

The SRSC Newsletter

The Santa Rosa Stamp Club

Promoting the study, knowledge, and enjoyment of stamp collecting.
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Editor's Note

Dennis Buss

Member David Hansen has found an unusual and creative way to build a stamp collection. Born in New Zealand, David demonstrates how the postage stamps of that country connect with his family history. In so doing, he hopes to provide not only an album legacy for his grand children but also as a way to stimulate their interest in our great hobby.

When the topic of collecting stamps of dead countries is mentioned we typically think of postal entities that existed and expired in the late 19th or early 20th centuries. With the German Democratic Republic (aka East Germany), however, we see the coming and going of a country that coincides with most of our own lifespans. Stephen Brett makes a case for collecting the stamps of this fascinating cold war casualty where completion is a realistic goal. I can verify this claim as I was able to build a complete collection of the major DDR Scott listings in about a year. However, I must admit that I was not going after the more expensive errors!

Stamps and Succession: Collecting as a Reflection of Family History

David Wm. Hansen

As I reach 80 and look back on my life of stamp collecting, I have refocused the purpose of my collecting to try to give it more relevant family meaning. This is pressing because my children show little interest in inheriting my collection and years of enjoyment of the hobby. My two young grandsons may have more interest.

As a nine-year old New Zealander in 1952 I began collecting in Boarding school at a time when everyone seemed to be doing it. My father and uncle had collections and I inherited one of them. My teachers encouraged me because of the lessons collecting gave me of world history and geography. I enjoyed and excelled in those subjects, focusing on the British Empire, and enhanced even more when my parents travelled to Europe for two years and attended the coronation of Queen Elizabeth. The conquering of Mt Everest concurrently in 1953 by Edmund Hillary and Tensing Norgay gave an added patriotic surge to young New Zealanders.

However, in their travels my parents visited many other countries and sent me stamp packets from every country where they stopped. My interest in worldwide collecting was enhanced. In 1956 after emigrating to the USA I expanded my collecting further to focus on spending my allowance and lining the pockets of stamp companies that advertised in my comic books and on bubblegum wrappers. My collection grew and broadened its extent to the point where I was collecting worldwide with no real focus or goals.

After many years of collecting neglect when girls, sports, child raising and making a living filled my time now in my retirement I have learned to refocus my collection by using it to enhance the photos and events in my family's life. It helped that I am the caretaker of the family photos. By combining the photos and stamps in albums and scrapbooks I am able to convey family history and create broader generational interest.

Some but not all the highlights of my collecting focus include:

- New Zealand general collection: - Birthplace, family background for four generations.
- New Zealand Health stamps: - Childhood upbringing and physician father.
- New Zealand sports: - Family sports: rugby, sailing, running
- Queen Elizabeth Coronation - Parents participation. British Everest expedition.
- Olympic games - Family and personal attendance at 1952, '64 and '84 games
- Tin Can mail - Pacific island hopping
- Parks and open spaces - 45-year personal profession
- USA general collection - Focus of my USA life, travels and dual citizenship.

As they get older my young grandsons may enjoy and build on my collection enhanced by their own life experiences and history.

Photos 1 and 2: Dr. John Hansen (my Dad) star rugby athlete in Christchurch.

Photo 3: Father champion runner at Otago U. (NZ 440-yard champ).

Photo 4: David running Dipsea race 1990s, Dad NZ champ 1937 and 1952 Olympics.

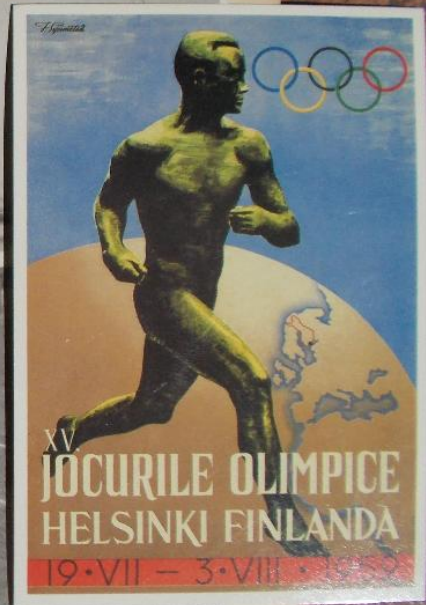
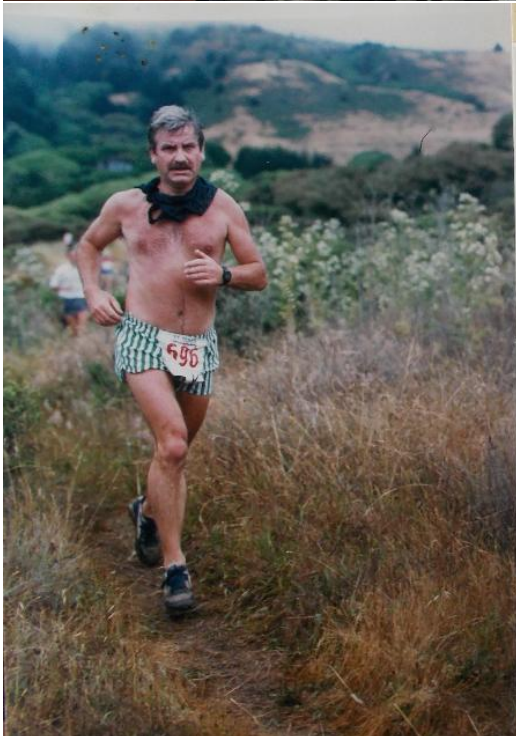




College Sports. Trawler Aground at Summer. Tasman C.



... winner, J. M. Hansen, is third from left



Collecting Stamps of the DDR (Deutsche Demokratische Republik/German Democratic Republic)

Stephen Brett

Since making the presentation on collecting stamps of the DDR to the club a few years ago my fascination with its history has led to deeper research and building my collection of its philatelic materials. I'm hoping that this article adds to your knowledge and appreciation of their stamps and, if you are so inclined, a renewed enthusiasm for your own collecting of DDR materials. While the DDR is designated a "Dead Country " (a country that no longer issues stamps) there are some benefits buried in collecting the stamps of a defunct country.



To begin a collector can truly claim eventually that his collection is complete. Period. DDR material is relatively inexpensive yet fascinating: a relic of Communist Bloc history and politics; a study of turmoil and fracturing; transitioning into strength with a unique monolithic cultural transformation ending with oblivion and rapprochement; and, dare I say, resurrection. DDR postage tells this dramatic story. *(The stamp shown above is DDR #1.)*

The DDR occupied a land area of 40,646 sq. miles - slightly larger than New York State. In 1980 its population was 16,800,000. It is hard to call the DDR, while it existed, an economic miracle. Near its end East Germany's GDP per capita was 9,400 Euros compared to West Germany's 22,000. It achieved the status of 14th largest world economy and 9th largest industrial power. The country's inhabitants enjoyed the highest standard of living of any communist satellite nation. The reputation of the German people of being productive is earned.

The creation of the DDR was proclaimed on October 7, 1949. Joseph Stalin established the DDR and turned control of East Germany over to the Communist Party headed by Wilhelm Pieck (1876- 1960). Everything was made to look democratic while in reality the communists retained control of the government which was completely loyal to Stalin.

It was ended by the *Volkskammer* (Peoples Chamber) on August 23, 1990. The postage stamps of the GDR were replaced by those of the Federal Republic of Germany starting October 3, 1990.

And now for some history. As the Nazi regime collapsed the whole machinery of government came crashing down. By 1945 Germany had become a nation without a state. The vacuum of power was partially replaced by the armies of occupation. Disintegration of civil service, the education system, the German Army and police force coupled with desperate material circumstances led to severe breakdown of law and order. There was immense material destruction. Industry had entirely ceased. For example, in Leipzig; 89% of industrial activity had entirely stopped. Because of the collapse of the transportation network it was nearly impossible to obtain raw materials. Even in 1947 the average worker took 55 hours off a month to scavenge food.

As previously mentioned, Germany was divided into zones of occupation. The Soviet Zone took much of Eastern Germany including a large part of Berlin. Berlin was divided into British, U.S., French and Soviet Occupation Zones. The British, U.S. and French zones of Berlin were an island within the larger Soviet Zone of East Germany.



When the occupation of Germany began at the end of WW II the Soviet Zone Provincial Administrations each issued local stamps. *(The stamp above is an example from Saxony.)* Not until

1946 was a general stamp issued for the entire Soviet Zone introduced. The allied local stamps were issued by the allies, but France issued its own stamps.

The Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) was founded on May 23, 1949. The Deutsche Post in the FRG was renamed Deutsche Bundespost (German Federal Post) in 1950. The DDR retained the term Deutsche Post (D.P.) of the D.D.R. The D.P., also known as Deutsche Post of the DDR was the state-owned postal and communications monopoly. The D.P. was placed under the control of the Ministry for Postal & Telecommunications Services of the DDR. It was a member of the Council of Ministers of the GDR and it operated from 1949 until the reunification of Germany (Oct. 3, 1990).

The D.P.'s civil servants were trained at the directorate school, at the Rosa Luxemburg Engineering School in Leipzig and at the College for Traffic Technology in Dresden. Beginning on July 27, 1945, the German Central Administration for Communications Services (*Deutsche Zentral Verwaltung fur das Nachrichtenwesen*) began its work in the Soviet Occupation Zone under the jurisdiction of Soviet Military Administration in Germany. The Post Office in the Soviet Zone fell under its administration. In July, 1948 the previous common stamps were overprinted with the words *Soviet Occupation Zone*.

Due to Berlin's occupation status, the West Berlin postal service was technically independent of the West German Bundespost. It was known as the Deutsche Bundespost Berlin. (Scott lists the stamps of West Berlin separately from those of West Germany.) East Germany did not make this distinction for its East Berlin postal services.

All of the first definitive postage stamps for the GDR depicted the profile of President Wilhelm Pieck. These are plentiful and most of us have probably stared at this common piece of philately wondering, "Who is this person?" Pieck was a political activist and communist politician. He joined the Communist Party in 1918 but soon had to flee in exile. He returned to Germany in 1922 and became a founding member of the International Red AID. When the Nazi Party came to power in 1933, he fled to the USSR where he became active in the Communist Party. With Soviet backing Pieck, was elected as the first President of the DDR in 1949 serving until 1960. As mentioned, he was succeeded by Walter Ulbricht. *(The stamp on the right is from the first definitive set depicting Pieck.)*



In its 41 years of existence the DDR issued over 3,400 postage stamps. Philatelically, the DDR issued stamps for the purpose of spreading their political and social propaganda. I personally find them fascinating as relics of the Cold War most of us grew up in. Similar to the USSR and other Eastern European Communist countries, the DDR issued many stamps each year. They often issued one denomination in a set of stamps in much smaller quantities in order to elevate the market prices for that particular stamp. As an example, in a particular stamp in a set called *sperrerst*, the 25 pfennig had 2 million issues while in the same set other stamps had quantities of 4,500,000 to 16,000,000.

Similar to many Soviet satellite countries, a policy was followed of creating CTO (canceled to order) material. The DDR postal administration engaged in many unusual tactics to sell their large yearly stamp output to western collectors. The sale of these issues enabled East Germany to gain hard currency from abroad. While the stamps were valid, they were not widely available to the general public. Instead, they were sold to stamp dealers abroad and to registered philatelists.

Collectors should note that the Soviet Union after its own currency revaluation of June, 1948, the Soviet authorities ordered the DDR stamps hand stamped with district names and numbers as a control measure. The hand stamping was done at the individual post office level. Later that year, the aforementioned was followed by overprints on the general issues reading "Sowjetische /Besatzungs/ Zones. "



For clarity, I'll mention that with the reunification of Germany on October 3, 1990 the Deutsche Post (DP) became part of the Deutsche Bundespost which, in turn, became the privatized Deutsche Post AG (January 1, 1995). Upon reunification, the DP's stamps became valid for both the FRG and West Berlin beginning July 2, 1990 and vice versa until their eventual expiration. DDR Stamps with Michel catalogue numbers from 1004 to 3343 were valid until October 1, 1990 and Michel numbers 3344-3365 were valid until December 31, 1991. *(The stamp shown on the left is from the last set of stamps issued by the DDR.)*

Although it is easy to dismiss the DDR stamps as propagandistic, many stamps are well designed often depicting important German artistic and cultural achievements from the past, the flora and fauna of the region as well as famous literary and historic figures. Very few serious collectors found that collecting DDR was worth the effort prior to 2000. But future generations who study the history of the Cold War or baby boomers like me (or perhaps you) may find a revitalized interest in these stamps and souvenir sheets as artifacts of this important era of world history. Moreover, building and completing a collection of East German stamps is quite feasible and does not require a large investment. For example, a nice mint collection (incomplete) in six Lindner albums including some interesting covers recently sold for \$260 on eBay. The biggest challenge is to find the scarce officials sets in mint condition. The Michele Specialized German catalog is an essential resource for details on collecting this area and time period.

Afterword: In a recent SRSC Newsletter I wrote an article on the topic of "mining" your doubles and surplus materials for some forgotten, neglected or unrealized treasures that might lead to one's migration into more advanced philately.

Well, I found a gem while working on some long DDR sets, namely, the "Arms of Republic" Official stamp issues. In a small glassine marked "O22a" 175.00, I found what first appeared to be a rather common Official type DDR stamp. But, upon further investigation the stamp turned out to be a variety from the redrawn Official set. In this case, it was the Olive-colored 20 pfennig denomination "Arc of Compass projecting at the right" type. My 2018 Scott catalogue listed it with a value of \$325.00—my lucky day! *(The stamp shown on the right is the "normal" #022 that retails between \$45 to \$50 in mint condition.)*



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Sponsored by the Redwood Empire Collectors Club**



The Santa Rosa Stamp Club meets on the first Tuesday of the month from 6:45 pm to 9:00 pm at the Finley Community Center, Cypress Room, 2060 W. College Ave. in Santa Rosa.

Membership dues are \$20 per year.

For information about the club visit our website at

<http://www.santarosastampclub.org/home.html>

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