



# POSTAL HISTORY OF TRANSCAUCASIA

09.1923 - 01.1924

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**Historical background.** In 1922, with the goal of restoring economic and cultural ties, the republics of Transcaucasia: Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia united to form the Transcaucasian Federation (TSFSR), which existed until 1936. On September 15, 1923, the Transcaucasian Federation began issuing its own postage stamps. The center of emission was in Georgia (Tiflis), where two issues of 17 stamps of various denominations were issued. The circulation period of the Transcaucasian Federation mails was short, until the end of January 1924, which explains their rarity.

**Aim & Importance.** The purpose of this exhibit is to illustrate Transcaucasian Federation mails with two issues of postage stamps, their rates, specialties, and little-known facts using the best and most outstanding examples. Philatelic exhibits of the Transcaucasian Federation have **not yet been displayed** at national or international exhibitions. The exhibition is dedicated to the most interesting period, beginning with the first issue and the joint Georgian-Transcaucasian franking's, including the second issue in gold kopecks, and ending in late January 1924, when the Transcaucasian Federation became part of the Soviet Union, the issuance of original TSFSR stamps ceased, and USSR stamps entered circulation.

**Rarity & Scope of investigation.** The exhibit represents more than 20 years of research, registration, and description of Transcaucasian philatelic objects and facts. The results of philatelic research include the most important pieces of Transcaucasian postal history. Much information about Transcaucasian mails have not yet been described in modern philatelic literature. The presence of a number of rarities makes the exhibit unique in regional postal history. The primary emphasis is on presenting new facts and discoveries based on the exhibitor's personal research, including use of official, private, and commercial letters, as well as money order forms to various destinations (domestic and international). The relevant comments regarding stamp varieties, proper franking, and the current postage rate are also based on personal research. The stamp classification presented at the exhibition is based on the exhibitor's detailed research and published in the journals of the World Philatelic Societies (*WPS*№1,2). Stamps of Soviet Transcaucasia are listed according to the author's indication system.

The most significant items are indicated with a **red frame**. The author's own research and finds, important comments and presentation of new facts are marked as **IR**, reference to literature sources indicated as *WPS*№. Certified items as - ©.

**Structure & Plan.** The exposition shows Postal items use in chronological order and gives detailed description. The exhibit focuses on the time of the Transcaucasian Federation, which, in the author's opinion, has not been sufficiently studied.



## CONTENT:

1. Mails with **First issue** of Transcaucasian Federation in rubles **15.09.1923**
2. Mails with **overprinted 700.000 on First issue** in rubles **10.10.1923**
3. Mails franked with stamps of "**Golden kopecks**"- the Second issue of Transcaucasia **24.10.1923**

## REFERENCES:

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4. Ceresa R. The Postage stamps of Russia 1917-1923. Vol. IV. Parts 16-17. Transcaucasia. Gorsley, Ross-on-Wye, Eng. 1993.



# 1. Mails with First issue of Transcaucasian Federation in rubles 15.09.1923

POSTAL HISTORY OF TRANSCAUCASIA 09.1923 - 01.1924

On March 12, 1922, in Tiflis, a conference of representatives of the Central Executive Committee of the Azerbaijan SSR, Armenian SSR, and Georgian SSR approved a treaty establishing the Transcaucasian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. Abkhazia later joined. On September 15, 1923, the TSFSR issued its first postage stamps. From September 15, 1923, to January 31, 1924, was issued two sets of TSFSR stamps with original designs (17 denominations in total). Some sources report three issues, taking into account the "700,000" overprint on two stamps with denominations of 40,000 rubles and 75,000 rubles. Postal rates changed repeatedly during this period, in part because they were pegged to the ruble exchange rate for about a month.



1916-1924  
Ø 28,0 mm  
Sukhumi

## SUKHUM, ABKHAZIA.

### AN EARLIEST POSTAL USE OF THE TRANSCAUCASIAN FEDERATION STAMPS. IR



Postal card with cancellations Sukhumi October 11, 1923 sent to Tashkent (Turkestan). Franking 350.000rub. corresponds to current rate of postcard within the Transcaucasian Federation from October 01, 1923. Certain time after start of usage of TSFSR emissions, stamps of last issue of Soviet Georgia was used for mixed franking of TSFSR stamp of 150.000rub. And rare destination.

IR

**THE ONLY KNOWN POSTAL ITEM WITH MIXED FRANKING  
AND STAMPS FROM THE GEORGIAN SSR AND  
THE TRANSCAUCASIAN FEDERATION! IR**



# 1. Mails with First issue of Transcaucasian Federation in rubles 15.09.1923

## POSTAL HISTORY OF TRANSCAUCASIA 09.1923 - 01.1924

Due to their short lifespan, correspondence franked with ZSFSR stamps and sent through the postal system is of particular interest. Cancelled stamps, as well as seal varieties, are also of particular interest. An attempt to identify these is made in this paper. Incidentally, ZSFSR stamps with philatelic cancellations are unknown.

### ONE OF 4 KNOWN LETTERS FRANKED WITH STAMP OF 40,000 RUBLES VALUE! IR



A private registered letter sent from Borjomi on November 2, 1923, to New York (arrival date November 29, 1923). Franked for 2,440,000 rubles at the exchange rate used to determine postal rates at the time. Stamps are canceled with a Georgian-language Borjomi postmark. Transit marks are from Tiflis on November 4, 1923, and from New York on November 24, 1923.



ONE OF THE 7 KNOWN LETTERS USING STAMPS WITH A DENOMINATION OF 75,000 RUBLES! IR



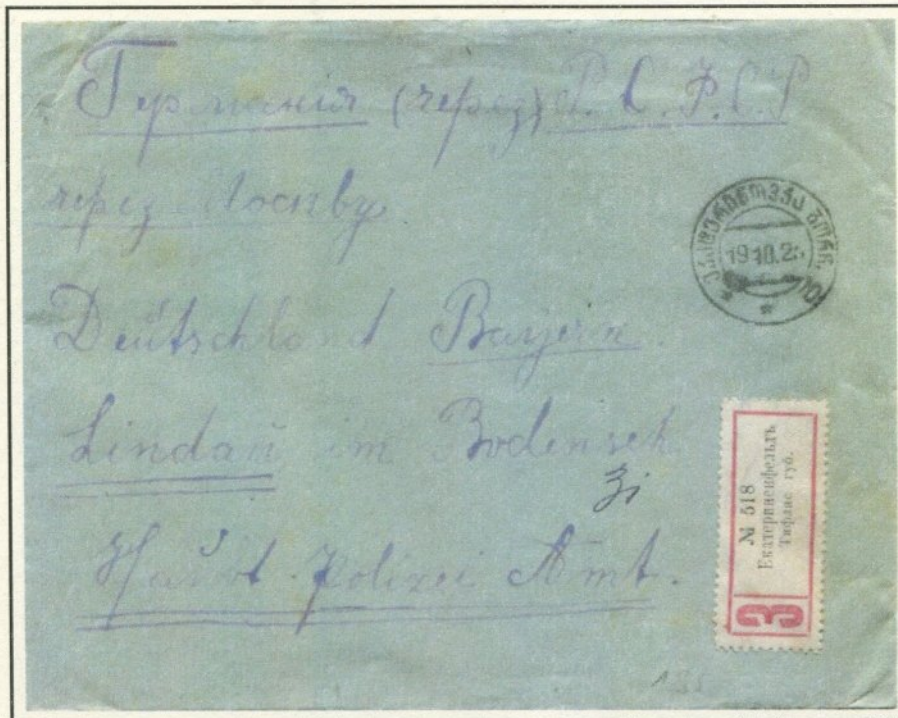
1923  
Ø 28,5 mm  
Borjomi

Commercial letter sent from the Borjomi Mineral Water Factory on October 4, 1923, to Tiflis (arrival date: October 4, delivery date: October 4, 1923). Franked for 400,000 rubles according to the postal tariff. Stamps are cancelled with the Georgian-language Borjomi cancellation mark. Due to the discrepancy between the 40,000-ruble and 75,000-ruble stamps and current postal tariffs, their use was extremely rare.



# 1. Mails with First issue of Transcaucasian Federation in rubles 15.09.1923

POSTAL HISTORY OF TRANSCAUCASIA 09.1923 - 01.1924



The address side of a registered letter from Yekaterinfeld: according to the registered letter label, Yekaterinovka is spelled in Georgian on the postmark. The village was founded by German colonists invited by Empress Catherine II.

## ONE OF THREE KNOWN SHIPMENTS FROM EKATERINOVKA CANCELLED WITH A GEORGIAN STAMP! IR



Registered letter sent from Yekaterinfeld (Ekaterinovka) on October 19, 1923, to Lindau (Bavaria, Germany), transit stamped at Munich station on October 31, indicating delivery in Lindau. Franked for 1,100,000 rubles according to the postal rate. Stamps are canceled with a rarely used Georgian-language cancellation mark.



The address side of a registered letter from Shulavera, inscription: "No one is allowed to receive, only Konstantin Agasarov."

**ONE OF TWO KNOWN SHULAVERY SHIPMENTS CANCELED WITH A GEORGIAN POSTMARK! IR**



A private registered letter sent from Shulavery (now Shaumyani) on September 29, 1923. To Kamarlyu station (Armenia), postmarked October 2, 1923. Delivered to the village of Khvanchkara. Franked for 800,000 rubles according to the postal rate. Stamps are cancelled with a rarely used Georgian-language cancellation mark.



1. Mails with First issue of Transcaucasian Federation in rubles 15.09.1923

POSTAL HISTORY OF TRANSCAUCASIA 09.1923 - 01.1924



A standard postcard sent from Sukhum (Abkhazia) on October 19, 1923, to Moscow (Russia). Franked for 400,000 rubles at the postal rate. Cancelled with a Russian-language postmark from the Imperial period.



A money order for 23.5 million rubles sent from the village of Yermolovskoye (now Gechripsh, Abkhazia) on November 18, 1923, to Sukhum. It is generously franked for 2,450,000 rubles – 1% of the amount, according to the postal rate. The stamps are canceled with the rarely used Yermolovskoye postmark.





1. Mails with First issue of Transcaucasian Federation in rubles 15.09.1923

POSTAL HISTORY OF TRANSCAUCASIA 09.1923 - 01.1924

Бланк Комиссариата Почт и Телеграфов Закавказья

Overprint: FORM OF THE COMMISSARIAT OF POSTS AND TELEGRAPHS OF TRANSCAUCASIA



THE FIRST KNOWN ITEM FROM THE PERIOD OF THE TSFSR SENT BY "EXPRESS MAIL"! IR

A receipt of a postal item on the letterhead of the Transcaucasian Commissariat of Posts and Telegraphs sent by "Express Mail" from Tiflis on September 27, 1923, to Batum (Adjara) on September 28, 1923. Franked for 400,000 rubles in accordance with the postal rate. Cancelled with a Georgian-language postmark of Batum.

ONE OF TWO KNOWN MAILS WITH RUBLE STAMPS SENT AFTER December 1, 1923! IR



1922-1924  
Ø 28,5 mm  
Tbilisi 5

A standard postcard from the Provisional Government period (eagle without crown) sent from Tiflis on December 1, 1923, to Paris, France. Franked for 1,500,000 rubles at the postal rate. Cancelled with a Georgian postmark from Tiflis. As of December 1, 1923, inflation-era stamps denominated in rubles were withdrawn from circulation. Mail may be accepted via mailbox.



## 2. Mails with overprinted 700.000 on First issue in rubles 10.10.1923

POSTAL HISTORY OF TRANSCAUCASIA 09.1923 - 01.1924

In the Transcaucasus, as a result of rampant inflation, postal services cost hundreds of thousands and even millions of rubles. Postage stamps with multiple zeros were used until December 1, 1912, when stamps denominated in golden kopecks were introduced.



The address side of a registered commercial letter from Batumi.



A commercial registered letter sent from Batumi on November 8, 1923, to Stettin (Prussia, Germany). Arrival date: November 19, 1923. Franked for 1,500,000 rubles according to the postal rate. Stamps are cancelled with the Georgian-language postmark of Batumi. An advertising sticker, extremely rare during the Soviet period, when private trade and commercial initiative were prosecuted by law.



## 2. Mails with overprinted 700.000 on First issue in rubles 10.10.1923

POSTAL HISTORY OF TRANSCAUCASIA 09.1923 - 01.1924

Less than a month after the introduction of the ZSFSR stamps, on October 10, 1923, the 40,000-ruble and 75,000-ruble stamps were overprinted with 700,000 rubles. This became necessary due to rampant inflation, which led to an increase in postal rates.

Inflationary processes in the economies of the RSFSR and Transcaucasia affected postal rates. The Soviet government pegged the rates to the exchange rate of gold, and postal services in Transcaucasia began to cost hundreds of thousands and even millions of rubles.



The address side of a registered letter from Tiflis.



A private registered letter sent from Tiflis on November 24, 1923, to Berlin, Germany. Arrival date: December 5, 1923. Franked for 6,300,000 rubles at the exchange rate. Stamps overprinted 700,000 to 75,000 rubles (green) and canceled with the Georgian-language Tiflis postmark.



## 2. Mails with overprinted 700.000 on First issue in rubles 10.10.1923

POSTAL HISTORY OF TRANSCAUCASIA 09.1923 - 01.1924



Notification of receipt of a postal item sent from Tiflis on November 20, 1923, to Batum (Adjara). Returned to Tiflis, but due to the addressee's failure to appear, sent back to Batum. Franked for 465,000 rubles according to the postal rate. Cancelled with a Tiflis-station postmark, a new Tiflis postmark (early use), and a Batum postmark on the reverse side, dated December 28, 1923.

### THE MOST RICHLY FRANKED KNOWN SHIP OF THE PERIOD OF THE TSFSR! IR

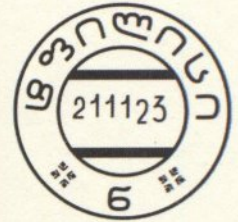


A private registered letter sent from Tiflis on November 29, 1923, to London, UK, to the office of the Gulbekyan Brothers—well-known manufacturers and shareholders in many large pre-revolutionary enterprises in the Transcaucasus. Carmine arrival stamp. Franked for 10,400,000 rubles at the postal rate calculated at the exchange rate. Stamps overprinted 700,000 to 40,000 rubles (purple) and canceled with the Georgian-language Tiflis postmark.



## 2. Mails with overprinted 700.000 on First issue in rubles 10.10.1923

POSTAL HISTORY OF TRANSCAUCASIA 09.1923 - 01.1924



1923-1924  
Ø 28,5 mm  
Tbilisi

Address side. Commercial registered letter from the Transcaucasian Regional Office of the USSR State Bank in Tiflis addressed to Westminster Bank Limited in London (United Kingdom).



A commercial registered letter sent from Tiflis on November 21, 1923, to London (United Kingdom). Carmine arrival stamp. Franked for 6,500,000 rubles at the exchange rate. Stamps overprinted 700,000 to 75,000 rubles (green) and canceled with the Georgian-language Tiflis postmark.



### 3. Mails franked "Golden kopecks" stamps - the Second issue of Transcaucasia 24.10.1923

POSTAL HISTORY OF TRANSCAUCASIA 09.1923 - 01.1924

To curb inflation, the Soviet government decided to introduce the "Gold Ruble," which was intended to ensure currency stability. Starting December 1st, mailing costs began to be paid for with gold stamps denominated in kopecks. Ruble stamps with numerous zeros, which had previously been in circulation, were withdrawn from circulation.



Address side of a private registered letter from Tiflis to Asnières (France).

#### FIRST DAY OF ISSUE OF STAMPS WITH DENOMINATION IN GOLD KOPEKS! IR



A private registered letter sent from Tiflis on December 1, 1923, to Asnières (France). Arrival date: December 14, 1923. Franked at 40 kopecks (in gold) in accordance with the postal rate for registered letters from December 1, 1923. Stamps are canceled with the Georgian-language Tiflis postmark.



### 3. Mails franked "Golden kopecks" stamps - the Second issue of Transcaucasia 24.10.1923

POSTAL HISTORY OF TRANSCAUCASIA 09.1923 - 01.1924



Address side of a private registered letter from Tiflis to Paris (France).



A commercial registered letter sent from Tiflis on December 29, 1923, to Paris (France). Arrival date: December 13, 1923. Franked at 40 kopecks (gold) in accordance with the postal rate in effect from December 1, 1923. A charity stamp in aid of the disabled of Civil War, issued by the Government of the RSFSR. All stamps are canceled with a Russian-language postmark "Tiflis-Station."



### 3. Mails franked "Golden kopecks" stamps - the Second issue of Transcaucasia 24.10.1923

POSTAL HISTORY OF TRANSCAUCASIA 09.1923 - 01.1924



A private, standard letter sent from Tiflis on December 18, 1923, to Tallinn, Estonia. Machine-stamped arrival stamp. Franked for 20 kopecks (in gold) according to the postal rate.



Registered letter sent from Baku on December 27, 1923 to Istanbul (Turkey). Transit stamps of Tiflis 27.12.23 and Batumi 30.12.23. Franked at 49 kopecks (in gold), registered letter rate 40 kopecks. Arrival stamp in Arabic calligraphy. Label of the Baku Chamber of Control.



### 3. Mails franked "Golden kopecks" stamps - the Second issue of Transcaucasia 24.10.1923

POSTAL HISTORY OF TRANSCAUCASIA 09.1923 - 01.1924

THE ONLY KNOWN CARD SENT AT THE RATE OF 3 GOLD KOPEKS!



A standard postcard from the Provisional Government period (eagle without crown) sent from Tiflis on January 11, 1924, to Gomel (Belarus). Franked at 3 kopecks (in gold) in accordance with the current postal rate. Cancelled with the Georgian postmark of Tiflis (Post Office No. 4). Reception mark in Gomel on January 21, 1924.



A special postcard from the Georgian Museum, sent from Tiflis on December 19, 1923, to Vienna, Austria. Franked for 15 kopecks (in gold) according to the postal rate for a non-standard postal item.



### 3. Mails franked "Golden kopecks" stamps - the Second issue of Transcaucasia 24.10.1923

POSTAL HISTORY OF TRANSCAUCASIA 09.1923 - 01.1924

A postal money order form with Arabic transcription for **100,000,000** rubles sent from Lenkaran (Azerbaijan) on December 16, 1923, to Batum (Adjara). Postmark in Georgian: "PAID." Franked for 22 kopecks (in gold) rubles according to the postal rate. Cancelled with the Lenkaran postmark, and the reverse side with the Batum postmark dated December 19, 1923.



1916-1924  
Ø 30,0 mm  
Lenkaran'  
(Baku district)



LAST KNOWN USE OF THE "INDEPENDENCE" STAMP.  
THE ONLY CARD FRANKED WITH 5-KOPECKS GOLD STAMPS! IR



A standard postcard form from the Russian Empire, sent from Tiflis on December 25, 1923, to Paris, France. Postmarked "Tiflis Station." The last known cancellation of the "Independence of Georgia" card was January 26, 1924. Franked at 10 kopecks (in gold) (2x5 kopecks) according to the postal rate.