

World of Topicals:

Printing History on Stamps

By George E. Pettengill

(From STAMPS Magazine, September 13, 1941, with images added)

In as much as stamps have been issued in honor of numerous events, both past and present, important and trivial, it would seem interesting to consider what philatelic honor has been paid to the art of printing. As the medium to which the postage stamp owes its existence, one would anticipate that if the occasion arose, several countries would issue stamps in honor of printing. The year 1940 was celebrated widely as the five hundredth anniversary of the invention of printing and certainly seemed a suitable time for such recognition, but for some reason the philatelic honors were meager.

In fact, only Yugoslavia and Bulgaria issued stamps specifically to commemorate the five hundredth anniversary of the invention of printing. The Yugoslavian stamp, issued during a philatelic exhibition at Zagreb, September 29 to October 7, 1940 has a face value of five paras fifty dinars. (Scott No. 159). This has an attractive design in

Yugoslavia Sc. 159 and a souvenir postal card issued at the Philatelic Exhibition with the stamp cancelled on its September 29, 1940 first day of issue.



two shades of green, showing a stone bridge at Obod. At the bottom are the dates “1440 —1940” and “Gutenberg” the name of the man whom we honor as the first printer from movable types. In the outer frame there is an inscription including the date 1493, the year in which printing was introduced into Jugoslavia at Zengg and Cetinje.

The Bulgarian set was issued on December 16, 1940, a special commemorative cancellation having been applied that day to mail franked with these stamps (Scott Nos. 384-385). The one leva, green, has the bust of Gutenberg as its design, and the dates 1440-1940 at the top, denoting the anniversary. The two levas, reddish-brown, features a portrait of Nikola Karastoyanoff, the first Bulgarian printer, with the dates 1840—1940 indicating the hundredth anniversary of the introduction of printing into Bulgaria. Karastoyanoff printed biographies of the saints and school books in the basement of his home at Samokkoff. The original press, a picture of which appears on the lower part of the stamp, is now preserved in a museum in Sofia.



Although these stamps are the only ones issued especially to note the anniversary of the invention of printing, Germany, the native land of Gutenberg, had announced the issuance of a set in several denominations. This, however, apparently never appeared, as no further mention of it was found.

Gutenberg did receive some philatelic homage in Germany that year, as a statue purporting to be his likeness is shown on one of the stamps issued in connection with the Leipzig Fair. This stamp is of three pfennig denomination, brown in color (Scott No. 494). In addition to the figure of Gutenberg holding an open book with his name thereon, it shows a picture of the Deutsche Bucherei



(German Library) in Leipzig, founded in 1912. With well over a million volumes, it contains a complete collection of all the German publications since 1913, and serves as a center of information about German books. However, as this stamp was issued for a Fair, it is not strictly one honoring the art of printing.



Subsequent to this article, stamps honoring Gutenberg include, left to right: 1954 Sc. 723, 500th Anniversary of the publishing of the Gutenberg Bible; 1961 Sc. 826, 8pf value from the Portraits definitive issue; 2000 Sc. 2068, 600th Birth Anniversary

Even though these are the only stamps issued recognizing either the inventor or invention of printing, in several cases other countries have noted the first introduction of printing into their civilizations. The earliest of these in point of date noted the first introduction of print of the stamps, is the set from Montenegro in 1893 (Shown, Sc. 25). It is merely the then current issue overprinted with the inscription “Commemoration of Printing” and the date 1493. This date, 1493, has already been noted as appearing on the Gutenberg stamp of Yugoslavia, into which country Montenegro was incorporated after the [First] World War. The first Montenegrin press was established at Cetinje under the guidance of the monk, Makarije. It had another distinction in that it was the second press to make use of Cyrillic type. At least four books appeared from this press, the earliest being an Octoechus.



Moving farther eastward we find that Russia commemorated philatelically the three hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the death of its first printer, Fedorov. The

exact date of the introduction of printing into Russia is not known. There is evidence of interest even before the year 1500, but it is clear that in the time of Ivan the Terrible a press was set up under the management of Ivan Fedorov, assisted



by Peter Timofeev. Their first publication, commenced in 1563 and finished in 1564, was the *Apostol* or Liturgical Epistles and Gospels in Church Slavonic. After publishing several other items, the press was burned sometime before 1568, and Fedorov had to flee from Moscow. The stamps noting his death are two in number, twenty kopecks, rose, and forty kopecks, blue (Scott Nos. 529 and, shown, 530.) The design consists of a statue of Fedorov in the center, flanked on one side by a typical handpress and on the other by a modern high-speed press.

One may note also that Hungary, on one of the stamps issued in 1940 for the First National Protestant Day, shows an old printing press as part of the design. The principal feature of the stamp is a picture of Gaspar Karoli, c. 1529-1590, who first translated the Bible into the Magyar language. In his hand he holds the Bible, above is the printing press, and below is the name "Vizsoly," the place where this Bible was printed (Scott No. B 104,



shown here with Specimen overprint. Also shown, below that, is the Gutenberg airmail stamp from the 1948 Explorers and Inventors set, Sc. C53.)

The introduction of printing to the western hemisphere has been more adequately and interestingly noted. In 1939, Mexico issued a set of six stamps in commemoration of the four hundredth anniversary of printing in the Americas (Scott Nos. 748-750 and C97-99, see page 5). It was in 1539 that Juan Cromberger, the foremost printer in Spain, concluded an agreement with one of his work-



Sc. 748-50, left to right: Juan de Zumarraga; First printing shop in Mexico; Antonio de Mendoza

Sc. C97-99, left to right: First engraving made in Mexico; First work of legislation printed in America; Oldest preserved Mexican printing



men, Juan Pablo, to establish a press in Mexico. That fall Pablo's first publication appeared under the patronage of Fray Juan de Zumarraga, the first bishop of Mexico. The bishop's portrait appears on the two centavo stamp, and on the ten centavo stamp is a portrait of Don Antonio de Mendoza, the viceroy, also an early patron of the press. The building in which the printing press was established is shown on the five centavo stamp.

The colophon of the *Manual de Adultos*, 1540, the earliest extant example of Mexican printing, appears on the one peso stamp. The design is unique in its subject matter, and the colophon printed in red contrasts with the brown of the stamp's other textual matter. The first engraving produced in Mexico, 1544, is reproduced on the twenty centavo stamp, and on the forty centavo appears the title page of the first work on legislation printed in the country, in 1563. This is one of the few stamps to reproduce a title page in its design. The most representative and most detailed, this set honors fully the introduction of printing into the western hemisphere.

To the north in 1939 the U.S. was also celebrating the anniversary of the introduction of printing into Colonial America. One



hundred years later than in Mexico, the first press was set up in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1639, by Stephen Daye and his son, Matthew, under the auspices of the Widow Glover. The design for the stamp consists of a reproduction of the press as used by Stephen Daye (Scott No. 857). At the time of the stamp's appearance there was some discussion as to whether the press illustrated was the actual one employed by Daye or not, but at least it is typical, and is a fitting subject for a design. (See page 8 for more on this subject.)



One other country in the western hemisphere has noted a printing anniversary. In 1930 Honduras issued three stamps, the same design



and denomination, two centavo, but in three different colors, orange, ultramarine, and red (Scott Nos. 295-297, shown here on a Registered, August 11, 1930, cover to the Scott Catalogue editors). The design reproduces the title page of the first issue of the Gaceta del Gobierno, or Government Gazette, the stamp thus commemorating one hundred years of newspaper printing.

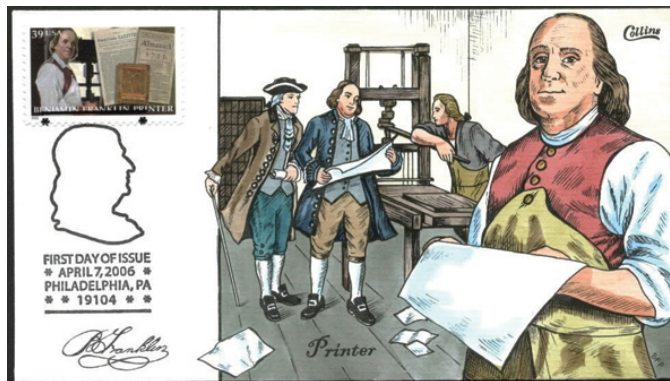
Honduras was the second country to use a title page as a design, the first being Portugal in 1924. The stamps, part of a set commemorating the birth of Camoens, reproduce the title page of his famous work *Os Luciadas*, printed in 1572 by Antonio Gocaluez (Scott Nos. 330-334, shown, Sc. 334). Mexico is the latest and its contribution has been mentioned previously in this article.



Although not historical in its significance, one may note that Mongolia has issued a stamp showing a Mongol at a printing press (Scott No. 62). Other than the United States Printing Tercentenary issue this is the only stamp in which a printing press has been featured as the design. (Shown here, it actually pictures a weaver at a loom!)



Benjamin Franklin, certainly known to everyone as a printer, has been portrayed on numerous United States issues from the five cent of the first issue in 1847 (Scott No. 28) to the one-half cent of the last regular issue in 1938 (Scott No. 803). However, since this philatelic honor is undoubtedly due to his activities as Postmaster General and in other capacities, rather than as a printer, mention is made only in passing of the existence of these stamps. (In 2006, the U.S. issued a set of four stamps honoring Franklin as Statesman, Scientist, Printer—shown here in Sc. 4023 on a Collins FDC—and Postmaster General.)



Elizabeth Glover and the First American Printing Press

The caption for the image in the upper right on page 4, from the original article reads, “America’s first printing press, set up in 1639 by Stephen Daye...” However, Daye was given more credit than he deserves, not only in this article, but also in other accounts. This more accurate description can be found at

<http://www.uh.edu/engines/epi733.htm>:

“In 1638, Mrs. Elizabeth Glover set up America’s first press at the Massachusetts Colony’s new college, Harvard. Mrs. Glover and her husband, the Rev. Jose Glover, had sailed from England with five children, a few technicians, and a printing press. Jose Glover was a nonconforming minister who meant to provide religious books and tracts for the Colony.

“But he died on the ship across. So Mrs. Glover went right to work setting up the printing shop. Her chief assistant was the oldest technician, Stephen Daye. We now credit Daye, who could barely read or write, with being America’s first printer.

“Harvard's first president, Henry Dunster, took an interest in the press and in Mrs. Glover. They married three years later. By then, the press had already issued a broadside, *The Freeman’s Oath*, an 8-page Almanac for 1639, and the famous *Bay Psalm Book*.

“The Bay Psalm Book was both ambitious and crude—a formidable achievement under the worst conditions. It was 5 by 7-1/2 inches, just shy of 300 pages, and loaded with errors. It held only the rough-hewn Psalm paraphrases. There was no music in the early editions. For a while, the words had to serve as mnemonics for those sturdy tunes we still sing today.”

On page 9 we reproduce two photographs that can be found at another informative site:

<https://www.nwhm.org/html/exhibits/womenwithdeadlines/wwd2.htm>

The Daye Press is the printing press brought to Massachusetts Colony by Elizabeth Glover. Stephen Day was Glover's printing operator and chief assistant, for whom the press was named.



Library of Congress
LC-USZ62-46687



Two pages from one of the 11 surviving copies of *The Bay Psalm Book*, the first book printed in the American colonies. The full title is *The Whole Booke of Psalmes Faithfully Translated into English Metre*.

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