

Stamps of Ukraine Before Independence

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Following the collapse of the Russian Empire, on January 22, 1918, a national assembly met at Kyiv and established the Ukrainian National Republic. The first stamps of the new republic were issued in July, 1918.



In the early months of independence, Russian stamps were commonly used, but the influx of large quantities of stamps from Russia made it necessary to take measures to protect postal revenue. In August 1918, local post offices were ordered to send their existing stocks of Russian stamps to regional centers, where they were overprinted with a trident symbol. It was applied to Russia Nos. 88-104 and 110-111, the Romanov issue.



The trident emblem was taken from the arms of the Grand Prince Volodymyr and adopted as the symbol of the Ukrainian Republic. This symbol was later adopted as the coat of arms of independent Ukraine in 1991.

Three Russian postal savings stamps were used and accepted as postage stamps during stamp shortages. At the direction of the central government, some stamps were hand surcharged at the Kharkiv and Kyiv post offices in June of 1920 and February of 1922.



In 1923, the Ukrainian government in exile in Warsaw prepared an 11-value set from an unissued 1920 set surcharged and overprinted with the Cyrillic "UPP." Intended as a Field Post issue for a planned invasion of Ukraine, the invasion never occurred, and the stamps were never issued.

During the Soviet period from 1921 – 1923, millions of Ukrainians starved to death, a famine known as the Holodomor or "The Great Famine". This was the result of collectivization of agricultural crops and their confiscation by Soviet authorities for distribution elsewhere. In 1923, Soviet Ukraine issued a set of four Famine Relief semi-postals. The designs featured an allegorical figure of famine (10+10), Ukrainian national poet Taras Shevchenko (20+20), the grim reaper stalking a peasant (90+30), and an allegory of the spirit of Ukraine distributing food (150+50). None of the money raised from the sale of these stamps was used to relieve famine.

During three years of civil war, the Ukrainian army, as well as Bolshevik, White Russian, allied and Polish armies, fought back and forth across the country. By November, 1920, Ukraine was finally occupied by Soviet forces, and Soviet stamps were used from that time until the recreation of independent Ukraine on August 24, 1991. Other than 16 military stamps for courier field post use, no other Ukrainian stamps were issued until 1992.

