

SYNOPSIS

Kalaallit Nunaat – The Greenlanders' Country

The postal history of Greenland is very exciting and fascinating.

After the rediscovery in the early 18th century and the missionary and economical activities on the world's largest island, the postal system developed very slowly and sluggish. The reasons might have been the extreme climatic conditions and the low amount of inhabitants spread over a huge area.

This exhibit follows a social-geographic selection of topics.

The collection embraces the period from 1774 to 1939, only one letter has a newer date (1960s). This letter is used to demonstrate the so called "kayak post" which was the fundament of communication from the beginnings of mailing in the early 18th century until the middle of the 20th century. Letters of this kind are very rare.

For me it is important to have a look on the aspects behind the reference samples. This collection tries to convey the fascination of the history of letter-writers and letter-receivers: Why do some people expose themselves to tremendous stress and stains by choice – for humanitarian, economical, scientific or even personal reasons?

Chapter 1

In 1774 the Danish state took over various Greenlandic companies as bankrupt estate, which tried to start trading activities since the early 18th century, and founded the Kongelige Grønlandske Handel (KGH) who was, amongst other things, responsible for the mail service from and to Greenland. In the early years the state-controlled company conducted one tour to the bigger settlements once a year (until ca. 1850). Afterwards the amount of tours increased slowly to 9-17 times a year until the beginning of the 2nd World War. Postal items from and to Greenland had a special feature during pre-philatelic times: they were carried free of charge between the office in Copenhagen and their destination in Greenland (as well as in reverse direction); only the postal charges to or from the KGH had to be paid. This practice came to an end with the foundation of an own Greenlandic post in 1939. Until the 30th of July 1958 parcels and letters within Greenland were carried for free.

Chapter 2

Distinctive features in the mail service between Greenland and Denmark are found in mail pieces from and to ships of the Danish marine, in the privately controlled cryolite mine in Ivigtut in the southwest and in the private trading station Thule in the northwest of the island.

Chapter 3

In 1904 The Royal Greenland Trade Company reached out to the Danish post whether he would be permitted to charge postal rates for mails that were handled by the Danish post. The request was declined but the post did not see any obstacles for „internal“ mailings between the KGH and the Greenlandic colonies. Thereupon the KGH introduced fees for mailings above 250g on the 1st of May 1905. As a result, special parcel-stamps were issued and own postmarks were used in Greenland and in Copenhagen. The period of use spanned from 1905 to 1938 and ended with the release of Greenlandic stamps by the post.

Chapter 4

The main focus of this collection are documents of historical expeditions on land, at sea and in the air. Dazzling names such as MacMillan, Wegener or Lindbergh are encountered here. Many rare or even unique letters are shown in this section.

The collection contains a multitude of specialties, which are often only known in few copies, such as:

- Post card with matching reply part from Germany to Greenland and back (no other piece known)
- F.O.C from Greenland to the administration in Copenhagen (ca. 1798-1817)
- F.O.C. within Greenland (1850 and 1863)
- Kayak letter from the east coast of Greenland
- Registered letter from Ivigtut (3 pieces known)
- Letter from the Thule district (1920)
- Letter from Greenland (> 250g) franked with Pakke-Porto stamps (no other piece known)
- C.O.D. card for a parcel to Greenland (15 pieces known)
- Parcelcard to an expedition in East-Greenland, carried via Iceland (very rare)
- Letters to the „Literary Expedition“ (1903), the „Danmark-Expedition“ (1906) and Alfred Wegener (1930)
- Mini letter from the „US Navy Polar Flight Expedition“ in 1925
- Letter from Lindbergh's flight across Greenland in 1933

Plan of the exhibit

1. The postal system in Greenland until the implementation of own stamps
 - 1.1 Den Kongelige Grønlandske Handel (KGH) in Copenhagen
 - 1.2 Post to Greenland
 - 1.3 Post from Greenland
 - 1.4 Post within Greenland
2. Specific shipment instructions for post between Denmark and Greenland
 - 2.1 Post exchange with ships from the Danish navy
 - 2.2 The postal system of the cryolite mine in Ivigtut
 - 2.3 Post in the Thule area
3. Pakke-Porto stamps and parcel post
 - 3.1 Cancellation of Pakke-Porto stamps
 - 3.2 Parcel post between Denmark and Greenland
 - 3.3 Use as saving stamps
4. The exploration of Greenland
 - 4.1 Classic expeditions in the 19th Century
 - 4.2 Expeditions by sea and on land in the early 20th century
 - 4.3 Flights in and above Greenland in the early 20th century

Literature (i.a.):

- Eric v. Wøvern,
GF 1 Pakke Porto Stamps 1905-1938, Virum (DK) 1983
- Eric v. Wøvern,
GF 3 Expeditions and Flights before 1938, Virum (DK) 1975
- Torben Hjørne,
Specialcatalogue Classic Greenland, Århus (DK) 1985
- Torben Hjørne,
Postal history Vol.1, Parcel-cards, Århus (DK) 1982
- Torben Hjørne,
Posthistorie Bind 3, Pakkeporto + Frimærker, Århus (DK) 1983
- FG Nordische Staaten e.V.
Grönland – Insel der Arktis, Nachlese zum Exponat von Gerhard Müller, Schwalbach 2007
- Carl Aage Møller & Torben Hjørne
GREENLAND The „Nordlicht“-Collection, Zürich (CH) 2010

Own research:

- Christian Czubek & Rolf Dömbach
Grönland-Expeditionen und ihre Post (25), Mission Polaire 1938 Hubert Garrigue, FG Nordische Staaten e.V.
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