

The 1918 'Vaasa' War Time Provisionals of Finland

Purpose: To show the story of the War Time provisional issue of Finland

Treatment & Scope: Pre-production, production and Usage of this issue. Issued from 5 March 1918. Demonetized in 1920 and 1923. This nicely fills a one-frame exhibit.

Challenge: This was a very short lived issue, with small quantities of some values. Little mail due to war time conditions. Proofs especially are difficult, as well as timely usage of some values.

Organization:

1. Preproduction
2. Production and usage by values. Printing done in two distinct phases..
3. Epilogue-the Presentation Set.

Background: In 1917 the Czar was overthrown and Finland claimed its independence. This was recognised by Lenin, but by January of 1918 the Bolsheviks instigated a 'revolution' in Finland aided by Russian troops and Russians. These 'Reds' siezed Helsinki and the stamp stores, causing a shortage in the Northern 'White' areas. The Whites authorized a provisional issue to be lithographed in the city of Vaasa. This issue is similar to the definitives. The Whites reconquered the South in some 3 months, ending the necessity for these stamps, but they retained validity until 1920 to use up the supplies.

Keys: † discovery of new information and red highlights important information. The most notable items are matted or outlined in red.

“DIE” PROOFS

Proofs



A black print “Die” Proof on card of all first phase values, including the 15p Post Card. The 1 mark and 5 mark values are still without the ‘M’ letter. <5 known

*The single stone images of the values were all transferred to this one stone to obtain approval to proceed. Since the process was photo-lithography, there were no “dies” as such, but rather single image stones which later produced the printing stones. Note alignment marks.
One of these proofs was cut up and is the source of the reported single value black proofs.*

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Synopsis

Title and Treatment.

This is a traditional exhibit of this short-lived emergency issue. It is confined to the period 9 March 1918 for the first issues and end is 1920 with demonetization.

Background

In general, each value is treated separately, with first stamps and then usage.

The need arose when Local and Russian Bolsheviks invade/revolted and seized southern Finland, including the Capital and all stamp stocks in February, 1918. The general populace rallied to the Whites, and the Reds were beaten in April 1918. The stamps remained in use until exhaustion or 1920 as an economy measure.

This is an important period in Finland, as it was their '1st War of Independence'. Their success kept them from being swallowed by Russia as most other groups were. It also demonstrates the resilience of the postal system in the face of a National Catastrophe.

Knowledge, Study and Research

This area has had a lot of study, but I have unearthed new proofs unknown to the Finns, and by analysis showed that other items long considered scrap to actually be proofs. Also I have established that the set of imperf sheets in the epilog were properly authorized by the proper authority, showing here the only extant copy of his letter authorizing 4 sets (of which only 2 remain intact).

Rarity and Condition.

Items such as the new proofs and the epilog are extremely rare, most being unique. The proper use of the 5 mk value during the proper time is also rare, less than 10 being known.

Condition is the best available, considering the wartime conditions and the poor quality paper available for envelopes.

References:

1. Facit Catalog. Most English, least information.
2. LaPe Catalog. Good English, good information.
3. Handbook of Finnish Stamps, Fifth Volume, 2nd Edition. Helsinki 1986. pp168-204.
Excellent info, good English, but hard to find. The most definitive work.