Marian Stamps
from around the world

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THE FIRST MARIAN STAMP
IN THE WORLD

Marian Philately is but a part of religious philately, which in turn is a section of philately in general. The literal meaning of philately suggests "that a stamped letter frees the recipient from paying the mailing charges". Marian Philately deals with the collecting and studying of postage and imprinted stamps depicting the Blessed Virgin Mary or churches and places related to it. The first stamp appeared in 1840 in Great Britain, while various Christian motifs on stamps appeared during the early decades of the 20 century.

The First stamp depicting the Blessed Virgin Mary is part of a set dated February 1920, issued in Bavaria.

Bavaria (German Bayern,) has been a duchy, a kingdom until 1918, a republic, and later formed part of West Germany. At first the region was inhabited by Celts. Germanic tribes invaded it in the 500's. Bavarian dukes ruled the duchy from 911 to 1180. Napoleon made Bavaria a kingdom in 1805, but it became a state of the German Empire when Germany was unified in 1871. After World War I (1914-1918); it was briefly a republic, and then part of Germany again. The Allies invaded Bavaria in World War II (1939-1945), and U.S. troops occupied it after Germany surrendered. Later, Bavaria became a West German state. West Germany and East Germany unified in 1990.

Today Bavaria is the largest federal *state (Bundesland)* of Germany by area, forming almost 20% of the total land area of Germany. Its capital is Munich in Upper Bavaria. About 6.4 million of its population is Bavarian, 4.1 million Franconian and 1.8 million Swabian.

The kingdom of Bavaria issued its postage stamps from 1849 to 1920. In 1920 it issued the world's first stamps depicting the figure of Our Lady. This makes Bavaria the first country in the world to issue the first Marian stamps.

The stamp issue

This first Marian issue consisted of 4 stamps with a common design, 4 different colours and 4 different values:

1 mark stamp was issued in Red and Grey

1 ¼ mark Blue and Brown

1 ½ mark Green and Grey

2 ½ mark Black and Grey.

THE DESIGN

The stamps were designed by Artist: Sigmund Von Wech The stamp design is simple but clear. It shows Our Lady holding her Infant Son on her left arm and holding a sceptre in her right hand. Jesus is holding an orb symbolizing that he is King of all that is in heaven and earth. Mary is seen looking at Jesus and standing on a crescent moon. The word Bayern in block letters is printed on a banner at the top of the stamp. A similar banner at the bottom of the stamp carries the value of each stamp... While the figure of Our Lady and Jesus are encircled by a design resembling the sun, the whole picture is encircled on both sides by a kind of scroll with the words PATRONNA BAVARIA. A Coat of arms rests at Mary's foot.

Germany's inflation period started in 1919 and on 1st May 1919 Germany became a Republic, and the Empire was dismantled. The following year on 1st April Bavaria lost the right to issue its own stamps. So on the 6th April 1920 these Bavarian Marian stamps were issued with an overprinted: **"DEUTSCHES REICH".** These were used almost exclusively in Bavaria, although were valid for postage throughout the Germany Republic. So these stamps became the first religious stamps to be used in the German Republic.

The stamps feature the golden statue of the Virgin Mary standing on a crescent moon as the Queen of Heaven on the Mariensäule. **This** Marian column is located on the Marienplatz in Munich, Germany. It was erected in 1638 to celebrate the end of Swedish occupation during the Thirty Years' War. The figure was originally located in the Frauenkirche. *Mariensäule* in Munich was the first column of this type built north of the Alps and inspired erecting other Marian columns in this part of Europe. The statue was originally erected to commemorate the **victory of Maximilian I over the Turks in 1620.**

At each corner of the column's pedestal is a statue of a putto, created by Ferdinand Murmann. The four putti are each depicted fighting a different beast, symbolizing the city's overcoming of adversities: war represented by the lion, pestilence by the cockatrice, hunger or famine by the dragon and heresy by the serpent. ♦