

World of Stamps: **Federated States of Micronesia**

By Geir Sør-Reime



Stone money, Yap (Sc. 20)



Like the Marianas and the Marshall Islands in the Oceania region, the Federated States of Micronesia has a shared story of Spanish discovery, German colonial rule, Japanese occupation and rule between the world wars, U.S. occupation and subsequent Trusteeship administration until 1979, when a constitutional government was formed. In 1986, full independence was achieved.

The Federated States of Micronesia, with its four constituent states Chuuk (formerly called Truk), Kosrae (for-

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merly known as Kusaie), Pohnpei (formerly known as Ponape) and Yap, has a total land area of 271 square miles spread over 607 islands; and a population of 111,000.

Prior to 1979, these states, along with Palau, which is now a separate republic, were known as the Caroline Islands, named after King Charles II of Spain. Although visited by several

Europeans, the first colonization attempt was as late as 1875, when Spain attempted to exercise control over the islands. Germany had also established itself at Yap and there was a Papal arbitration in 1885, giving the islands to Spain, but with free trading rights for the Germans. In 1899, after the Spanish-American war, Spain sold the islands to Germany. Germany attached them to German New Guinea.



*Caroline Islands
1900 (Sc. 3)*

Germany took over the islands June 1, 1899, and already on October 12, 1899, a post-office was opened on Ponape (today's Pohnpei), followed in November by a post-office on Yap. Later, post-offices were opened on Palau (1907) and Truk (1905). German stamps overprinted "Karolinen" were also issued from October 12, 1899. Because of this, unoverprinted German stamps were not used on the islands.



Caroline Islands 1901 (Sc. 9, Sc. 16)

The definitive series in the uniform designs showing the Imperial Yacht "Hohenzollern" was issued from January 1901 onwards. Like other German colonies, new



Caroline Islands
1915 (Sc. 23)

printings of these stamps, but on watermarked paper, were issued in Berlin during WWI, but were never available in the Carolines.

In 1910, a typhoon destroyed the post-office on Ponape and a shortage

of 5pf and later, of 10pf stamps resulted in several provisionals being made at Ponape. At first, 10pf stamps were bisected to serve as 5pf stamps and were authorized with the official seal of the Ponape post-office. Later, 3pf stamps were surcharged 5pf, and 20pf stamps were bisected to serve as 10pf stamps.



Top, 1910 5p provisional on card (Sc. 20);
bottom, 1910 20p bisected and used as
10p, on cover

The Caroline Islands were occupied by Japanese forces during October 1914. German colonial stamps overprinted "I.J.O. - Ponape" and "Sen" are bogus.

After WWI, the islands were administered by Japan under a mandate from the League of Nations.

During WWII, the U.S. towards the end of the war managed to isolate the large Japanese garrisons on some of the Caroline Islands, and after the Japanese surrender, the islands came under U.S. administration, from 1947 as the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.



Post-WWI mourning
label for 'lost colonies',
here Caroline Islands



1995 50th anniversary of liberation (Sc. 231a)

In 1995, four Micronesian stamps marked the 50th anniversary of the liberation from the Japanese rule. A 1986 air post stamp had celebrated the 40th anniversary of the return of the deported population of Nauru from Truk. A similar stamp was is-

sued by Nauru in 1983.

In 1986, U.S. Trusteeship administration ceased, and the Trusteeship was formally ended by the U.N. in 1990.



Left, 1986 return of Nauruans from Truk (Sc. C20); right, similar 1983 Nauru stamp (Sc. 273)

The Federated States of Micronesia were established 1979 and signed a compact of free association with the U.S. in 1986.



1990 compacts of free association with the U.S. for Micronesia (and the Marshall Islands): top Micronesian issue (Sc. 126a); bottom U.S. issue (Sc. 2507a)



The Federated States of Micronesia issued their first stamps in 1984, when an independent postal administration was established. This was celebrated with a set of four



1984 postal independence (Sc. 1-4)

stamps featuring maps of the main island of each constituent state.

A definitive series was issued simultaneously, portraying important persons in the history of the islands, and scenery from the constituent states.



1984 definitive, Kosrae, showing the "Sleeping Lady" (Sc. 10)



1984 definitive, Pohnpei Falls (Sc. 11)



An additional, 1985 value illustrated the official seal of the nation.

One of the most impressive ancient monuments in the Federation is the ruins of the offshore Nan Madol capital of the Saudeleur dynasty which ruled the islands ca 500-1450 AD. Some of the ruins of this "Venice of the Pacific" were featured on a 1985 set of postage and air post stamps (see page 6).



1985 definitive, Great Seal (Sc. 39)



1985 Nan Madol ruins
(Sc. C16)



From www.travelingeast.com: Nan Madol is a stone city located in the eastern shore of the state of Pohnpei. It is mainly composed of 90 man-made islets connected by canals and enclosed by stone walls. The city, also known as the Venice of the Pacific, was built as the residence of ancient royalties during the Saudeleur dynasty. Some islets served as mortuaries, and others were used for special purposes such as coconut oil preparation, canoe building, and food preparation. It is said that the population of Nan Madol was less than a thousand. The ruins of Nan Madol suggest that it had been inhabited as early as the first or second century AD. But it was during the eighth or ninth century that the islets were constructed. And by twelfth or thirteenth century, the construction of the megalith was begun.

What stuns archeologists is the construction of Nan Madol. The walls, which are about 17 to 25 feet tall and 17 feet thick, are made of basalt stones and arranged in an alternating pattern. Archeological investigations proved that there were no basalt sources in Nan Madol, so how the Pohnpeians transported the heavy basalt stones to the site is a mystery.

Nan Madol means "spaces between", and probably the city was named this because the "spaces between" the islands are a network of canals surrounding the island. The map shows how the islands are separated from each other by the canals, which also can be seen in the photo.



1985 booklet (Sc. 38b)

Further definitive values were added in 1986 and 1988, the latter were also issued in stamp booklets.

The post-office on Truk was depicted on a 1984 stamp issued in honor of the Ausipex philatelic exhibition in Melbourne, Australia.



Left, 1984 Truk post-office (Sc. 21); right, 1984 with 1899 German colonial stamp (Sc. C5)

Yap is well-known for its gigantic stone money, first depicted on one of the 1984 definitive stamps (see page 1).

A 1988 series illustrated the colonial history of the islands, with the Spanish, the Germans, the Japanese and the Americans.



1988 colonial history of Micronesia (Sc. 59-62)

A new definitive series issued in 1989 depicted marine fauna, as did the 1998-2001 series. The 2002-04 series however, depicted flowers as well as birds, and the 2006-07 series featured birds, butterflies and fruits (see page 8).

1989 seashells definitive (Sc. 102)





2006 Birds definitive

In 1990, there was a joint issue with the U.S. and the Republic of the Marshall Islands, celebrating the independence of the two Micronesian republics.

The first anniversary of Micronesia's admission to the U.N. was celebrated with a pair of 1993 stamps. The 15th anniversary



1992 1st anniversary of UN membership souvenir sheet (Sc. 153a)



1994 15th anniversary of Constitution (Sc. 194)

sary of the Micronesian constitution was marked with a 1994 stamp, and in 1994, four stamps celebrated the 10th anniversary of Micronesia's postal service.



1994 10th anniversary of postal independence (Sc. 198a)



1999 showing German colonial stamp (Sc. 340)

Stamps of the German colonial era were reproduced on two stamps issued 1999 for the IBRA 90 philatelic exhibition in Nuremberg. Such stamps were also reproduced on a 1984 air post set for the Ausipex 84 exhibition in Melbourne (see page 7).

Because Micronesia is a federal state, several issues depict features of each of them, including a 1989 set depicting the flags of each state (see page



1989 flags of constituent states (Sc. C39-42).

The same stamps with 44¢ denominations were not issued because the name of two of the states had been erroneously transposed (shown in pre-release press photo)



1993 native canoes, here Yap voyaging canoe, or Waaliwaiy (Sc. 173)



9), a 1993 set depicting native canoes, a



1994 costumes of the states, here Pohnpei (Sc. 193a)

1994 set depicting local costumes, and also a 2003 set for the International Year of Water, although Yap is missing from this



2005 Kosrae government complex

set. The government complex of the State of Kosrae was featured on four 2005 stamps. The 2007 Christmas series featured one church from each of the states.

In 1989, a sheetlet depicted scenes and products of “The Garden State of Kosrae”.

Tourist scenes of Pohnpei, Kosrae, and Yap appeared on 1993, 1994 and 1996 series, respectively.



1989 sheetlet for Kosrae – The Garden State (Sc. 103)

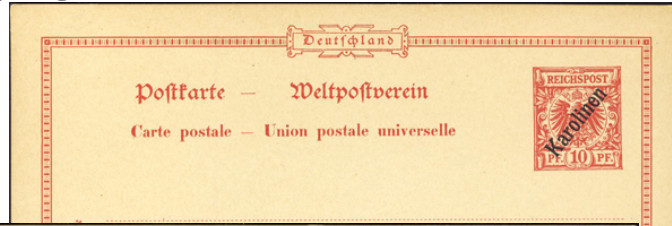


Tourism, top to bottom: 1993 Pohnpei Falls (Sc. 179); 1996 Yap meeting house (Sc. 239a); 1994 Kosrae “Sleeping Lady”.



2007 penguins

Among the more strange motifs on Micronesian stamps is a 2007 set depicting penguins.



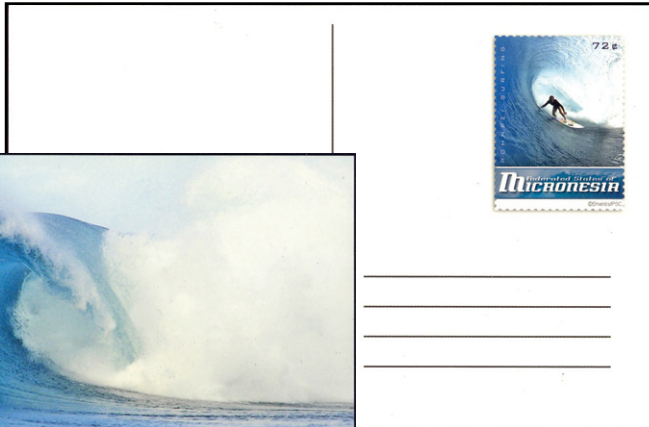
1899 postal card (Higgins & Gage 2)

1901 postal card (H&G 8)

During the German colonial period, pre-stamped postal cards were issued, both as overprints on German postal cards and with the “Hohenzollern” imprint.

After independence, Micronesia has issued a few pre-stamped envelopes and postal cards. A 2009 set featuring surfing on Pohnpei was accompanied by pre-stamped postal cards with the same stamp imprints.

2009 surfing on Pohnpei postal card, same as Sc. 786 stamp



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