

The Classic Postal Cards of Finland: 1871 - 1884

The Exhibit & Importance

This is a seven frame postal stationery exhibit shown in ten sections including all single and doublecards.

The postal cards, when introduced, were a significant innovation; they were inexpensive, half the cost of a letter and valid throughout Finland without regard to distance. Within a decade, this postal media became very popular with merchants.

The Postal Cards

From October 1871 until September 1884, 17 seventeen main type cards were issued. Initially, the 8 penni cards were printed in the Swedish language, valid only for mail throughout Finland, without regard to distance. The following year, new cards were issued printed in three languages, Swedish, Finnish and Russia; these cards were valid for use to Russia. In 1875, Finland joined the UPU and new 10 penni cards were issued, valid to all UPU signatories. New postal rates for domestic and international use also came into effect. Additionally, in 1875, Finland introduced its first doublecard.

Organization – Exhibit Plan

This exhibit is organized chronologically; the cards are shown as issued. Basic information is presented in the two corner headers. On the left, a description of the card; on the right, date of issue, cards printed, printer or destination of used cards are shown. Main Sections are shown in deep reddish violet bold print.

On December 31, 1884, all 8 and 16 penni cards were invalidated. The 10 penni cards remained valid for domestic service until 1891; however, the UPU stipulated new colors of stamp imprints should be introduced at the beginning of 1885. Thus, we have arrived at a good point to close the exhibit.

Contents

For each card type and important subtypes, the thrust of the display is to show the mint cards and important varieties followed by used cards in domestic and foreign traffic. Within the scope of this exhibit, there are 17 separately issued cards and approximately 50 subtypes or varieties listed in the main Finnish catalogues and many dozens of other varieties not listed

but mentioned in the literature. Also, there are no essays or proofs in private hands.

All of the cards in this exhibit were printed in two phases; first the formula card at several different private firms, then the stamp imprint, separately by hand, at the Government Printing Office, Charta Sigillata. The cutting of the formula cards from the 16 card cardboard form resulted in the stamp imprint being variously positioned in the upper left hand corner. The printer's marks, (lines) are clearly visible on many cards and explain the different positions of the stamp imprint on the first cards. These position anomalies are noted in the exhibit, but are not listed as separate subtypes.

The Challenges

There are three main challenge factors in presenting this material as a philatelic exhibit:

- 1) A number of the early mint cards are very rare and infrequently available in the philatelic market.
- 2) There are so many varieties of the early cards, it would be impossible to show them all. The challenge is in the selection of the most important material for a balanced presentation.
- 3) Upfranked cards to many foreign destinations are very elusive. Duplication would be a significant challenge.

Items of Special Interest

Mint and used examples of the first two cards, the later with the blue intermediate paper. Other subtypes of the first card printed on reddish and brownish cardboard are very difficult. Used examples of the 8 + 8 provisional card to abroad and upfranked 8 penni cards are very elusive. Difficult destinations include pre-1875 cards to Russia; also, Norway, Portugal and USA (San Francisco).

Special interest items are shown in colored ink.
R = 5 - 7 known; RR = very rare, 2 - 4 known.

Essential References

Norma (2013) & Lape Specialized Catalogues (2012)
Harri Sihtola, *Enismmäinen Postikorttimme*, 1985
Harri Sihtola, "Rare Finnish Stationeries," *The Finnish Philatelist*, Vol.7, No.2, May 2002
Cyril Schwenson, "The Classic Postal Cards of Finland," *The Finnish Philatelist*, Vol. 9, No. 1, February 2004

Exhibit Plan

Section	Content	Period	Page(s)
1	PK 1: First postal cards, Swedish text, 8 penni domestic rate	1871 - 1884	2-35
2	PK 2: Tri-lingual form, for domestic use and to Russia	1872 - 1884	36-40
3	PK 3-4: Overprints with additional text	1872 / 73 - 1884	41-48
4	PK 5-6: New footer text	1873 / 74 - 1884	49-64
5	PK 7-9: Provisional Issues, new rates for domestic and international traffic, first doublecards	1875 - 1884	65-73
6	PK 10-11: New form, Coat of Arms, single and doublecards	1875 - 1884	74-88
7	PK 12: New Coat of Arms form for foreign traffic, 16 penni rate	1875 - 1879	89-96
8	PK 13: Four languages for domestic and foreign traffic, French added, universal 10 penni rate	1879 - 1901	97-102
9	PK 14-15: New four language form, single and doublecards	1881 - 1901	103-106
10	PK 16-17: New form, header text changes, single and doublecards	1883 - 1901	107-112