, was then baked to become hard; a skin of animal was also used or a piece of bark of a tree. Also in old Egypt wax tablets have been used. The Chinese did write on wood, metal or silk, while the Hindus have used palm leaves. Later on the Papyrus leaves were used and for ink, a mixture of gum and sect. After the invention of paper in the middle ages, a great progress was made and the communication between people by way of transmitting messages came a step forward. · But still something was missing, and that was the cover, to put the letter in it. That was not before the middle of the 19th century; before that, letters were folded or rolled up, and were sealed with a seal of wax.

That about the devellopment of the letter, and now about the transmitting of the messages. The first mentioning of a postal Service came from the oldest History of the Asiatic peoples. After conquering the countries, it was necessary for the conquerer to make roads to facilitate

the transport of troops and war materials without too much delay, and also a sort of postal service was organised to bring messages and orders over to the different parts of the occupying forces.

In the large Indian States it was done by foot runners, who were running in "relays" from post to post and the messages were taken over by the next runner; this was contrary to the Egyptian system, where the runners were running the complete distance and sometimes weeks or months staying underway and had to bring back the answer as well. They were called "Faishat". Before going on their journey, the bequeath their belongings to their sons or family, because they were not sure to come back out of fear of wild animals or hostile tribes.

The founder of the real organised postal System was CYRUS, who established the Persian World Empire. On his orders, runners were replaced by mounted Couriers and on different places along the main roads "stations" or "haltes" were established. On these holts, passengers could spent the night and rest and horses were changed. These couriers made distances of 400 km. a day, while in old Greece during the time of Alexander the Greek runners on foot, made distances of over 200 km. a day.

The Romans also realised that a good organised Postal Service was needed and they made roads between Rome and the conquered part of their large Empire. When the Roman Empire was on top of its might, it possessed a large network of roads with a length of about 80,000 km.

It was Emperor Augustus who organised a regular service of messages, but also the transport of travellers from one place to the other in special carriages or coaches. This was naturally restricted only for important personages, but the "CURSUS PUBLICUS", under which name this service became known, was of great importance and improvement in the delivery of messages and transport of travellers.

In the course of time, two services developed from this: the "Cursus Clabularis" or heavy or slow Post, and the "Cursus Velox" or speedy post. The Cursus Clabularis had for transport heavy carriages with oxes drawing and for the Cursus Velox or speed Post, mules were used.

Along the main roads on distances of 5 to 10 km. stations called "Mutaticnes" were established where the animals were exchanged and so it was possible to travel speedily and it was not unusual that 200 km. a day were travelled in such a way.

After the decline of the Roman Empire in about 500 A.D. also the Postal organisations deteriorated, even Charles the Great tried to bring it to new life again, but without success.

But by the advance of civilisation and the development of business, the people interested, started to fill the gap and started their own way of communications. All sorts of people became carriers of mail. Pedlars,

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Monks, Pilgrims and others took charge of delivery of letters and messages and delivered them to their destinations. Princes of the land, had their own couriers and also Monasteries, had their own couriers in their services.

When Universities were established and studying young people were attending the Universities in Paris, Bologna, Naples and Montpellier, there was a necessity for a regular postal service between these places, and the Universities had their own carriers; especially in Paris, they had a good organised Postal System.

In the South of Germany there was a so called "Butchers Post" where travelling Butchers and cattle dealers took the post with them. This service was highly valued and they did get priveleges in the form of Freedom of Taxes. This form of Post even held out till the 17th century in Wurtenberg. Another important Postal Service was kept in working by the German Chevaliers (Ritter Orden) and maintained a good postal service between the members of the Order. They also had a service between the Baltic Sea Ports, as Hamburg, Bremen and Lubeck and was called the "Hanze Post".

But it was not before 1500 that a well organised regular Service was established by Emperor Maximilian in nominating a nobleman of Bergamo Francois de Tassis, later called of Thurn & Taxis, as Postmaster of the whole Holy Roman Empire. This Francois de Tassis established his headquarter in Mechelen near Brussels and from there organised a good services with Stations and overnight places for passengers and exchanges of Horses along the road. His sons and members of his families were appointed postmasters in the different countries and they organised the Post so successfull that they were given the hereditary right of delivery of the Post in the Western World. Post connections were established between Brussels and Vienna, to Rome, Madrid and Hamburg and all principal Cities. In 1615 the House of Thurn & Taxis, as it was called then by the Germans, was elevated to the Princes of Thurn & Taxis, with a Castle given in Regensburg and a seat in the German Reichstag.

The Kings of France and Napoleon and later also Holland, took the postal service in their countries in their own hand, but even up to 1867 the Post of Thurn & Taxis continued to function and issued in 1852 their first adhesive stamps. In 1867 the post of T & T was taken over by the Prussian Postal Administration for an indebture of 3 million Thaler.

Up to now the delivery of a letter or message was always charged to the receiver; in England in 1840 a great Postal reformation took place with the introduction of the "One Penny Post", by which letters could be prepaid and delivered free to the receiver.

It was Rowland Hill who introduced the first adhesive stamp in Great Britain, even the idea was originally from James Chalmers, a bookprinter

of Dundee, Scotland, who already in 1834 reported to the Government on the necessity of the use of a franking mark for letters.

Rowland Hill was born in Kidderminster in Worchester on the 3rd December, 1795. His father started in 1803 in Birmingham a boarding-school were also Rowland was educated. Later he took the leading over of the school with his brother Matthias. A few years later Rowland Hill became Secretary of the Committee for Colonisation of South Australia.

Many people in England protested against the high cost of the Postal deliveries and the slow service and in 1836 Rowland Hill made a commotion in the country by issuing a pamphlet "Post reform, its Importance and Practicability". He demonstrated clearly the great shortcomings from the present system and showed the way to improvement. The Penny Post Law was accepted by the Government on the 17th August 1839.

Rowland Hill contacted the printers Perkins, Bacon & Petch, well-known engravers and Printers to make "adhesive Labels".

As model they selected the s.c. city medal, made by the chief engraver Wyon of the Royal Mint, for the occasion of the entry of Queen Victoria in London on "Lord-Mayor-Day". After this Henry Corbould made the design, and the engraving was done by Charles & Frederik Heath (Father and Son). The stamps 1 penny black and 2 pence blue were for the first time available on the 6th May 1840.

The British example was followed by the whole world with great interest, but it was not before 1843 that one of the first Postal Administration of Zurich, Switzerland, followed, and issued the two now famous Cantonale stamps the 4 and 6 Rappen. The following countries followed soon and issued their first stamps; Bavaria 1849, France 1849, Spain 1850, Austria 1850, Baden 1851, Netherland 1852, Belgium 1852, Luxemburg 1852, Vatican State 1856, Portugal 1853, Mexico 1856, being the first non European Country to issue stamps. It is interesting to see the result in England of the increase in handling of letters during the first years of the new Penny Post invention:

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1839   82 million letters transported
1840  168    ,,        ,,        ,,
1841  196    ,,        ,,        ,,
1842  204    ,,        ,,        ,,
1843  220    ,,        ,,        ,,
1844  242    ,,        ,,        ,,
1848  339    ,,        ,,        ,,
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This innovation of stamps to be put on letters, and so make the letter pre-paid, brought a new system in working; whereas before, the receiver of the letter had to pay the carrier or postman, with the new system, the cost of carrying the letter was already done. Still it was allowed to sent

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letters without stamps and then a postal due was charged, as it is still the case.

The British example was accepted by all countries, and soon after the first stamps had been issued there were people who started collecting these pieces of paper, and already in 1862 there was a monthly completely dedicated to Philately, n. 1. The Monthly ADVERTISER. The word *'Philately'* came in use in the year 1864, lanced by the French Stamp dealer Herpin from the Greek word *"Philas"*, meaning "friend" and the word *"Ateleia"* freedom of paying taxation. The word Philately now has a broader meaning, and means the scientific arrangement of the stamp issues, studying the varieties, printings, postal history and postmarks; while a stamp collector is a person who just sticks the stamps in his album, or collects them in some way or another.

It was not before 1874 that a more intimate contact between the different countries issuing stamps came into being. It was the Director General of the German Postal Administration, Ernest Heinrich Wilhelm Von Stephan on whose initiative on the 15th September 1874 the representatives of 22 Countries came together in Bern, Switzerland, to create the Union General de Poste, later on called the "Union Postal Universale", U.P.U., and Von Stephan became the first President.

This Congress also created the International Bureaux and permanent Secretariat, which bureaux is still sending to all postal administrations in the world the stamps from and to all the different countries.

In the course of time, many rules and regulations have been established, extended and changed, but the right of transit of mail through each country has been unchanged.