

Fabulous Firsts:

Mecklenburg-Strelitz (Oct. 1, 1864)

by B.W.H. Poole (with images added)



Mecklenburg-Strelitz Scott 1-6



1864 1sg Rose (Scott 4) vertical pair and slightly overlapped single, tied by "NEUBRANDENBURG 25-11 * 67" framed arc datestamps on buff cover to Posen, transit and arrival backstamps.



A great rarity, Mecklenburg-Strelitz 1/4 sg, (Sc. 1), four singles, tied by Furstenberg circular date stamps... Scott value for a single on cover is \$80,000.

The grand-duchy of Mecklenburg-Strelitz adjoins that of Mecklenburg Schwerin. Its industries, people, and geographical formation are similar to that of its sister duchy, while its capital is Neu-Strelitz. It had but one vote in the Imperial Federal Council and sent only one member to the Imperial Diet. The existing duchy dates from 1701, the title of grand-duke being acquired in 1815. At the time its postage stamps were issued its ruler was the Grand Duke Frederick William, then a child four years of age.

Philatelic History

Until October, 1864, the postal affairs of the tiny Grand-duchy of Mecklenburg-Strelitz were managed by the Thurn and Taxis administration. It then, if somewhat tardy in making up its mind to do so, decided to issue stamps of its own and the order for these was given to the Prussian State Printing Office at Berlin.

The currency was a mixed one, as both that of the thaler of its sister grand-duchy divided into 48 schilling was in use, and that in which it was divided into 30 silbergroschen. A series of six different stamps was issued, five of these having the values denoted in silbergroschen while the other had its value expressed as 1 schilling. The latter was intended for local letters only while the other denominations took the place of the similar values that had been used under the Thurn and Taxis administration.

The rates of postage on single letters were as follows:—

- Up to 10 miles, 1 silbergroschen;
- From 10 to 20 miles, 2 silbergroschen;
- Over 20 miles, 3 silbergroschen;
- Local, or "drop", letters were 1 schilling;
- The registration fee was 2 schilling;
- Special delivery cost 3 silbergroschen.

Printed matter within the confines of the duchy was charged at the rate of 1/4 silbergroschen per loth, while for other places within the German-Austrian Postal Union the rate was 1/3 silbergroschen.

The computation of the postal charges must have been difficult at times for some of the rates were expressed in schilling and some in silbergroschen and, as we have shown in the case of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, the two currencies were somewhat difficult to reconcile. The stamps had but a short life for on January 1st, 1868, they were superseded by the general issue for the North German Confederation.

The Stamps

The stamps were first issued on October 1st, 1864, and of the six values comprised in the set three were of one design and three of another. The central design on the 1/4sgr, 1/3sgr and 1 schilling consists of a rectangle of solid color on which the Arms of Mecklenburg, a bull's head on a shield surmounted by a grand-ducal coronet, are embossed in white.

On the frame the inscriptions are shown in colored letters on an engine turned ground, while in each of the four corners the numerals of value are shown in white on square blocks of solid color. The inscriptions are "MECKLENB." on the left, "STRELITZ" on the right, "EIN VIERTEL" or "EIN DRITTEL" on the top for the 1/4sgr and 1/3sgr respectively, and "SILB. GR." at the bottom for these two values.

On the 1 schilling the top frame shows "EIN" and the bottom one "SCHILLING". On the other three values the centre is similar but is on a solid oval ground. The frame around this is octagonal in shape with inscriptions on an engine turned ground. These are "MECKLENB. STRELITZ" at the top and the value in words at the bottom. In the centre, at each side, numerals of value are shown on small uncolored ovals.

The stamps were all embossed in color on plain white wove unwatermarked paper at the Prussian State Printing Office. They were printed in sheets of 100, ten rows of ten, with the side margins numbered 1 to 10 corresponding with the horizontal rows. All were rouletted 11-1/2.

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How many were printed or how many different printings took place we have been unable to discover but the totals were roughly as follows:—

1/4sgr and 1/3sgr about 60,000 of each.

1 schilling at least 20,000.

1sgr and 3 sgr about 100,000 of each.

2sgr about 50,000.

All values except the 1 schilling and 3sgr exist in fairly pronounced shades. Of the 1/4 silbergroschen 100 sheets (10,000 stamps) were printed in orangeyellow. This was the first supply and those printed subsequently were in orange-red.

Remainders

The grand-duchy having joined the North German Confederation, a notice dated December 17th, 1867, announced that on and after January 1st, 1868, the stamps of the Confederation would be substituted for those of Mecklenburg-Strelitz. The remainders were sold in 1868 to a merchant in Neu-Strelitz but no details appear to have been published regarding the numbers in the lot or the price paid for them. All the stamps of Mecklenburg-Strelitz are considerably rarer used than unused and specimens with forged cancellations are, therefore, by no means uncommon.

None of the stamps of this grand-duchy have ever been reprinted.



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