

Fabulous Firsts: **Hanover** (December 1, 1850)

by B. W. H. Poole

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The former kingdom of Hanover, or Hannover as our Teutonic friends spell it, has been a province of Prussia since 1866. The second Elector of Hanover became George I of England in 1714 and from that date until 1837 the Electors of Hanover sat on the English throne. When Queen Victoria ascended the throne Hanover passed to her uncle the Duke of Cumberland. On his death (Nov. 15, 1851) the blind George V succeeded to the kingdom and he, siding with Austria in 1866, took up arms against Prussia, was defeated and driven from his throne, and the little kingdom was annexed to Prussia.



A year before the death of King Ernest (Duke of Cumberland) Hanover issued its first postage stamp. This stamp, bearing the facial value of 1 gutegroschen, was placed on sale on December 1, 1850.

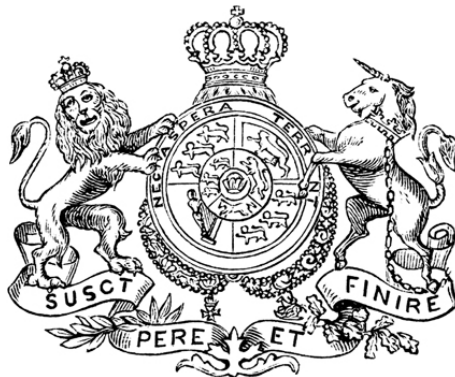


HANOVER, 1850, 1g Black on Gray Blue (1). Huge to enormous margins incl. bottom right sheet corner, strong paper color, on neat folded cover tied by Emden Dec. 31 circular datestamp

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The design shows a large open numeral “1”, inscribed “GUTENGR”, in a shield with an arabesque background. This is surmounted by the Anglo-Hanoverian arms on a rather minute scale, while a continuous scroll extending down the sides and across the bottom of the design shows in the various folds of the ribbon “FRANCO” at left, “EIN. GGR.” at right, and “HANNOVER” at bottom with numerals in each of the lower corners. The period after EIN was evidently inserted in error, for it is quite unnecessary and is not repeated in any of the other denominations of the same design issued in succeeding years.

The rather elaborate arms are, with very slight difference, the same as those borne by George III and succeeding British sovereigns of the Hanoverian house from 1801 until William IV’s death in 1837. A writer in the Philatelic Record describes them as follows:—“These arms are quarterly: one and four, England; two, Scotland; three, Ireland; with, on the escutcheon of pretence, Brunswick, Luneberg, and Westphalja, and over all (in the centre), the golden crown of Charlemagne, the mark of the dignity of arch-treasurer of the Holy Roman Empire, which belonged to the House of Brunswick. The supporters are the lion and unicorn, and beneath is the motto, “SUSCIPERE ET FINIRE”, meaning “To undertake and to finish”.



Left, the Anglo-Hanoverian arms; top right, the Hanover arms; bottom right, the Hanover arms as they appear on the First Issue. (Reminder: for a closer look, use your pdf magnifier tool.)

The die was engraved by Herr Fickenscher, a Hanoverian engraver, and the plate was made and the stamps printed on hand presses at the type foundry and printing works of Senator Culemann in Hanover. The printing form consisted of 120 casts, taken in type metal from the original die, which were arranged in twelve horizontal rows of ten. As is not unusual with stamps produced in this manner, there are plenty of minor varieties such as breaks and flaws in the frame and other lines, and defective letters. The lettering of the motto, in particular, is full of defects, and a perfect inscription is the exception rather than otherwise.

The stamps were printed in black on a gray blue paper, manufactured by Osnabruck, and this was watermarked with a series of rectangles of about the same size as the stamps. Like all the other stamps of the kingdom issued prior to 1864 this 1ggr. was entirely imperforate.

A peculiarity of this and many other Hanoverian stamps is the red gum which was used until about 1864. Writing with regard to this gum some thirty years ago the late Mr. W. A. S. Westoby made the following comments:—"What was the real reason for employing colored gum does not appear, but tradition says it was useful in the cases of stamps becoming detached from letters, as the red stain showed that the letters had been stamped, and had lost the stamps during transit. This explanation seems rather lame, for even if it were of any use when there was only one stamp, it could be of none where there were several." However, the fact that the gum was colored is of considerable importance to stamp collectors, for it forms a valuable test in distinguishing originals from reprints. When the gum was wetted it stained both stamp and cover so that even used copies generally show a more or less prominent red stain.

To a certain extent this stamp was experimental for it could not be used on foreign correspondence, but only to prepay the single letter rate within the kingdom itself or to those cities in which Hanover maintained a post office, viz:—Bremen, Hamburg, Bremerhaven, Ritzebuttel and Vegesack. At this period the thaler was worth about 78¢, so the face value of this 1 gute groschen stamp was about three cents in American money.