



THE SOCIETY OF RUSSIAN PHILATELY

Bulletin 75, Summer 2025

Steve Volis, Nik Sorokin - Bulletin Editors

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President's Message



Greetings from Alabama!

Today, the weather feels like September, not August—70s with a light breeze. Next week, we'll be back to summer heat. This year, I've been busy judging at several shows: WESTPEX in April, Minneapolis two weeks ago, and next week, I head to GASS in Chicago, IL.

WESTPEX was a great show! Rossica was well represented with several exhibits, a booth, and a membership meeting featuring a presentation by Greg Mirsky on Russian Revenues. I was occupied with judging, but our booth was staffed by dedicated volunteers from the San Francisco area. Thank you all!

As reported in the Journal, our Society is doing well, with no major changes in membership or finances; however, I have a few updates to share.

Next year, we're trying something new with

mini-membership meetings. Unlike our traditional events, these will not include booths, only a membership meeting with a presentation. The goal is to bring local Rossica members together at least once a year at regional shows to discuss Russian philately. Inspired by our members in France who are having a great time at their gatherings, we are now planning our first meetings to take place at the Southeast Stamp Expo in Atlanta in January 2026 and PIPEX in Portland, Oregon, in May 2026, for West Coast members who can't attend Boston. My aim is to encourage more member engagement and conversation. We'll see how it goes!

Our national membership meeting will be at BOSTON 2026 in May. We'll have a booth, presentations, and, hopefully, some impressive exhibits. Please submit your exhibit applications as soon as possible! Come to the show, visit our booth, attend the presentations, or even volunteer at the booth. Support your Society and the dealers who fuel our passion.

Rossica officers have declared 2026 to be our Society's election year. You will be seeing more about that in the coming months. Consider running for an office or talking someone into running for office. Our Society has a dedicated group of officers today, but new ones are needed to keep the Society viable.

Lastly please exhibit! I need something to Judge! But seriously, it is through exhibits that we introduce Russian philately to our fellow collectors. As in the 50's and 60's, Russia today is not portrayed very well, so now is the time to show what it has to offer. Please create those exhibits. Even a single frame one will be great, and exhibiting will help you focus your collecting interests as well.

Well, I take care all, stay healthy, and enjoy what is left of the summer. I hope to have seen many of you at the GASS. I'll be in the frames area most of the time, but they do let us out at night.

So, take care of your families and yourselves, remember this is a hobby and use it as a source of peace and relaxation.

Raymond J. Pietruszka
Rossica President

WESTPEX After Action Report

by *Raymond J.
Pietruszka*



1. WESTPEX, held on April 24-26 in San Francisco, California, was a good show for Rossica. We had a booth that was manned most of the time for three days and several members and potential new members stopped by to visit. We also sold several back issues of our journal. Our membership meeting on Saturday had about 12 collectors in attendance. After my brief introduction and update, Greg Mirsky gave a presentation on Russian revenues. Our exhibitors did well, earning Large Gold, Gold, and Large Vermeil medals. David Jay's exhibit "Geometric Cancels of Moscow won the Rossica Award.

2. I was busy the first half of the show with exhibits judging. It was a lesson learned again: Don't judge and try to support Rossica at the same show. There is simply not enough time for both. Vesma Grinfelds, Rossica's Secretary, had the same problem as she oversaw awards and the youth table while also helping Rossica.

3. A couple of actions came out of this show:

a. We were invited to be a convening Society at the Rocky Mountain Stamp Show in Denver. It is scheduled for May 2026. But we are already planning on convening at PIPEX-26 and the Boston 2026 World Expo, both in May. Those two shows will keep us quite busy.

b. I saw Ed Laveroni and his wife at the show. He was exhibiting Early California Mail. I asked him to send us a digital copy of his Trans-Siberian Railroad exhibit to include in our digital archive.

c. Met a local gentleman, Sergey Lituinenko, who has been researching the subject of Russian emigration to the United States after World War II. He has identified several sources of archival materials that include information on Rossica in China and Yugoslavia. I passed Greg's name on to him.

d. We now have our banners on both coasts again. Greg has a set, and I have a set.

e. The interest in Rossica shown by WESTPEX

attendees has reminded us to do better on getting our show paperwork together. We ran out of applications, flyers, and sign-up sheets.

4. My final observation was that while there were several dealers who had Russian material, it took some effort to find it. I also found that prices for better items continue to rise. There seem to be no Offices covers costing less than \$100, with many priced at several hundreds of dollars. Nor did I see many covers from the Russian Federation.

5. Finally, I want to say thank you to all the volunteers who helped at the Rossica booth. In addition to Greg, there were David Jay, Vitaly Geyfman, Michael Gagarin, and Lenny Katz. Our Society truly appreciates your support!

New Rossica Members

We welcome the following new applicants into the Rossica Society:

- 2261 - Anton Kommar, Cyprus
- 2262 - Igor Drogovoz, Ukraine
- 2263 - Alexander Voigt, Czech Republic
- 2264 - Yegor Kostin, Russia

Reinstated:

- 1195 - Jerome Norton, NY, USA

Collecting Frenzy

by *Nikolai Sorokin*

Recently, a news item was published about the passion of collecting. Its subject was Pokemon cards, not stamps, but having been a philatelist all my life it resonated with me.

The McDonald's restaurants in Japan began offering two limited edition Pokemon cards with each of their "Happy Set" meals (similar to "Happy Meals" in the US.) Each such meal was guaranteed to have a Pikachu card, featuring art of the rat-like critter reaching for a burger. It was the company's way of offering a fun dining experience for children and families.

But grown-up card collectors immediately took advantage of the offer. They flocked to the restaurants and bought out the \$3.50 "Happy Set" meals solely for the cards. This frenzy created piles of untouched and trashed food. As a result, McDonald's closed the promotion. Presently, asking price for those cards is as high as \$28 each.





A world-class philatelic exhibition is coming to Boston in May 2026.

The previous such expo in the United States was the 2016 World Stamp Show. The Rossica Society participated in that expo and will do so again in Boston. We will have our own table there and hold a general Rossica meeting.

Plan to attend if at all possible!

This will be a wonderful opportunity to find some new philatelic items, see a multitude of incredible philatelic exhibits, but best of all, we shall have the opportunity to see old Rossica friends and make new ones!

Unless you happen to live in the Boston area,
now is a good time to reserve lodging.

The show will run from Saturday May 23 through Saturday May 30.



US postal stamp issued on August 14, 2025, to mark the Boston 2026 World Expo. It will be the Twelfth International Philatelic Exhibition held in the United States.

Surcharge For a Registered Letter

by Mikhail Dymshits
translated by Steve Volis



Figure 1a.



Figure 1b.



Figure 1c.

A recently discovered registered cover postmarked in 1978 (Figures 1a-b), reveals an unusual situation where a “surcharge for registration” (Figure 1c) was collected from the recipient via a postage-due postmark with the hand-written amount “6 k.” This payment structure was not permitted under postal regulations, as all fees for registered mail were supposed to be collected at the time of mailing.

This unusual case likely stems from the fact that the cover appears to be a philatelic item originating from the steamship *Moldavia*. It is possible that the sender was a philatelist himself or had asked an acquaintance who purchased a cruise on the ship to mail it. The address on the cover was typewritten, indicating it was prepared in advance. In the ship’s postal cabin, the sender likely noticed that the registered mail label also bore a distinctive inscription: “ВОДНОЕ ОТД. ПАРАХОД БАТУМ-ОДЕССА” (Sea Post Office, Steamship Batum-Odessa). It is plausible that the postal clerk lacked postage stamps, so, “by mutual agreement,” a postage-due postmark was applied instead. The indicium on the cover is canceled with a P.O. datestamp of October 12, 1978, and the back bears an arriving datestamp of October 21, 1978, from the Makeyevskoye P.O. in the Yaroslavl region. The cover’s flap is unsealed, and its overall condition is remarkably pristine, which is highly unlikely for mail that genuinely went through the postal system.

Thus, this appears to be an intriguing example of a philatelic forgery created to appeal to collectors, but one that violates postal regulations.

A Variety of the 25-Kopek Postcard with “Pilot” Indicium

by Mikhail Dymshits



In V. Pantyukhin’s catalog “Standard Postcards and Special Purpose Postcards of the USSR 1923–1992” (Moscow, 2011), the postcard with the “Pilot” indicium and the 1946 coat of arms, featuring a linear instruction line and text, is listed under number 1.163 (Figure above).

The note specifies that “the postcards have varying distances from the edge of the stamp to the first dotted line—ranging from 5 to 8 mm, a shift of the stamp’s right edge relative to the end of the dotted line, and other variations.” In high (typographic) printing, such shifts in elements are common, as postcards were printed in sheets of 16, with each form manually assembled from standard elements. The indicium and coat of arms were reproduced using stereotyping and, with proper technological discipline, were identical across the entire printing form. However, the instruction line

and text were set using standard typefaces, which were reproducible but could vary in their relative positioning.

The identified variety lies in the mutual arrangement of the first instruction line and the text below it. In one case, the first vertical stroke of the letter “Н” (N) extends beyond the line, while in another, the last dot of the instruction text is positioned beyond the instruction line (as shown in the upper postcard of the illustration). In the variant with the dot beyond the instruction line, the letter “а” in the word “области” (oblasti) is also poorly printed, though this feature of the variety is not consistent.

Given the frequency of occurrence, it can be assumed that this layout was unique to only one printing form out of the 16 on the sheet of these postcards.

The Mystery of the “Free-frank” Triangle

by Mikhail Dymshits

WANTED !!!



Triangles marked “БЕСПЛАТНО” (Free-frank) on military correspondence are well-known to collectors of Soviet and Russian postal items. Introduced in 1940, they appeared in various forms during the first half of the 1940s, often indicating specific departments or units. In the postwar period, these were replaced by triangles with inscriptions such as “КРАСНОАРМЕЙСКОЕ” (Red Army) or “КРАСНОФЛОТСКОЕ” (Red Navy). In 1950, an order was issued to replace these inscriptions with “СОЛДАТСКОЕ” (Soldier's) or “МАТРОСКОЕ” (Sailor's), and in 1953, all inscrip-

tions were supposed to be changed to “ВОИНСКОЕ” (Military). In 1962, another change occurred, and the inscription became “Военнослужащего срочной службы” (Conscripted Military Personnel). However, I have not yet been able to find triangles with the “VOINSKOE” inscription, although military correspondence from 1953–1962 is quite common. Does anyone have examples of triangles with the “ВОИНСКОЕ” (VOINSKOE) inscription in their collections? If you find such an item, please send a scan to: mdymshits@yandex.ru