

Philately in Shape: The Triangular Stamp Collection

The exhibit concerns the triangle shaped stamps that have been in circulation around the world. The goal of the present exhibit is to introduce anyone interested in the reasons why triangular stamps have been created at first, and why they are used till today.

Some of the items that the present exhibit includes are:

- The first airmail triangular stamps
- The largest triangular stamp till today
- The first triangular stamps having its apex in the bottom of the design
- The first postage-due triangular stamp



Card Postal from Costa Rica to U.S.A. 1963 including two airmail stamps: 1 of 10 centavos and 1 of 25 centavos. The airmail rate was 25 centavos and the increment between rates was 10 centavos.

Bibliography

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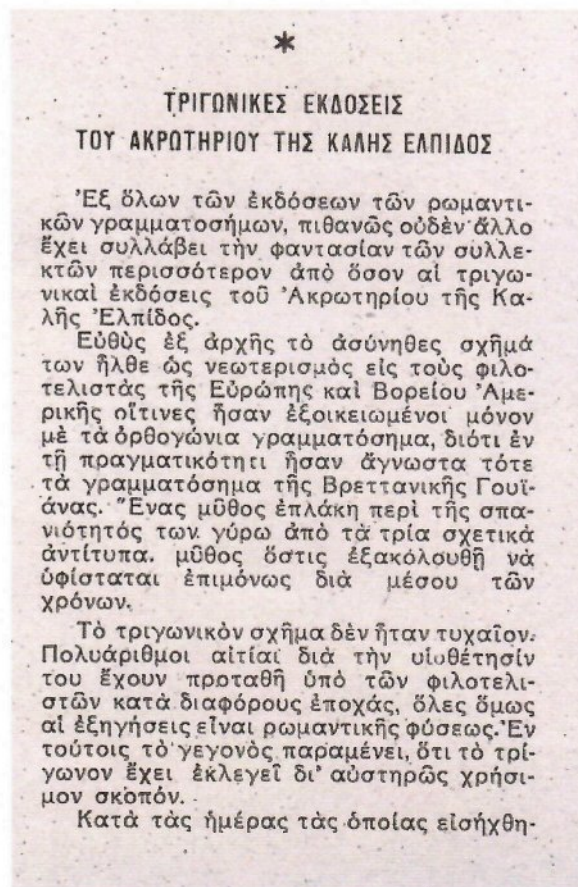
Main Parts of Triangular Stamps



Galápagos Islands (Ecuador) - airmail 1959.

Why Triangular?

The distinctive characteristic of triangular stamps is their shape. The first ever triangular stamps were issued by the Cape of Good Hope in 1853. Their unusual shape made them easily identifiable to those handling the mail, since most stamps were (and are) either rectangle or square as we can be informed by the corresponding article by L.M. & M. Williams in "Philately News", issue 53-54, May-June 1953, presented in the following figures.



σαν τὰ γραμματόσημα, ιθαγενείς ἀναλφάβητοι ὑπάλληλοι εἶχαν καταλάβει ὠρισμένες θέσεις εἰς τὰ ταχυδρομεῖα τοῦ Ἀκρωτηρίου. Διὰ τὴν βοήθειάν των ὑπάλληλους νὰ ἀναγνωρίζουν μετὰ τὴν πρώτην ματιὰ ἕνα γράμμα τοῦ ἐσωτερικοῦ, ἐγίναν τὰ γραμματόσημα αὐτὰ εἰς τὸ ἀσύνηθες αὐτὸ σχῆμα.

Τὸ σχέδιον ἦτο ἐργασία τοῦ Τσάρλς Μπέλ ὅστις παρήγαγε τὰ δύο δοκίμια. Τὸ ἓν εἰς τὸ υἱοθετηθὲν σχέδιον καὶ τὸ ἄλλον πενταγωνικὸν καὶ φέρον τὴν εἰκόνα τῆς Βασιλίσσης Βικτωρίας.

Ἡ μήτρα ἐχαλκογραφήθη ὑπὸ τοῦ Οὐίλιαμ Χάμφρεϋς καὶ τὰ γραμματόσημα ἐτυπώθησαν εἰς φύλλα τῶν 240 ὑπὸ τοῦ Πέρκινς - Μπέϋκον καὶ Σία.

Ἐπὶ τὴν ἐκδοσὶν δύο κλάσεις, εἰς τὴν πρώτην ἔκδοσιν κόκκινον τῆς 1 πέννας καὶ κυανοῦν τῶν 4 πεννῶν.

Ὁ οἶκος Πέρκινς - Μπέϋκον καὶ Σία οὐδέποτε εἶχεν προηγουμένως ἐκτυπώσει

τριγωνικὰ γραμματόσημα, οὔτε εἶχεν χρησιμοποιήσει χάρτην φερωντὰ ἐπινοήσεις ὑδατοσήμων τιθεμένων κατὰ τρόπον κατάλληλον διὰ τοιαῦτα γραμματόσημα. Ἐπομένως δὲν εἶναι ἀπίθανον ὅτι οἱ τυπογράφοι ἔβγαλαν μίαν ἢ περισσότερας σελίδας ὡς δοκίμια εἰς μαῦρον χρῶμα ἐπὶ τοῦ χάρτου μετ' ὑδατοσήμων προτοῦ ἀρχίσουν τὴν ἐκτύπωσιν τῶν πραγματικῶν.

Οὕτως δύναται νὰ ἐξηγηθῇ ὁ θόρυβος τὸ ὁποῖον προεκάλεσε ἡ ὑπαρξὶς τῶν μυστηριωδῶν μελανῶν γραμματοσήμων τῶν 4 πεννῶν ἐπὶ χάρτου μετ' ὑδατοσήμων τῶν ὁποίων εὐρέθησαν μερικά, καὶ τὰ ὁποῖα ὡς φαίνεται ἔχουν χρησιμοποιηθῆ.

Ἡ πρώτη παράδοσις συνισταμένη ἐκ γραμματοσήμων τῆς 1 πέννας εἰς 50.000 καὶ τῶν 4 πεννῶν εἰς 100.000 ἔφθασαν εἰς τὸ Ἀκρωτήριον ἐπὶ τοῦ α/π «Καλκοῦτα» στὰς 23 Ἰουνίου 1853 καὶ τὴν 1ην Σεπτεμβρίου ἐτέθησαν εἰς κυκλοφορίαν.

L. M. & M. WILLIAMS

Article "Triangular Issues of Cape of Good Hope" by I.M. & M. Williams, in "Philately News", issue 53-54, May-June 1953.

As the former article informs us, the main reason that the Cape of Good Hope issued triangular stamps in 1853 was to make them easily distinguishable from other countries' stamps, ensuring that they stood out in the mail system.

This unique triangular shape was intended to reduce confusion with the rectangular stamps commonly used by other nations and made it simpler for postal workers (many of which were semi-literate) and recipients to recognize the Cape's postage at a glance.



1864, 6P All triangle issues from Cape of Good Hope, depict the reclining figure of 'Hope' (a female figure seen in profile) engraved by William Humphrys, an employee of the printers Messrs Perkins, Bacon & Co.

The unusual scheme of triangular stamps is the main reason why many of these issues all over the world have been used for things other than normal mail. Such cases are airmail, special rates in effect during a specific period, special delivery etc.

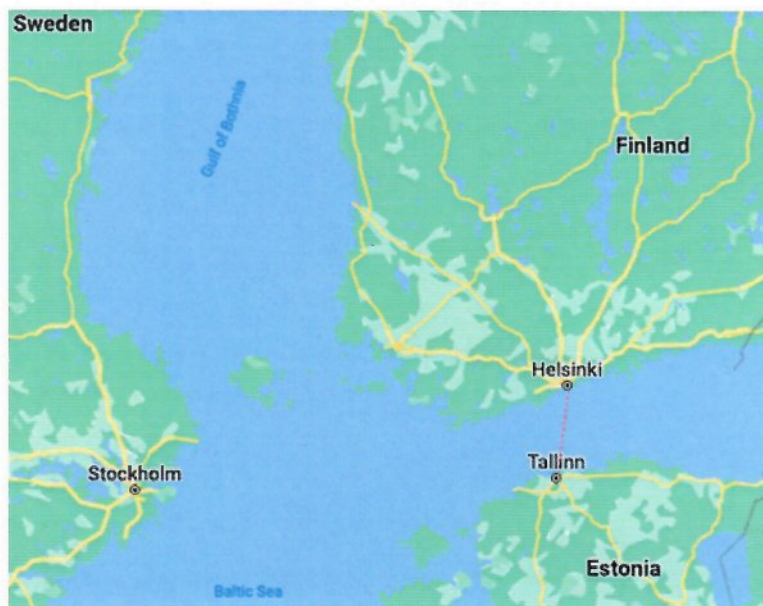


Austria 1916 triangular stamps of 2 and 5 heller depicting the Greek messenger of gods, Hermes. used for parcels and indicated first-class handling. These stamps are the first triangular to have their apex at the bottom.

Triangular Airmail

Estonia was the first country to use triangular stamps for airmail in 1920. At that time, most of the foreign mail was routed via Helsinki. However, in February and March 1920, persistent sea ice made navigation impossible between Tallinn and Helsinki, which are only 90 km apart.

Neither Estonia nor Finland had private aircraft, but a small number of British naval Avros and French naval Breguets were available. During talks between the two governments in early February, agreement was reached on an airmail service to be flown twice a week. However, on February 7, three Estonian aircrafts with Estonian pilots and British instructors arrived in Helsinki unannounced.



Map which depicts the distance between Tallinn (Estonia) and Helsinki (Finland) over the Baltic Sea. Captured from google maps.

On February 11, one of the planes returned to Tallinn with 27 million Estonian marks printed in Finland, and on February 12, the other two planes returned with 131 kg of mail each.

Thereafter, during the rest of February and the beginning of March, a total of 23 ad hoc but regular mail flights (the so-called "ice flights") took place between Tallinn and Helsinki, carrying about 40 kg of mail, mainly registered and diplomatic mail, depending on the weather conditions.

Between 6000 and 7000 kg of mail were carried on these flights. One of the pilots, Captain Jueri Ots, was later instrumental in establishing Estonia's regular airmail service. However, overhead costs were increasing, and it became clear that an additional charge was needed to cover airmail costs.

The Estonian Cabinet approved a triangular airmail label on February 20, to be published on Saturday, March 13, and officially used from Monday, March 15.

Letters up to 15 g and postcards carried by airmail service must be registered and the airmail fee of 5 marks must be paid before mailing. All items had to be marked Õhupostiga (airmail).



5 m label inscribed Eesti Õhu Post (Estonian Air Mail), designed by Karl Triumph, issued on 13th March 1920. Typo by Paalman, Tallinn, in sheets of 200 consisting of two panes of 100 each.

Estonia continued to produce airmail stamps in triangular shape till July of 1925, when the last triangular airmail stamps were issued.



The last Estonian triangular stamps issued on July of 1925, 5-45 marka.

After Estonia introduced triangular stamps, numerous countries embraced this design for airmail, using the unique shape to clearly differentiate airmail from standard postal services.



Iceland 1930 airmail official. This means that these stamps were used for governmental mail using air delivery. 100th anniversary of Iceland's parliament establishment (Althing)- 10 aurar (100 aurar = 1 króna).



Letter sent from Bolivia to New York, USA 15/8/1945. 14 bolivianos and 40 centavos (1 boliviano = 100 centavos).



Latvia 1931 airpost, 25 santīmi (100 santīmi = 1 lats).



Letter sent from Riga-Latvia 3/9/1931, to Stanimaka (former name of the town of Asenovgrad)-Bulgaria arrived 9/9/1931. 30 santīmi in total.



Netherlands 1933 airpost, 30cents (100cents=1 Dutch guilder).



Letter sent from Rotterdam - The Netherlands on 16/12/1933 to Semarang, Java Province, Indonesia (which was a Dutch colony at that era) arrived on 23/12/1933.

Largest Triangular Stamp



Soviet Union 1922, semi-postal, 4 kopeks. The largest triangle stamp till today.

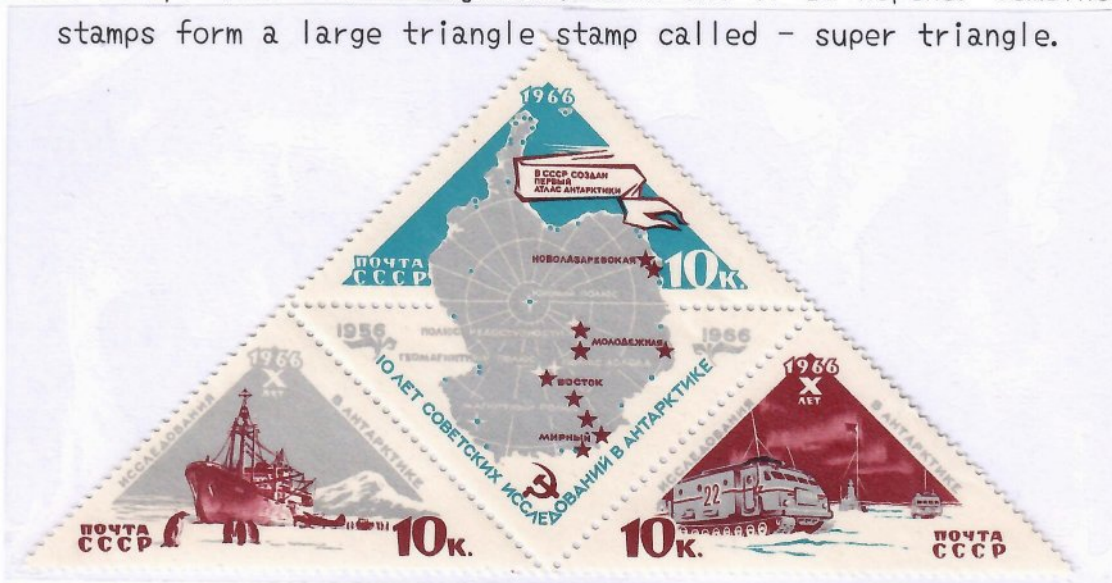
This triangular stamp is part of a series created to raise funds for famine relief during the devastating famine that occurred in southern Russia and Ukraine following the Russian Civil War.

The stamp shows two hands clasping in solidarity, with a sheaf of wheat above them. The wheat symbolizes aid and nourishment, a critical image during the famine.

Above the wheat, there is a red star, a symbol of the Communist Party and the Soviet state, radiating light. The text at the bottom reads: Юго-Восток голодающим (meaning "To the starving in the South-East"), referring to the regions hardest hit by the famine, particularly in the Volga region and the south-east of the RSFSR.

Super Triangle Stamp

3 different stamps (one with a vignette) each one of 10 kopeks. Combined the 3 stamps form a large triangle stamp called - super triangle.



Postage stamps from the Soviet Union (USSR), issued in 1966, celebrating the 10th anniversary of Soviet research in Antarctica. These stamps commemorate the USSR's involvement in Antarctic exploration and scientific research, particularly during the International Geophysical Year (1957-1958), a global initiative focused on Earth's physical properties, including polar studies.

The First Postage-Due Triangular Stamps

Postage-due stamps were special stamps used by the postal authorities to indicate an amount owed by the recipient, due to insufficient postage having been originally applied.



Nyassa (today's part of Mozambique) 1924, postage-due.

The First Personal-Delivery Triangular Stamps

In 1937, Czechoslovakia issued two 50haler triangular personal-delivery stamps, one in blue, other in red. Payment of the extra fee represented by these stamps assured personal delivery directly to the addressee and no one else. Senders who wanted personal delivery bought red stamps.

However, when addressees wanted all their mail delivered personally, they bought blue stamps the post office affixed to their letters before delivery.



Personal delivery stamps likewise the former mentioned but from the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, 1939-1940 and from Slovakia 1940 respectively.

First Day Cover with Triangular Stamps



First Day Cover from German Democratic Republic (DDR) with three semi-postal stamp that commemorate the "Pioniertreffen" (Young Pioneers meetings or gatherings) of 1964. The Young Pioneers was a socialist youth organization in East Germany that aimed to instill socialist values in children.

The values of the stamps are marked as 10+5, 20+10, and 25+10 (in East German pfennigs), with the extra amount (after the "+") likely contributing to a cause or organization. The blue background, with vivid colors for the children's clothes, highlights the optimism and energy the government wanted to associate with youth socialism at the time.

Self-Adhesive Triangle Stamps

Australia was the first country to produce self-adhesive triangle stamps in 1994. Afterwards many countries followed



St. Vincent Star Wars, 1996, the second ever self adhesive triangle stamps.

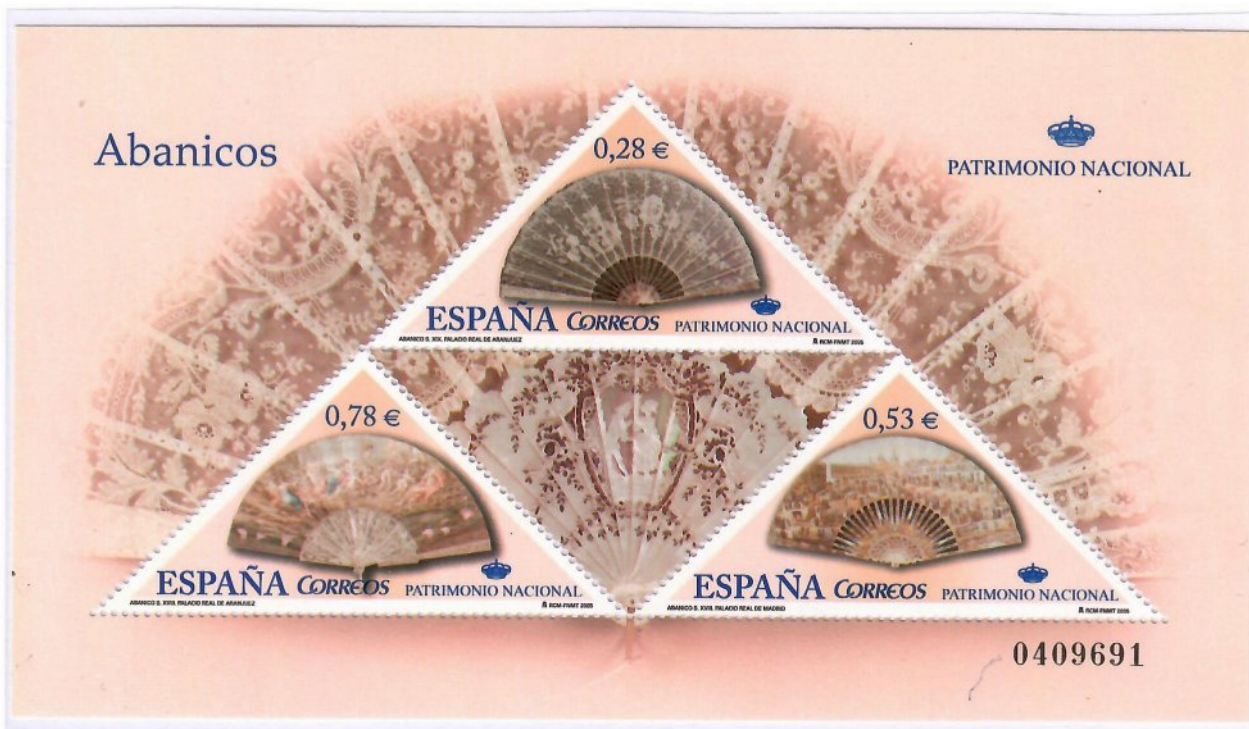


Canada 2001. Each stamp is valued at 47 cents and displays different balloon designs.

Triangular Mini-Sheets



Israel 1957. Mini-sheet for the 1st international philatelic exhibition of Israel with roulette perforation.



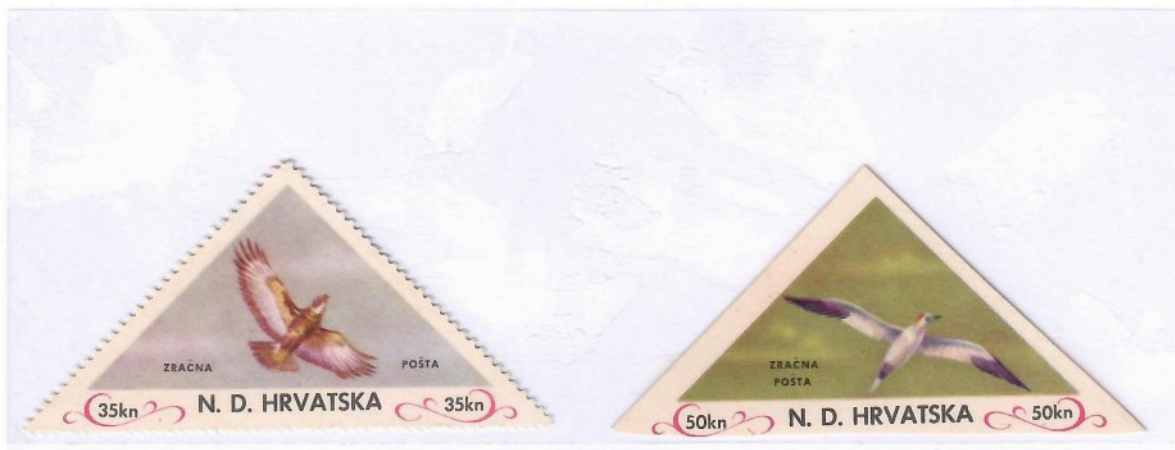
Spain 2005. Mini-sheet titled "Abanicos" (Fans), celebrates Spanish heritage by featuring antique hand-held fans. Issued by Correos España (the Spanish postal service) under the "Patrimonio Nacional" (National Heritage) series. The three triangular stamps have different face values €0.28, €0.53, and €0.78

Cinderella Triangle Stamps

In the early 1950s, several sets of stamps were issued to support a “Free Croatia” movement. They were apparently produced by a “government in exile”. However, their character raises questions about the “officialness” of the items -half of them do not even signify a (supposed) currency. Thus, they are classified as “bogus” or “cinderella” items.



N.D.Hrvatska cinderella stamps



Cinderella, Bogus or Authorised Triangle Stamps?

Tannu Tuva, or simply Tuva, was an autonomous region and later an independent state located in what is now the Tuva Republic within the Russian Federation. Tuva is situated in Central Asia, bordered by Mongolia to the south and Siberia to the north. Historically, Tuva had a unique and complex history, shaped by the influence of various neighboring powers.

Tannu Tuva is renowned among philatelists for its unusual and creative stamps issued during the 1930s. These stamps were often in triangular, diamond, and other unconventional shapes and depicted a range of subjects, including local animals, Tuvan culture, and scenes from daily life.

However, many of Tannu Tuva's stamps issued after 1933 are considered "bogus" or "philatelic creations" by some in the philately community. This is because these stamps were produced more for the purpose of raising revenue from collectors rather than for genuine postal use within Tuva.



Tannu Tuva 1935 issue depicting local animals. Stamps' denominations ranging from 1 kopek to 5 tugrik

Greek Triangle Stamps

In 2014, Greece released a unique set of self-adhesive stamp booklets featuring triangular stamps. These stamps showcase festive Christmas themes and include QR codes that, when scanned, allow users to listen to "Jingle Bells". These are the only triangular stamps of Greece till today.

