

## EUROPEAN CLASSICS

### XXI. ICELAND

*Iceland* — its native Icelandic name being *Island* — is an island of volcanic origin in the North Atlantic, on the Arctic Circle, about 150 miles southeast of Greenland and 500 miles northwest of Scotland. It was during the classic stamp period a possession of Denmark. Its area extends to almost 40,000 square miles, but because about four-fifths of its territory is uninhabitable, it is sparsely populated. In 1870, it had less than 70,000 inhabitants. The capital, Reykjavik, was not much more than a fishing village; in 1870, it had a population of a little over 2,000.

The *history* of Iceland is an old one. It seems to have been discovered by Irish monks, late in the 8th century. Some of them seem to have settled there, but nothing is known of how they could have existed in this rather barren land. Around 850, Vikings from Norway moved in and established the first settlements. Early in the 10th century the country was already so well organized that in 930 an aristocratic republic was proclaimed and a parliament, called the Althing, assembled, which was the first legislative body of this kind in the world. Christianity was introduced around the year 1000, but the conditions deteriorated, and in 1262, the end of the republic came when the island accepted Norwegian sovereignty and retained only a kind of limited autonomy. When in 1397 Norway was united with Denmark, Iceland came under Danish sovereignty, under which it remained, although Norway was separated from Denmark in 1814. Denmark disregarded the separate rights of Iceland more and more, and, especially in the 18th century, the island, harassed by volcanic eruptions, disease, famine, pirates, etc., became more a liability than an asset. The Althing ceased to function in 1798; it was restored in 1843, but only with consultative power. Eventually, in 1874, a new constitution was given to the island which restored the power of the Althing, although all laws still had to be approved by the King of Denmark. A special ministry for Iceland was created in Copenhagen which governed the island during the classic stamp period.

The *postal history* of Iceland is a rather short one. When Denmark established its own postal service in 1624, this was not

extended to Iceland. In such a sparsely populated country, a satisfactory postal service was difficult to maintain in any ease. Considering the fact that communications were maintained only on foot, sometimes with the help of packhorses, and only during the summertime, while they often became impossible during the winter, we should not be surprised that no organized mail service existed on the island. The population had to send letters, money or parcels through occasional travellers. Only in 1776, a Royal decree established a rather primitive mail service on the island which was connected with the yearly sailings between Copenhagen and Reykjavik. The first trip of a postal schooner took place in 1782. The yearly trip for Iceland started from Copenhagen early in October and normally arrived at Reykjavik after about three weeks. When there were adverse winds, the trip often took much longer, up to eight weeks, occasionally even several months. The return trip started in Reykjavik in March. Aside from this official mail trip, private trading vessels also carried mail when occasion arose. The first mail routes on the island started to function in 1786, and two yearly trips were scheduled, one from Reykjavik after the arrival of the boat from Copenhagen and the other to Reykjavik to connect with the departure of the boat to Copenhagen. The mail service was primarily for official mail; only when such mail was to be carried, the mail trips were made and then took also private mail. When there was no official mail, the trip was cancelled. These primitive conditions remained unchanged for many decades, and when on April 1, 1851, Denmark issued its first postage stamps, it was not found necessary to introduce this new gadget in Iceland also. But in the decade from 1850 to 1860 the number of sailings from Copenhagen to Reykjavik increased considerably, especially since the first steamer arrived in Reykjavik in 1858. In 1859 there were already seven round trips, most of them with connecting service on the mail routes in Iceland. There were also sailings between Reykjavik and Liverpool. Eventually, in 1869, a law was passed which put the mail service in Iceland under the supervision of the Danish General Post Office at Copenhagen. In consequence, the Danish Postal

Administration started on March 1, 1870 a regular mail service from Reykjavik and Seydisfjörður in Iceland to Copenhagen via the Faroe Islands. At the same time post offices were opened at the above two places in Iceland and Danish postage stamps introduced there. The Danish mail service extended only to Reykjavik and Seydisfjörður, which were connected by the steamer to Copenhagen, while the mail routes on the island, still in a primitive state, were under domestic administration. While the Danish mail service functioned rather well, the domestic mail service was irregular and often delayed. The steamer to Copenhagen frequently had to sail without having received the inland mail.

A big step forward was made with the law of February 26, 1872, which established an Icelandic Postal Administration having jurisdiction over the inland mail, but under the supervision of the Danish General Post Office at Copenhagen. The latter maintained control of the mail service to Denmark and to foreign countries. The new administration established a General Post Office at Reykjavik and during 1873 opened 18 post offices in the various parts of the country. In addition, 58 letter collecting agencies were created during the same period, subordinated to the post offices. During the following years, until the end of the classic stamp period in 1876, four more post offices and five letter collecting agencies were opened and 7 post offices as well as 18 letter collecting agencies closed, some of them after only a few weeks of operation. At the end of the classic stamp period, on July 31, 1876, 15 post offices and 45 letter collecting agencies were functioning. Mail on the inland mail routes was carried on foot, sometimes with the help of packhorses, occasionally also by carriages. Coastal ships were required to take mail to the ports at which they called. The mail service to and from Denmark and foreign countries was, by an agreement of Sept. 26, 1872, entrusted to the Danish postal service. No further changes took place in this setup during the classic stamp period. On July 1, 1875 Iceland, through the fact that it was considered a Danish colony, became a member of the Universal Postal Union.

The primitive condition of the mail service in Iceland is also recognizable by the *number of pieces of mail* carried by the Icelandic

mail service. In 1874, about 30,000 pieces of mail were carried, less than half a piece a year per head of the population. In 1876, at the end of the classic stamp period, the figure had risen only slightly to 33,500 pieces a year.

As in Denmark, the *currency* during the classic stamp period was the *Rigsdaler* (rd) divided into 96 *Skilling* (sk). On Jan. 1, 1875, simultaneously with Denmark, a new currency was introduced, on the same basis as there, but with different names for the units: 1 krona (kr, plural kronur) equivalent to 100 Aurar (aur, singular eyrir). 1rd was equivalent to 2k, therefore 1sk about 2 aurar. To make up for the 4% difference, because 1k (100 aur) was only 48sk, the relation 2 to 1 was used only for the amounts up to 11sk, while for higher amounts 1 to 4 aur were added to the aurar amount to arrive at the correct equivalent. — For the *weight*, the metric system was used, 1 pund (pound) was divided into 100 kvint; one kvint was equivalent to 5 grams. *Distances* were measured by the metric system, as in Denmark.

We terminate the *classic stamp period* of Iceland with the introduction of the kronur currency on the stamps, which took place on *August 1, 1876*. Therefore, as for Denmark, only the stamps in skilling currency are considered in this monograph.

Iceland first used Danish stamps and stationery. Such *Postage Stamps* were introduced on *March 1, 1870*, *Postal Envelopes* and *Postal Cards* on *April 1, 1871*. The country introduced its own stamps, *Postage Stamps* and *Official Stamps*, on *Jan. 1, 1873*; no postal stationery was in use from that date until after the end of the classic stamp period.

The *postal rates* which came into force simultaneously with the introduction of postage stamps, on March 1, 1870, were established only for mail to Denmark, the domestic mail service on the land routes at that time was free. For letters to Denmark the rate was 8sk up to 15g and 16sk over 15g up to 250g, which was the maximum weight allowed. Printed matter and samples paid half of the letter rate. The registration fee was 8sk. Money letters paid, in addition to the postage, 8sk up to 50rd value, 16sk over 50 to 100rd value and 16sk for every additional 100rd value. Money orders cost 12sk up to 25rd and 24sk up to 50rd, which was the maximum. For parcels 16sk was charged



up to 1 lb, 32sk over 1 lb to 2 lb and 48sk over 2 lb up to 5 lb, which was the limit. Ship mail between Reykjavik and Seydisfjörður paid half the above rates, except for the registration fee which was also 8sk. For unpaid mail, as far as it was accepted, a 50% surtax was collected from the addressee. On April 1, 1871, reduced rates came into force. All letters up to 250g now paid 8sk, printed matter and samples 4sk. For money letters, 16sk was now charged per 100rd value in addition to the postage, parcels paid 12sk plus 4sk per lb. Money orders were 4sk per 15rd, with a maximum of 60rd. Unpaid mail now paid a surcharge of 100%, but unpaid printed matter was charged double the letter rate. When the Icelandic Postal Service was established on Jan. 1, 1873, it abolished the free domestic postage. The first domestic letter rates were established on April 1, 1873, namely for letters 4sk up to 15g, 8sk over 15g to 125g and 12sk over 125 to 250g. For local letters, only half of the postage was charged. Printed matter and samples paid half the letter rates, with a minimum of 4sk, money letters 4sk for every 100rd in addition to the postage, parcels 16sk per lb up to the maximum of 5 lb. Registration fee was 8sk. There were special fees for other services, as counting of the money in money letters, writing of addresses, wrapping, sealing, etc. For unpaid mail, double postage was collected. For mail to Denmark, generally double inland rates went into force for letters on Jan. 1, 1873, namely 8sk up to 15g, 16sk from 15 to 125g and 24sk from 125 to 250g. Printed matter and samples cost 8sk up to 125g and 16sk from 125 to 250g. The additional fee for money letters was 12sk for every 100rd value, and parcels paid 12sk plus 4sk per pound, if sent overland in Iceland 16sk per lb more. Money orders cost 12sk for every 15rd, to a maximum of 60rd. Registration fee was 8sk. Mail to foreign countries paid various rates. On Jan. 1, 1875, the rates were established in the new currency but until Aug. 1, 1876, still had to be paid with stamps in skilling currency. The three domestic letter rates were now 10aur (5sk), 20aur (10sk) and 30aur (15sk), printed matter and samples cost 10aur (5sk) and 20aur (10sk). The value fee for money letters was 5aur (2½sk) for 100kr; for money orders 20aur (10sk) for each 30kr was to be paid (maximum 80aur = 39sk). Parcels cost

30aur (15sk) for each lb. Registration fee now was 20aur (10sk). To Denmark, the letter rates now were 16aur (8sk), 30aur (15sk) and 50aur (24sk), printed matter cost 16aur (8sk) and 25aur (12sk), the value fee for money letters was 25aur (12sk) for 100kr value. Parcels paid 25aur (12sk) plus 10aur (5sk) per lb. For money orders, the charge was 20aur (10sk) per 30kr. Registration fee was 16aur (8sk). To foreign countries, varied rates were in force, but on July 1, 1875 the rates of the Universal Postal Union were introduced, namely for mail to Europe 20aur (10sk) for each 15g letter and 6aur (3sk) for each 50g printed matter or sample. The registration fee was 16aur (8sk). Special surcharges were collected to countries outside Europe.

When postage stamps were introduced in Iceland on March 1, 1870, five denominations were put on sale, namely *Danish postage stamps* of 2sk, 3sk, 4sk, 8sk and 16sk. The 4sk value was necessary only for letters between Reykjavik and Seydisfjörður, as well as for printed matter, while for all other mail the lowest fee was 8sk, and this value, together with the 16sk, constituted by far the majority of the Danish stamps used in Iceland. The 2sk was needed only for printed matter between Reykjavik and Seydisfjörður, which certainly did not amount to much. Otherwise, this denomination as well as the 3sk seem to have been usable only in combinations and on mail to foreign countries. The need for higher values led to the introduction of the Danish 48sk stamp in Iceland on April 1, 1871, but very few of these stamps seem to have been used. Therefore, when Iceland issued its own *postage stamps* on Jan. 1, 1873, only four denominations were introduced first, namely 2sk, 4sk, 8sk and 16sk. A 3sk denomination followed a few months later, it was probably first put on sale on April 1, 1873. The *official postage stamps*, which were introduced simultaneously with the first Icelandic postage stamps, consisted only of two denominations, 4sk and 8sk. During the period of use of Danish postage stamps, postal stationery was introduced also, on April 1, 1871, namely Danish *postal envelopes* of 2sk and 4sk and Danish *postal cards* of 2sk and 4sk. No postal stationery was in use during the classic stamp period from Jan. 1, 1873 on.

The *Danish stamps* and *stationery* were withdrawn from use and *demonetized* on

Dec. 31, 1872, the day before the first Icelandic stamps in skilling currency were introduced. These skilling stamps remained in use until July 31, 1876, on which day they were withdrawn and demonetized, because the new stamps in aurar currency were issued on the following day.

The use of stamps was obligatory from their introduction on. Unpaid letters were accepted with a surtax, which was first 50%, from April 1, 1871 on 100%, and which was collected from the addressee. Such unpaid letters are scarce, but a few are known. Registered letters, printed matter and samples were accepted only when they were prepaid by the sender. When unfranked printed matter or samples were found in mail boxes, they were treated as letters and double letter rates collected from the addressee.

The printing material and the stamps of Iceland were manufactured by the same engravers and printers who were responsible for the contemporary stamps of Denmark. The facts given for the Denmark stamps — in Volume III, pages 81 to 88 — to a large part also apply to the stamps of Iceland. We will relate only those data which differ from those reported for the stamps of Denmark.

The design of the first Iceland stamps was similar to that of the contemporary Denmark stamps. The center was identical and only the frame differed. This frame originated from an essay for a 48sk of Denmark which had been rejected and now was adapted for use in Iceland. In contrast to Denmark, the official stamps were printed in the same design as the postage stamps, differing only in the inscription and in the colors. The design was the work of the engraver P. C. Batz of Copenhagen.

Only one die was cut in steel which was used for all denominations of the postage stamps and the official stamps. It had no inscriptions except for the country's name ISLAND at top. This master die was also made by the engraver P. C. Batz.

To obtain the printing material, seven stereotypes were obtained from the master die, and the inscriptions for the five denominations of the postage stamps and the two official stamps engraved, for each denomination separately. This engraving consisted of the large figure of value in the center as well as POSTFRIM. (abbreviation for

"Postfrimerki") for the postage stamps and PJON. PRIM. ("Pjonustu Frimerki") for the official stamps, in both cases followed by the abbreviated value indication, for example "4 Sk." These secondary dies were used for the manufacture of the cliches for the printing. For the small printings of the Icelandic stamps, it seemed more economical to work with small settings, as at those times metal was expensive and labor cheap. Therefore, only twenty-five stereotypes were made for each denomination and assembled to a setting of 5x5. The cliches were spaced rather widely, 3½mm. between rows as well as between columns. There was no margin print except for needle dots to facilitate the perforating process. All printing material was manufactured by the H. H. Thiele Printing Works of Copenhagen which also printed the stamps.

The printing, which was done on the letterpress, was rather complicated, as the printers had to supply sheets of 100 stamps while the settings consisted only of 25 stereotypes. Therefore each sheet of paper had to go through the printing press four times to be complete, a task which was accomplished with rather surprising accuracy, the space between the four quarters of the sheets usually being just as wide as that between the cliches of the setting, and no greater differences than 1mm. are noticeable. The printing was also rather careful in all other respects, and aside from occasional over-inking it was uniform and well done.

The same watermarked machine-made paper as for the contemporary Denmark stamps was used. It was thin and brittle. Each stamp had a crown as watermark, and the margin watermark showed a crown in each of the top corners and a posthorn in each of the bottom corners, with KGL. POSTFRMK. in double-lined Roman capitals on all four sides. Occasionally, the printing was shifted, so that stamps can be found with parts of the margin watermark or, as exception, entirely without watermark. All values of the postage stamps (the 4sk only perf. 14x13½, the 16sk in both perforations) and the 4sk official stamp (perf. 12½ only) were found with inverted watermark; these are scarce to rare.

The color scheme for the first stamps of Iceland was partly related to that of the Denmark issue of 1870. The differences seem to have to do with the fact that the con-



temporary Denmark stamps were bicolored while the Iceland stamps were printed only in one color. For the 2sk, 4sk and 8sk the basic colors were the same, namely *blue*, *carmine* and *brown*, but for the 3sk (Denmark lilac) *gray* and for the 16sk (Denmark green) *yellow* was chosen. While the official stamps in Denmark had a different design but the same color scheme as the postage stamps, the same design but other colors were used for Iceland's official stamps, namely *green* for the 4sk and *lilac* for the 8sk, incidentally the same two colors which were used for the Danish 3sk and 16sk, but not used for the same denominations of the Iceland stamps; in that way they were free to be used for the official stamps of Iceland.

The *inks* used for the Iceland stamps were rather uniform, and no shades of any significance can be found. The variations of the color of the 8sk official stamp are due to various factors after the printing which influenced the delicate lilac color of this stamp.

The *gum* used for the first Iceland stamps was yellowish to brownish, it penetrated the paper and made it transparent, increasing its brittleness.

The same *perforation* devices as used for the contemporary stamps of Denmark were employed for the first Iceland stamps, namely a comb perforation 14x13½ (14x16 perms) and a line perforation 12½. Of the postage stamps, 2sk, 4sk, 8sk and 16sk exist in CP 14x13½, 3sk, 4sk and 16sk in LP 12½. Of the official stamps, the 4sk exists in both perforations, the 8sk only in CP 14x13½. The perforations run through all sheet margins for LP 12½, while for CP 14x13½ only the bottom sheet margin is perforated through. On a few sheets in LP 12½, the margin perforation was omitted, so that stamps with attached sheet margin, without perforation between, exist. Such varieties are known of the 16sk postage stamp (margin at left or at right) and of the 4sk official stamp (margin at left or at top). All values except the 3sk also exist imperforate and multiples are known of them. They are, except for the 8sk official stamp, un-gummed and come from sample sheets which seem to have been lifted from the official files. The imperforate 4sk also exists with inverted watermark. Some catalogs also list the 3sk imperforate, but we have never seen a multiple, and as long as there is no proof

to the contrary, we must consider the supposed imperforate 3sk stamps as clipped wide-margined perforated copies.

The first Iceland stamps were issued in *sheets* of 100, as printed. As in Denmark, a quantity discount of 4% was given on the purchase of full sheets of stamps. Rather small *quantities* were printed of all these stamps, according to the official records, namely, of the postage stamps, 40,000 copies each of the 2sk, 8sk and 16sk, 25,000 copies of the 3sk and 100,000 copies of the 4sk, while of the official stamps, 50,000 copies 4sk and 30,000 copies 8sk were made.

When the Iceland stamps in Skilling currency were demonetized on July 31, 1876, despite the small quantities printed considerable *remainders* were left in the hands of the postal administration. No figures are available, but it seems that of most denominations, although they were in use for more than 3½ years, only a fraction of the stamps printed was actually used on mail. This is also evident from the fact that in these 3½ years roughly 110,000 pieces of mail were handled by the post offices in Iceland, which certainly could not use up the 325,000 stamps printed. Shortly after the demonetization, the Icelandic postal administration started to sell mixed lots of the demonetized stamps to stamp dealers. These sales show that practically no 4sk officials, perf. 14x13½, were in the remainders, and that of the 2sk and 16sk, perf. 14x13½, only small quantities were available, while of the other values there was a larger supply, especially of the 4sk officials, perf. 12½, as well as the 4sk, perf. 14x13½, and of the 16sk, perf. 12½, postage stamps. Therefore, except for the 4sk official, perf. 14x13½, none of these stamps are really scarce in *unused* condition, and most of them are readily available in *multiples*. Unused blocks of four are known of all denominations and in all perforations. Even full sheets of 100 have been preserved of several of them; we know of the postage stamps 4sk, 8sk and 16sk, perf. 14x13½, and 16sk, perf. 12½, as well as the 4sk, perf. 12½, of the officials.

In great contrast to the relative abundance of unused copies, it is rather difficult to get the early Iceland stamps genuinely *used*. It is even hard to get acceptable single copies, and if we look for *multiples*, the going becomes really difficult. The rates generally did not make the use of multiples



Fig. 112 (Helen Forster Novy Collection)

necessary. Pairs are rare, and we doubt that they exist of all denominations; we have seen them only of the 3sk and of the 8sk officials. We have also seen a strip of three of the latter, but no strips of other denominations and, of course, no blocks of any of them.

The stamps of the first issue of Iceland *on entires* belong to the cover rarities. Only few covers seem to have survived, and we know less than a dozen entires with these stamps, almost all of them addressed to Copenhagen while domestic mail does not seem to have been preserved at all. This seems to be the reason that we have never seen any of the officials on entires. Neither have we seen the 2sk or 3sk alone used on entire; it seems that they were used mostly to pay the 8sk rate to Denmark by using two 3sk and one 2sk (Fig. 112). In any case, all covers with Iceland stamps in Skilling currency are rarities, and they fetch very high prices when one of the few known ones is offered. There are no first day covers or even first day cancellations off cover known, and there are no emergency or mixed frankings on record.

When *Danish stamps* were introduced in Iceland on March 1, 1870, the 1864 issue was current in Denmark, and therefore the first shipment or shipments contained stamps of that issue. Although all five denominations

of the postage stamps were sent to Reykjavik, only 2sk, 4sk, 8sk and 16sk were found with Icelandic cancellation, while no copy of the 3sk seems to have survived. A few months later, the 1870 issue was introduced in Denmark, and further shipments of stamps to Iceland consisted of stamps of that issue. Although again all six denominations were sent to Iceland, only four are known with Icelandic cancellation, namely 3sk, 4sk, 8sk and 16sk, while no copies of the 2sk and 48sk proving their use in Iceland seem to have been preserved. We have no evidence that of the 2sk and 4sk also stamps with LP 12½ were sent to Iceland. The 4sk Denmark of 1858 also has been reported with Icelandic cancellation, but we have not seen it. As all Skilling stamps of Denmark remained valid for postage long after 1870, such use of an older stamp, probably brought over by a traveller or sent for return postage, seems possible. We have never seen any Danish stamps on entires from Iceland, and it seems that no such covers have survived. Therefore, no first day covers with these stamps exist, and no first day of use can be proven on stamps off cover. Only about a year after the introduction of adhesives, early in 1871, Danish postal envelopes and postal cards were also sent to Iceland. Of the envelopes, both denominations of the 1866 issue, 2sk and 4sk, were sent, of the cards both



denominations, 2sk and 4sk, of the issue of April 1, 1871. As far as we could ascertain, none of these postal stationery items has been found used in Iceland, although their use is confirmed by the files and by newspaper reports.

Of none of the Skilling stamps of Iceland *Reprints* exist, but for a not too expensive field, classic Iceland is rather well supplied with *Forgeries* and *Fakes*. The whole set of postage and official stamps was imitated several times, but all these *forgeries* are rather crude and can mislead only a beginner, despite the faked watermark they sometimes have. More dangerous are *fakes*, which either concern the perforation or the cancellation. Stamps in the cheaper perforation — of the postage stamps the 4sk, perf. 14x13½ and the 16sk, perf. 12½, of the officials the 4sk, perf. 12½—are reperforated to simulate the scarcer perforation. In regard to faked cancellations, two kinds can be distinguished, the so-called “remainder” cancellations and cancellations with imitation postmarks. The buyer of the remainders seems to have obtained one of the later Reykjavik postmarks in sans-serif type, but with the date also in figures of the same type — not, as the first Danish postmark, with the date in Roman type figures — and cancelling-to-order of remainder stamps with other such postmarks, which were introduced after the demonetization of the Skilling stamps, also seems to have been done. Such “remainder” cancellations actually are fakes, and stamps cancelled in this way should not be accepted as genuine by a careful collector. This is, of course, also true for cancellations with faked postmarks, some of them imitating existing ones, others — as for example a target canceller — being pure phantasy.

One of the troubles the collector of Iceland stamps encounters is related to their *condition*. Their very brittle paper makes it difficult to obtain stamps which will satisfy the collector who wants his stamps perfect. Unused stamps still can be obtained in such condition, although a large majority of the stamps offered and in dealer stocks is faulty, especially in respect to the perforation, because the slightest bend or crease makes perforations or even whole corners come off. This calamity is still greater for used copies, as 95% of all preserved copies have short perforations, rounded corners or even more serious faults. Perfect used copies are rare

and sought after, so that they will fetch high prices when offered at auction. The average collector will have to be satisfied with stamps which have imperfections, otherwise he will be unable to fill the spaces of his album, especially when he is looking for used copies.

The story of the *postmarks* of Iceland is a very short one. During the pre-stamp period, no postmarks seem to have been in use, at least no indications exist and no examples of such use were found. The first postmarks were officially introduced simultaneously with the Danish stamps, on March 1, 1870. At that time, the two post offices which were established, Reykjavik and Seydisfjörður, supposedly each obtained a town postmark and a numeral canceller, in the contemporary Danish design, the first being a single circle with the town name in sans-serif letters and the date in Roman type figures, the second a three-ring canceller with the numbers “236” and “237” in the center. But only the two postmarks of Reykjavik, the circle town as well as the “236” canceller, are known used on stamps, while those of Seydisfjörður have not been found, and it seems doubtful whether any cancellations of this small post office have survived on the classic stamps. When Iceland took the postal service in its own hands, these Danish-type postmarks remained in use, but new postmarks were introduced, single circles with the town name and the date (day and month in figures), all in Roman type. This first Icelandic type of postmarks — and the last one to be found during the classic stamp period — is known from Reykjavik and the fifteen original post offices, as well as from five more post offices which were opened during the classic stamp period.

The letter collecting agencies had no postmarks during the classic stamp period. The stamps on letters mailed at such agencies were cancelled at the first post office they reached. In the rare cases when a piece of mail went from one agency to another without touching a post office, manuscript cancellation seems to have been used.

While the Danish stamps used in Iceland, as far as we can ascertain, are known cancelled only with the numeral canceller “236” of Reykjavik, the town postmark being put alongside of the stamps on the mail, the first Icelandic stamps were generally cancelled by the Icelandic type of town postmarks,

of which Reykjavik is by far the most common and all other towns are scarcer, some rare to very rare. Occasionally, Reykjavik used the old Danish town postmark or even the "236" canceller on the first Icelandic stamps, but such cancellations, especially with the numeral canceller, are scarce. We can also find these stamps with the cancellations of foreign ports, obviously from letters posted directly on the ships sailing from Iceland, notably the Danish cancellers "1" of Copenhagen and "238" of Thorshaven on the Faroe Islands. All together, the variety of cancellations is not great, but no collector can ever expect to get complete the about 25 different postmarks which are known on the classic stamps of Iceland.

All postmarks on Iceland stamps during the classic stamp period are struck in black, and colored cancellations do not seem to exist.

The literature about Iceland is not very extensive. The best book dealing with the postal history is E. A. G. Caröe's "Icelandic Posts 1776-1919", published in 1947, which is written in English and provides a very thorough insight into postal conditions. Concerning the stamps, the Kohl Handbook compiled all available information, but the resulting monograph does not deal much with the printing material of the classic issues, which study seems to have been neglected. No English translation has been published. Other literature is less important or outdated, but some articles scattered in the philatelic press contain information not to be found in other places.

The *Scott Catalog* lists for the classic period of Iceland seven postage stamps and three official stamps. But three of these stamps are only perforation varieties and therefore not necessarily main catalog numbers, which reduces the number of Iceland stamps with which we have to deal to seven. All these stamps are more expensive used than unused; unused the total catalog value is \$85, used \$168. The highest priced stamps belong to the postage stamps, unused the 2sk (\$30), used the 3sk (\$70). The cheapest stamps unused list \$5 (16sk postage, 4sk official), used \$5½ (4sk official). Therefore, there is no stamp which lists less than \$5, but the majority lists \$10 or less, namely four unused and three used. This makes classic Iceland still a country for the collector of small means, although it

certainly is not the material a collecting kid is due to acquire. This is, of course, only valid for fine condition which is in any case a problem. The generally bad centering — certain values come almost always badly off center — combined with the difficulty to obtain stamps without defects, contributes to the unattractiveness of the average Icelandic material of the classic period. Fine used copies are much more elusive than the catalog prices indicate, to which the fact contributes a lot that many copies with the undesirable remainder cancellations are around. The collector of stamps on cover will have a real hard time with Iceland, as there is little or no material available, the few examples of use of the stamps on entires being the cherished highlights of the rather few existing specialized collections of Iceland.

All together, collecting classic Iceland is much more difficult than it would seem for a country which issued only seven stamps, none of them considered to be rarities. The lack of sufficient material will discourage a collector who enters the field, and he will soon give up if he is not of the hardy type which obtains stimulation from the difficulties encountered in the task. If he is patient and can wait, a collector may be able to assemble within a decade or two an Icelandic collection of merit, but a collector who is impatient and cannot wait will make himself a nuisance to the dealers whom he approaches for material they do not have and cannot obtain. He will end up as a frustrated collector of material which exists but is not available and which he therefore is unable to acquire rapidly.

(Next: XXII. Ionian Islands)

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