



## THE SOCIETY OF RUSSIAN PHILATELY

***Bulletin 71, Summer 2023***

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### **President's Message**

Greetings from Alabama! The weather is currently very hot, just like the rest of the South! I've been busy with judging at stamp shows and visiting family. I've found a few interesting items for my various collections, but the pickings are slim. Auctions continue to bring interesting things to the market, but prices are quite high.

Your Society is doing well. Membership is still over 275; we lose a few members, and we add a few members each year. Financially we are holding our own, though publication and postage expenses continue to rise. We are planning to raise dues next year to cover this expense.

The annual membership meeting will be at

BALPEX on September 2<sup>nd</sup>. This change was necessary as the original choice NOJEX was canceled. Please plan to attend BALPEX. The organizers made an extra effort to take care of our society, so we need to support the show.

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Many of you may already know that the British Society is disbanding at the end of this year. This will leave Rossica as the only Russian philatelic organization in the English-speaking world!

We need to reach out to our fellow collectors in the British Society and encourage them to join Rossica.

When I joined Rossica, there were four English speaking societies around the world producing journals twice a year. That's right, 8 journals a year! Now there are just our two journals. Thank goodness that we have an excellent publication.

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During NAPEX, where I judged, I had the pleasure of having breakfast with Scott English, Executive Director of the American Philatelic Society. One of the topics we talked about was where organized philately is heading. Membership numbers continue to decline both nationally and in local clubs. The APS loses about 800 members a year. Local clubs are greying out at an alarming rate. Clubs and societies may have to consolidate to survive.

Young people, i.e., 35-45, do not seem to want to socialize with the older members of philately. Surveys indicate that people are still collecting, even the young ones, but do it as a solitary pastime and not in a group or social setting. The world has changed, a person can actively collect and never have to go to a club meeting or show. They can do it all through the internet. Closet collecting is not new. See <https://scholarlypress.si.edu/store/history-culture/gh-kaestlin-collection-imperial-russian-zemstv/> for a nice summary of the very successful closet collector GH Kaestlin (1892-1981).

Without new members our clubs and societies

will eventually die and with them the sharing of knowledge and the enjoyment that comes with that process. No clubs or societies will mean no journals, fewer books, and less research. For our hobby and our specialty, that would be a disaster!

Rossica has been reaching out to the next generation with a Facebook page, and Zoom meetings to try to add new members, but this is not enough. You can also help reverse the trend. Introduce friends and colleagues to collecting stamps and covers in general and perhaps specifically to Russian Area material. The key is to get them interested and **keep** them interested. Take a young collector to a local club meeting when you are having a program on an interesting topic. Take them to a stamp show and let them smell the stamps, hear programs, and see exhibits.

In addition to our members getting older, Rossica has the challenges of the Russian language and recurring political issues. There was a problem of sharing information and research material that lasted at least 100 years. This period ended in 1992 and from 1992 until 2022 there was a free flow of communications between east and west.  
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It is with a sad heart that I must announce that William Moskoff is stepping down as Journal editor due to health issues. Bill has been managing the Journal for several years. Steve Volis has stepped up to fill this role. Please give him your full support. Bill, Nik Sorokin, Steve Volis and Alex Kolchinsky, made our journal a world class award winning philatelic publication.  
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A volunteer is needed to translate a book by V. Tyukov on Russian military postal history. Rossica would consider publishing the work if there is a translator and editor. Please consider volunteering to help the society.

I have a few copies of the book "Georgia the years 1917-1923 – Postal History" by Grigoleit and Klempka and published in 2021 by the British

Society of Russian Philately and David Feldman International Auctioneers. This is most likely the final book to be published by the BSRP and it was the last book written by Edward Klempka. It is an in-depth study of Georgia's postal history. I am asking \$10 a copy at the show and \$20 by post, proceeds going to Rossica.

A lot has been happening in philately and in our Society, get out there and join the fun. Help make it fun again for all. Hope to see some of you in Baltimore over Labor Day. Take care, enjoy the summer, stay healthy.

Raymond J. Pietruszka  
President, Rossica  
[pietrj@mindspring.com](mailto:pietrj@mindspring.com)

## Minutes from Rossica Board of Directors Meeting of February 18, 2023

In attendance: Ray Pietruszka, Semyon Brayman, Bill Moskoff, Nik Sorokin, Steve Volis and Vesma Grinfelds.

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 AM (Pacific Time) by President Ray Pietruszka via Zoom with a quorum.

Treasurer's Report: Steve Volis noted that we have about 250 paid members (16-17 current members have not paid as of yet). We are likely to lose 14-15 members which is the usual rate of attrition. The member contingent from Russia and the Ukraine are continuing to be stable; 4-5 had joined since the last Journal. The Treasury, itself, is stable at \$30,000.

Library Report: It was noted that Greg Mirsky, Librarian, is getting some new books. Specifically, a new addition is a book about telegrams issues of USSR.

Publications Report: Bill noted that the spring issue should be fine. Many people are

commenting on past Journals in the "Letters to the Editor".

The Journal received a Gold Medal at GASS although the feedback was not helpful. It also received a Gold Medal in St. Petersburg.

Semyon Brayman will write a report about the Show and his item shown in Monte Carlo. Photos will be included. He also reported that he has contact with a work on Russian military postal history. A translator is needed! Rossica would consider publishing the work if there is a translator and editor. Ray will include this request in the next President's Letter.

#### Digital Sites:

Facebook: Our presence at this internet site is doing well. Viewers are responding to interesting subjects and are finding it an easy way to communicate.

Website: Nik has ideas which were sent via email to board members. A coordinator is needed for his ideas. With the help of our webmaster, Nik agreed to put some of his files on the Rossica site. There will be a post on Facebook alerting viewers to follow and check that material on the Rossica website.

It was also reported the Journals going back 6 years are now searchable.

New Business: Steve suggested that there is a need for an increase in dues for 2024. The price of publishing the Journal increases every 6 months. He suggested that there be an increase of \$5.00 for a paper journal. So, after the increase, dues for a paper journal would be \$40.00 US, \$45.00 Canada and \$55.00 all other countries. For a paper copy and an electronic copy, the price would be \$45.00 US, \$50.00 Canada and \$60.00 all others. Price for only the digital version would stay the same. There is also a \$3 fee for using PayPal. The proposed motion carried.

Ray Pietruszka questioned: does Rossica wish to have a presence (table) at GASS in Cleveland this coming August? After some discussion, it was

agreed that Rossica will NOT request a table as not enough members are likely be presence to manage the table.

Ray also noted that the 2023 Annual Meeting will be held in NOJEX taking place October 7-9 in New Jersey.

Future annual meetings were discussed. Vesma noted that our request to WESTPEX to hold our meeting at that event in 2025 has been accepted. Ray then suggested that we meet at CHICAGOPEX IN 2024. Vesma will check on this possibility.

Ray also suggested that we have a table and presence at BOSTON 2026. Vesma will check on this and report.

He also noted that more volunteers are needed for an assortment of roles with our organization and that advertisers are needed!

General Discussion: Russian philatelic material is not abundant in Europe. Auction houses in Russia still have high prices; there are about 20 such auction houses. Normal financial business is very difficult. The Russia market in Russia is very strong.

Meeting adjourned at 12:00PM (Pacific Time).

A questionnaire

Respectfully submitted,

Vesma Grinfelds, Secretary

### **To Future Award Winners**

Please send exhibit title, award level, and name of show to

[randyw1909@gmail.com](mailto:randyw1909@gmail.com)

Randy Woodward,  
5109 Mocha Ct,  
Oceanside, CA 92056

## Exhibit Award Winners

### Norman Banfield

IBRA 2023 (a Fédération Internationale de Philatélie (FIP) show), Essen Germany

"Russian Revenues: Stamped Paper & Stamps from the Imperial to the Soviet Periods"

5 frames

Vermeil - 81 points

### Vesma Grinfelds

The multi-frame exhibit *Cancellations of the Provisional Era in Latvia: 1919-1921* received the following awards at the following shows:

- San Diego Stamp Show 2023; Large Gold
- IBRA 2023 (FIP) show), Essen, Germany:  
Large Vermeil
- GASS 2022: Large Gold
- Rocky Mountain Stamp Show, 2022; Large Gold
- CHICAGOPEX 2022; Large Gold

LONDON 2022

*Latvia: Postmarks and Postal Routes of the Pre-Stamp Era*

Multi-Frame; Large Vermeil

The multi-frame exhibit *Latvia: The First Banknote Stamp and Its Overprints* received the following awards at the following shows:

- CAPEX 2022: Gold (88 Points)
- LUGANO 2022: Gold (88 Points)
- INDONESIA 2022: Gold (85 Points)

### Raymond Pietruszka

WESTPEX

*Legend of the Polish Legion*

Single Frame

Large Vermeil (80 points)

United Postal Stationery Society – Single Frame Award

### Hannes Westendorf

IBRA Essen, Germany

*The Postal History of Estonia During the Russian Period*

8 Frames

Gold (93 points)

Association of Estonia Philatelists Special Award

### Randy Woodward

WESTPEX

*Paper to Gold – The 1923 Soviet Transition from Paper Rubles to Gold Rubles*

5 Frames

Gold (87 points)

## New Rossica Members

We welcome the following new applicants into the Rossica Society.

<b>2231</b> - Mike Gagarin	CA, USA
<b>2232</b> - Francois Rochon	Canada
<b>2233</b> - Pavel Shulgin	Russia
<b>2234</b> - Vyacheslav Krentsel	Canada
<b>2235</b> - Vitaliy Brunov	Israel
<b>2236</b> - Alejandro Jaime	GA, USA
<b>2237</b> - Mikhail Levin	Russia
<b>2238</b> - Jean-Francois Paix	France
<b>2239</b> - Raimundas Lapas	IL, USA
<b>2240</b> - Antony Hurden	England

Reinstated:

<b>1616</b> - Prof. Dr. Ortwin Greis	Germany
<b>1964</b> - Erich von Hungen	CA, USA
<b>2059</b> - Dr. John Busowski	FL, USA

## Two Unusual Money Orders from Grajewo

By Vladimir Venets

An official publication of the Ministry of Internal Affairs relating to the rules of postal communications [1] contains paragraph 221 stating that *“the maximum amount of each transfer is limited to five thousand rubles...”* At the same time, as indicated in Circulars of the Main Directorate of Posts and Telegraphs № 7 of November 7, 1903, and № 85 of May 13, 1904, the amount to be transferred for one official transfer is not limited, and official transfers were made without paying postage [2].

However, there was another type of postal money order that was not limited in amount but required payment of postage. The Decree of the Minister of Internal Affairs on the postal part of November 9, 1906 [3] stated in paragraph 4 that *“The amount of a transfer submitted by one government institution to another shall not be restricted.”*

At the same time, as has been repeatedly stated in official documents, *“fees for transferring money by mail and telegraph are levied both from individuals, as well as government institutions and persons using the privilege of sending letters with a declared value by mail without paying a weight fee”* [4].

Figure 1 shows a form of a postal money order sent on August 27, 1908, from Grajewo to the Łomża branch of the State Bank. The amount of this transfer was 36,000 (thirty-six thousand) rubles.

The insurance fee for transfer of sums over 500 rubles was calculated by the same rules which were established for smaller sums, namely: adding 15 kopecks for amounts up to 25 rubles over one hundred, and 10 kopecks for other amounts up to the next one hundred.

Let's calculate what insurance fee was due for the transfer of 36,000 rubles. When transferring 5,000 rubles, the insurance fee was 12 rubles 50 kopecks. If you use the above rule for determining the amount of the insurance fee, it is easy to calculate that for the transfer of 36,000 rubles should have been paid 90 rubles of insurance fee.

Two postage stamps with a nominal value of 10 rubles each were apparently glued to the cut off upper part of the transfer form. But then the exact sum of 90 rubles was charged for forwarding this transfer.

Later the author managed to find another form of money order, sent also from Grajewo and also to the Łomża branch of the State Bank (Figure 2). The insurance rate for the transfer of 52,000 rubles was 130 rubles, and the postage stamps on this money order form were affixed to this amount.

Both transfers were addressed to the Łomża branch of the State Bank. The State Bank was established in 1860 to "revive trade turnover" and "strengthen the monetary credit system" of Russia, and its activities were under the control of the Ministry of Finance. Its Łomża branch, along with a number of other branches, was created after the final liquidation of the Polish Bank as part of the Alexander III cabinet's policy of Russification of the provinces and the introduction of uniformity in the administration of the Kingdom of Poland and the rest of the empire.

Thus, the recipient of the transfer had the required "government institution" status. It remains to be seen who sent these money orders. According to [5] in 1899 there was a main station of the Brest–Grajewo branch of the Southwestern Railway and a first-class customs office in Grajewo (a town in the Shchuchin county of the Łomża Province with 4,500 inhabitants). In 1889 goods worth 41,804,000 rubles were imported, and 28,290,000 rubles were exported through this customs office. According to [6], in 1912 there were 21 employees at this Class 1 customs office. Transports of goods bound for Königsberg and Danzig and back went through Grajewo.

In 1811 the function of managing customs was transferred to the Department of Foreign Trade, included in the Ministry of Finance. And on October 26, 1864, the Department of Foreign Trade was renamed the Department of Customs Duties.

Therefore, it can be reasonably assumed that the sender of both money transfers was the Grajewo customs, which also had the status of a "government institution", which explains the amounts of both transfers, which exceed 5,000 rubles.





**Figure 1.** A form of a postal money order sent on August 27, 1908, from Grajewo to the Łomża branch of the State Bank.



**Figure 2.** A form of a postal money order sent on March 25, 1912, from Grajewo to the Łomża branch of the State Bank.

#### References:

1. Resolutions on the Postal Part. Part I. Rules for Postal Communications. St. Petersburg, 1909.
2. Glembotsky A.O. Collection of Decisions and Orders of the Postal-Telegraph Department. Part 3. Money Transfer Operation. Kishinev, 1909.
3. Government Bulletin, 1906, № 252, стр. 2.
4. Igoshin Y.F. Collection of Postal Rules for Money Transfers through Postal and Telegraphic Institutions. Tomsk, 1914.
5. Brockhaus F.A., Efron I.A., Encyclopedic Dictionary, Vol. IX<sup>A</sup>, Gravitat – Davenant, St. Petersburg, 1998.
6. Commemorative Book of the Łomża Province for 1912, Łomża, 1912.

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Respectively Submitted  
Randy Woodward  
Rossica Bulletin Editor