
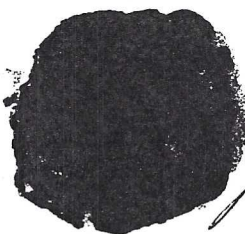


THE POSTAL HISTORY OF MONTENEGRO 1874 - 1922

This exhibit will document the mail service in Montenegro from the opening of the first post office in 1874 through the end of the exile government in 1922, through the use of contemporary postal material. There are a number of chapters to the story of this eventful era. Those addressed herein include the territorial expansion resulting from the Congress of Berlin, two changes in the currency, the elevation of Prince Nicholas to King, further territorial expansion during the successful First Balkan War, the World War I disaster involving the overrunning of the country by Austro-Hungarian forces, and the resulting establishment of a government in exile. With the Allied victory in 1918, Serbian forces occupied Montenegro and did not invite the King to return, thus submerging the Montenegrins in the new Kingdom of Serbs, Croats & Slovenes.

H
 Giovanni Piprim Cetinje
 Spedite
 con Diligenza
 Al sig. Giovanni Milovic
 P. 75 da Cattaro
 a Trieste
 1/4 ling. inglese
 10 1/2 napoletani
 4 lire turche
 2 # imperiali
 il tutto del valore
 di fior. 350. V. A.
 M
 Trieste
 Catt. 17/20
 franco 10 soldi
 fino Cattaro

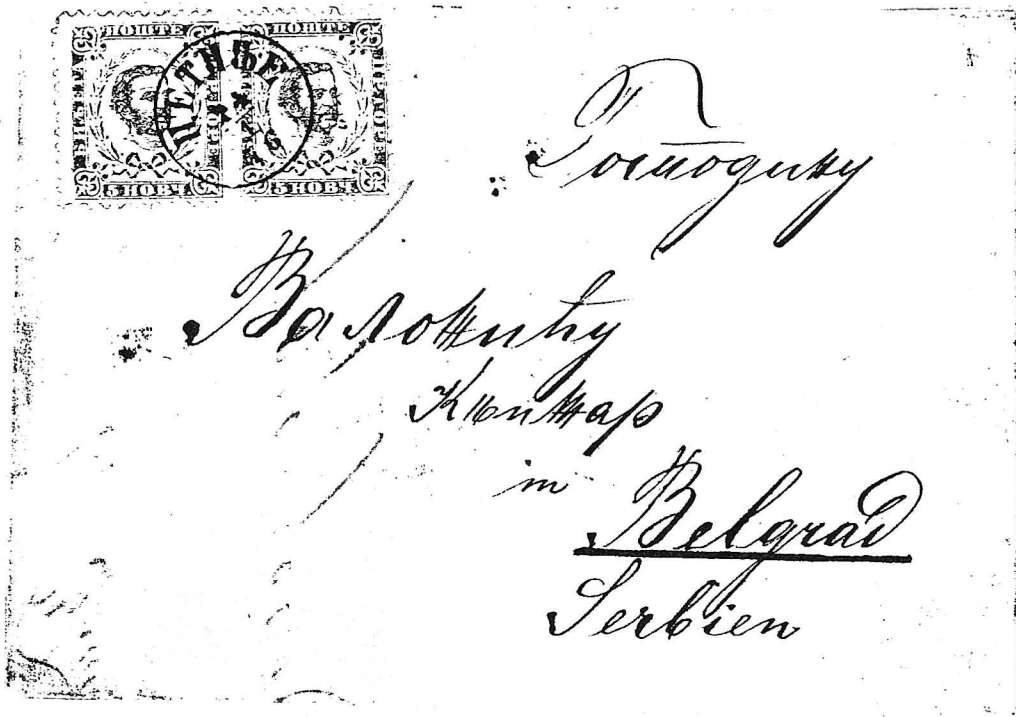
The first Montenegrin stamp issue, depicting Prince Nicholas, was in use for more than 25 years. There were four separate printings of the initial seven values, as well as new colors and additional denominations, which add greatly to the philatelic complexity. Covers are shown in the exhibit with stamps of all denominations and printings, although not of all values for each printing (as some of these are essentially unavailable on the philatelic market). The example shown above is a 5 novcica of the first printing used on the address portion of a parcel wrapper (with additional charges paid in cash) sent from Cetinje to Trieste. The postmark dated 22 May 1874 is only three weeks after the opening of the postal service and represents an extremely early usage.

FIRST DEFINITIVES OF PRINCE NICHOLAS

Under the tutelage of the Austrians, a postal system was established in Montenegro on 1 May 1874, with the opening of the first post office at Cetinje, followed shortly thereafter by offices in Rieka and Vir-Pazar. The first stamps consisted of seven values prepared in advance at the State Printing Works in Vienna in quantities ranging from 5,000 to 30,000 copies and depicting the head of Prince Nicholas. This first printing was on soft, thick paper watermarked "Brief-Marken" and perforated 10 1/4-11 with large holes and pointed teeth.

Initial Printing of 1874

Cetinje
24 January 1876



Covers franked with first printing Nicholas stamps are quite elusive as the quantity of mail handled in the early years was very limited due to a high rate of illiteracy and the fact that the populace was not accustomed to using a postal service. The above example shows a pair of 5 novcica stamps used to pay the international letter postage rate to Serbia.

FIRST DEFINITIVES OF PRINCE NICHOLAS
Initial Printing of 1874

Cetinje
8 July 1874

Each of the seven denominations of the first definitives were selected for the payment of specific rates, including the following: 2 novcica for domestic postcards and printed matter; 3 novcica for local letters plus international postcards and printed matter; 5 novcica for domestic letters (including the Boka Kotorska region of Dalmatia); 7 novcica special concession letter rate to Austria-Hungary; 10 novcica for international letters and domestic registered letters; 15 novcica for special delivery letters; and 25 novcica for international registered letters.

The above example is a very early use -- just over two months after issuance -- of the 7 novcica first printing Nicholas stamp. It pays the concession letter rate to Austria. The cover has transit marking of Kotor on 8 July and a Trieste receiving mark of 13 July.

FIRST DEFINITIVES OF PRINCE NICHOLAS
Initial Printing of 1874

Cetinje
27 October 1884

The first stamps were printed by typography in panes of 100 subjects. The colors used were the same as for the contemporary 1867 issue Austrian stamps of equivalent value, with the exception of the 7 novcica -- for which a comparable Austrian rate did not exist.

Via Torino-Mont-Cenis



Monsieur Moïse Fiquet

Palais de Justice

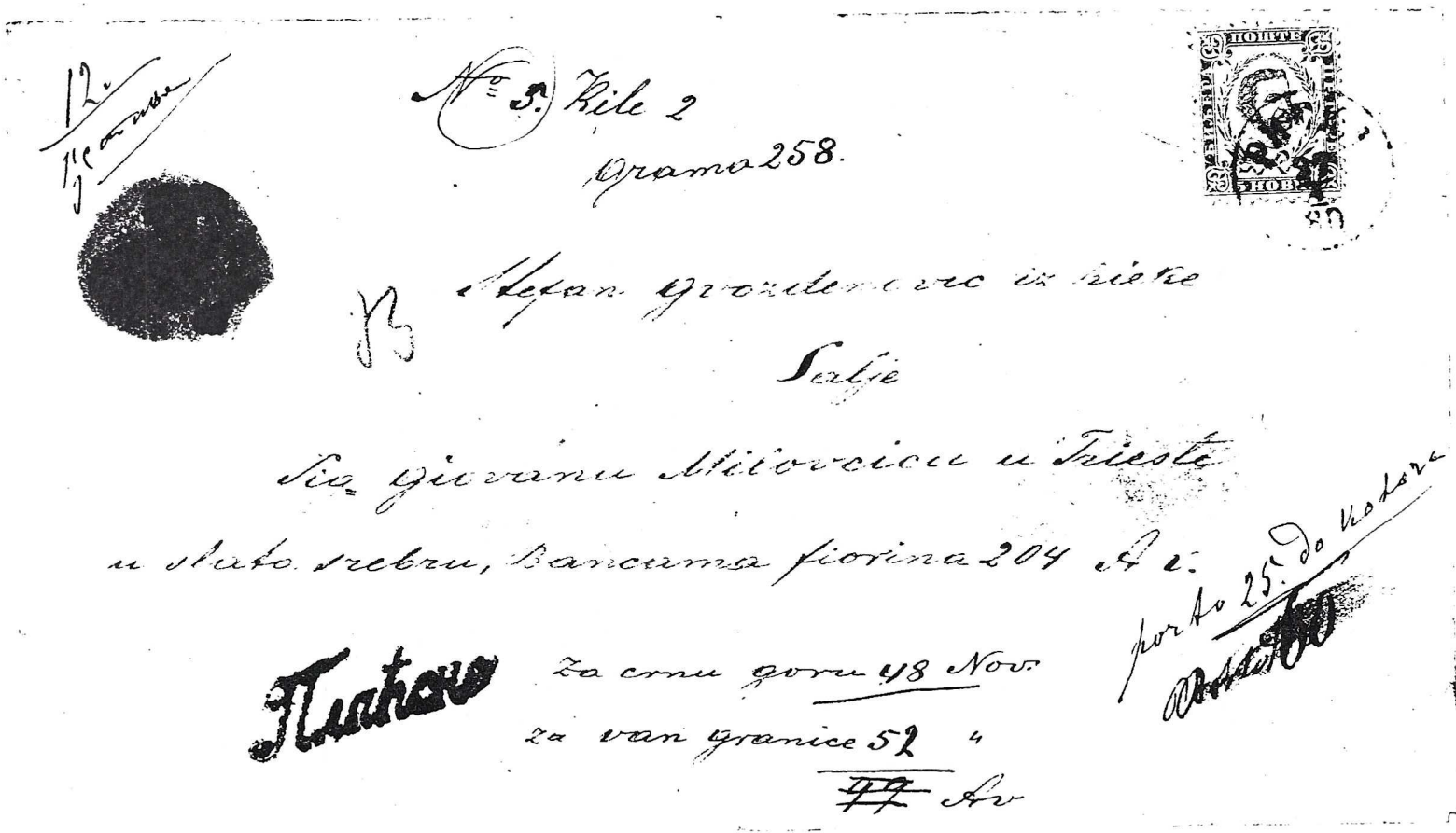
Genève

The above example of the 10 novcica first printing Nicholas stamp pays the letter rate to Switzerland. The cover has transit markings of Kotor (on 28 October), Zara (on 31 October) and a Swiss TPO of Ambulant No. 1 (on 3 November).

FIRST DEFINITIVES OF PRINCE NICHOLAS
Initial Printing of 1874

Rieka
27 April 1880

Use of the first definitives on mail matter other than letters or postcards is unusual and sought after by specialists. (In a recent major international auction that included an unusually large collection of Montenegrin postal history, there was only one example of usage of these stamps on part of a parcel wrapper as compared to 62 covers.)

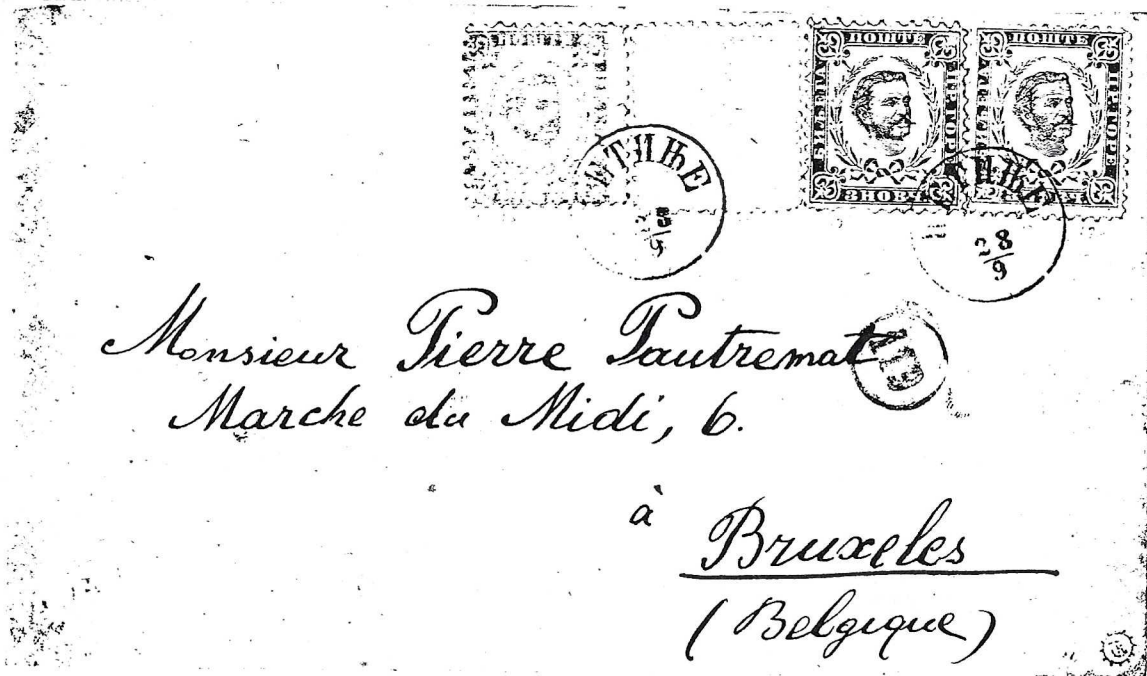


The above example shows a 5 novcica stamp used on an address label for a parcel from Rieka to Trieste. An additional amount was collected in cash per manuscript notation indicating postage of 25 (presumably Austrian kreutzer) to Kotor and 60 overall. A very elusive franking.

FIRST DEFINITIVES OF PRINCE NICHOLAS
Mixed Franking of First & Second Printing

Cetinje
28 September 1880

Although all of the first definitive stamps retained their validity until a new currency was introduced in 1900, the Fleck handbook states that mixed franking of the first printing with later issues is "exceedingly scarce."

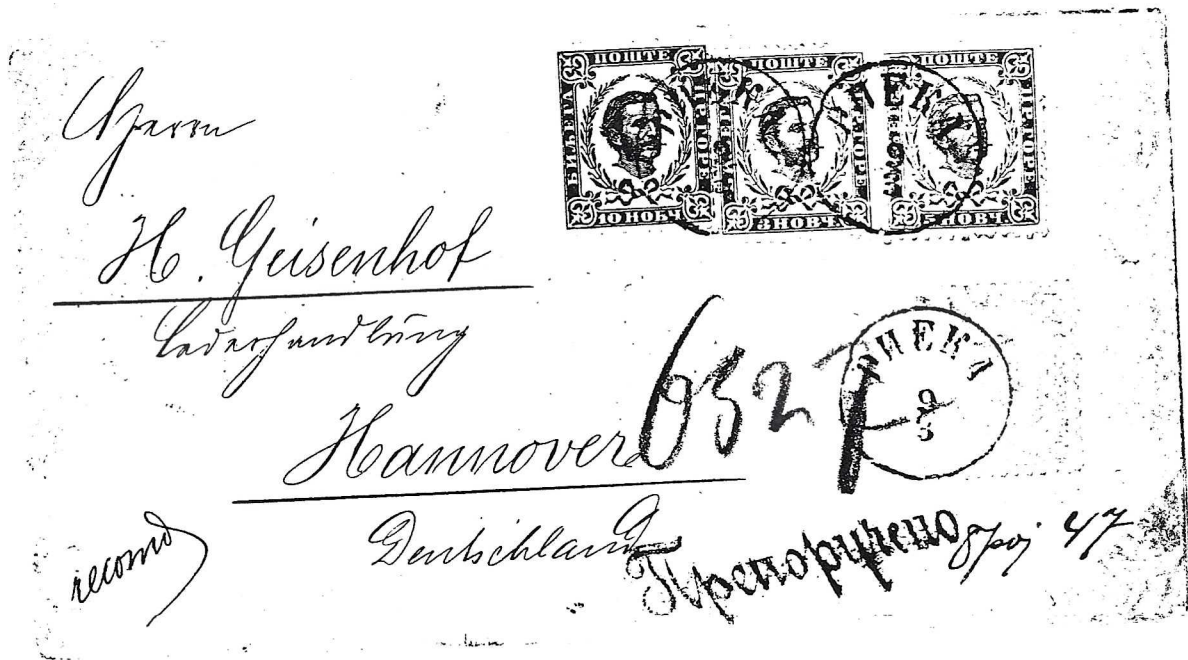


Above example shows mixed franking of first printing 2 and 3 novica stamps with similar second printing values to pay the 10 novica international letter rate to Belgium. The receiving mark of Brussels on 5 October 1880 is struck on the reverse.

FIRST DEFINITIVES OF PRINCE NICHOLAS
Second Printing of 1879

Rieka
9 March 1891

When supplies from the first printing ran low, a second printing was ordered in 1879. This time the stamps were printed in substantially larger quantities -- 40,000 copies of the two higher values and 125,000 of the other values -- on thicker paper (also watermarked "Brief-Marken") and perforated 12-13.

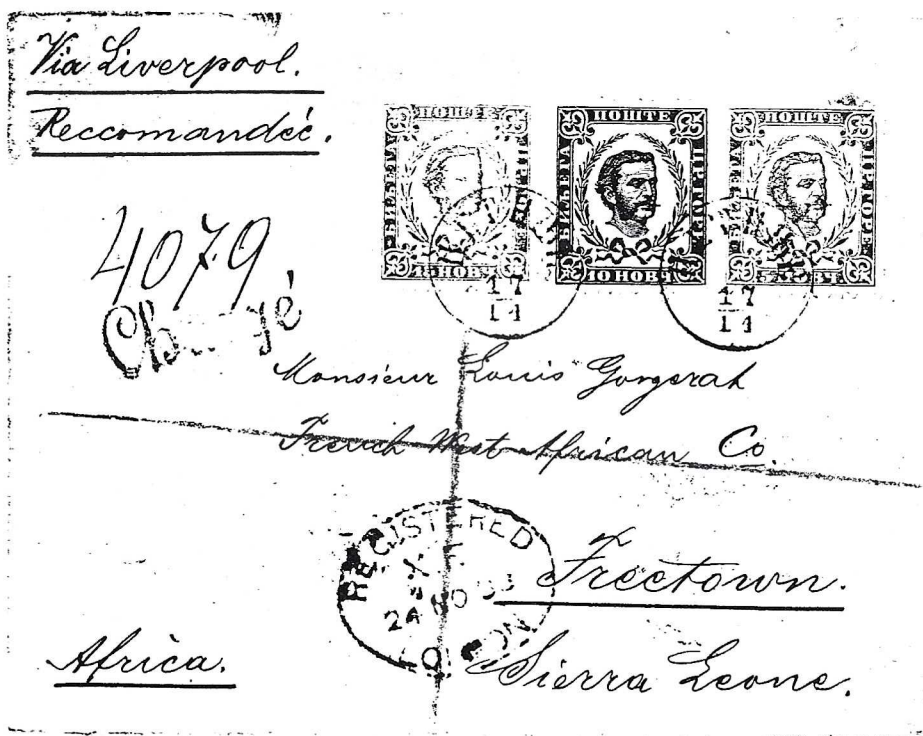


Above example of a four-color franking with second printing stamps pays the 10 novcica international letter rate to Germany plus 10 novcica registration fee. On reverse are a transit mark of Cetinje (on 9 March) and a receiving mark of Hannover (on 16 March). Note that the Rieka post office did not have a registration "box" marking at this time and used a straight-line "Preporuceno" marking to indicate registration.

FIRST DEFINITIVES OF PRINCE NICHOLAS
Second Printing of 1879

Cetinje
17 November 1888

In general, most Montenegrin mail of this period addressed to foreign recipients went to Austria-Hungary, Germany or Italy. Examples to other destinations are very scarce and, to Africa, can be considered extraordinary.

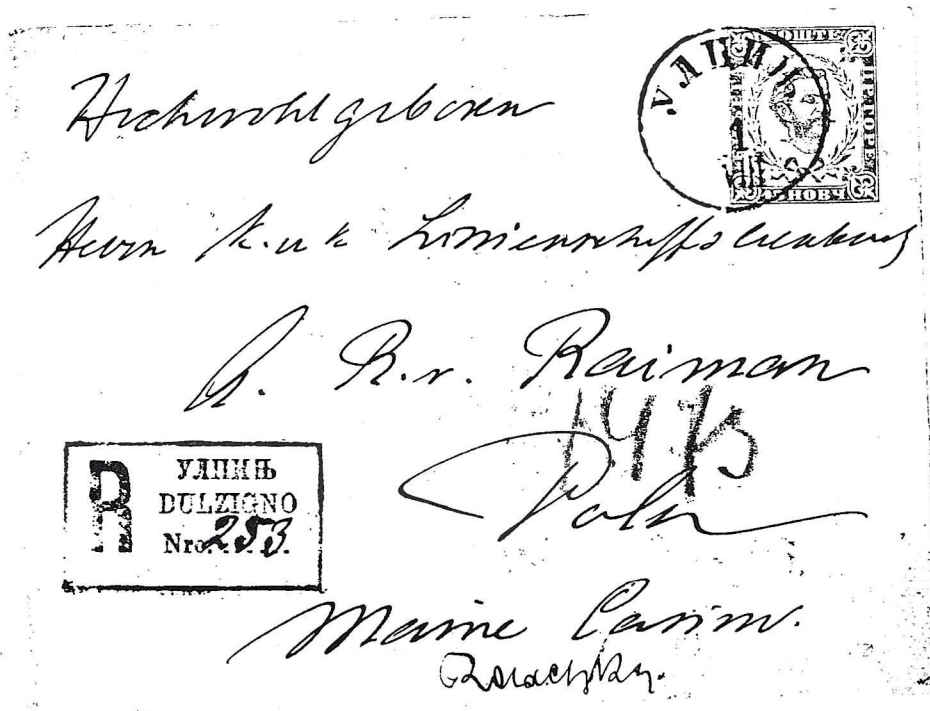


Cover with three color franking sent from Montenegro to Sierra Leone. Backstamped for transit in Liverpool (on 24 November) as well as for receipt in Freetown (on 13 December).

FIRST DEFINITIVES OF PRINCE NICHOLAS
Second Printing of 1879

Ulcinj
1 August 1892

It should be noted that Montenegro did not have its own money at this time. In fact, the first coins were not minted until 1906 and the first banknotes not printed until 1912. Thus, in the earlier period, Austrian money was used. In the late 19th Century, the denominations were in new kreutzer and gulden, which were translated into novcica and fiorin by the Montenegrins.



Cover franked with 15 novcica higher value of the first Prince Nicholas set, paying the border rate to Austria plus registration fee. Backstamped for transit in Rieka and Bar (on 3 August) as well as Cetinje (on 4 August). Receiving mark at Pola is dated 8 August.

FIRST DEFINITIVES OF PRINCE NICHOLAS
Second Printing of 1879

Bar
19 December 1888

Aside from the opening of several offices in the new territories, development of the postal service in Montenegro has to be described as proceeding at a very modest pace. Even as late as 1890 there were only eight post offices operating in the entire country, with the most recent one being having been opened at Danilovgrad in 1881.

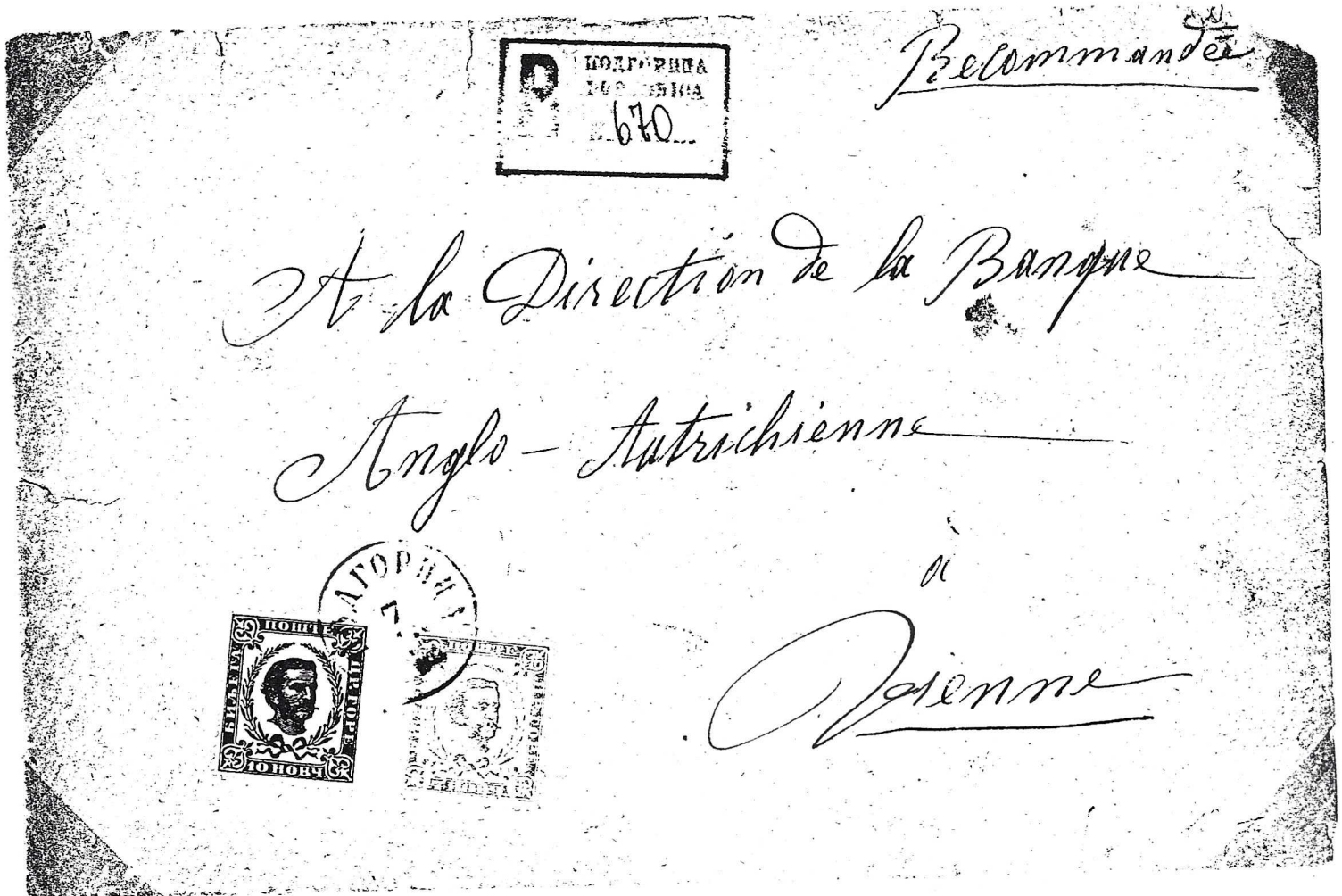


This cover is franked with the 25 novcica highest value of the first Prince Nicholas set. It pays the registered letter rate from Bar to Moravia. Backstamped for transit in Vir-Pazar (on 19 December) and Cetinje (on 20 December) as well as for receipt at Brno (on 26 December).

RUSSO-TURKISH WAR

Podgorica
7 December 188_

The Ottomans were never able to overrun the mountainous strongholds of Montenegro, which was the only area in the Balkans to preserve its independence. However, there were frequent disputes with Turkey. Following a revolt in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Prince Nicholas (in concert with Prince Milan of Serbia) declared war on Turkey in July 1876. Although the Montenegrins won several battles, the Serbs were crushed by the Turks, leading to an armistice a few months later. Russia came to the aid of its Slavic brethren, declaring war on Turkey in April 1877. The Montenegrins resumed hostilities and were able to capture Niksic and Podgorica in the north as well as break through to the Adriatic coast south of Lake Scutari.

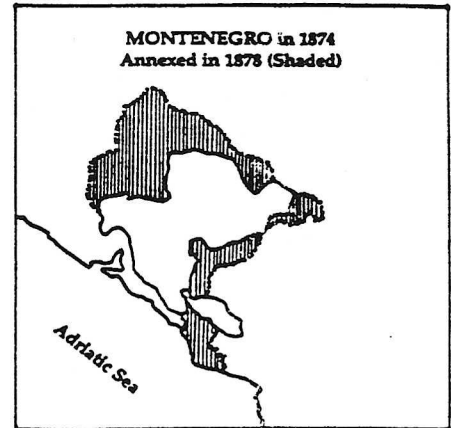


Cover franked with 7 and 10 novica values to pay the concession letter rate to Austria plus the registration fee. On the reverse is a wax seal of the Turkish Consulate for Podgorica-Rieka. No year date is shown in the despatch postmark or the transit marks of Rieka and Cetinje, but the usage suggests the mid-to-late 1880s.

RUSSO-TURKISH WAR

Bar
18 September 1892

Following the defeat of Turkey by Russia in the War of 1877-1878, Montenegro was awarded various territories at the Congress of Berlin, including the Plain of Podgorica and 25 miles of coastline along the Adriatic, which nearly doubled the size of the principality. (See adjacent sketch map.) Based on this annexation, four additional post offices were opened: Bar (also known as Antivari), Niksic and Podgorica in 1879 as well as Ulcinj (Dulcigno) in 1880.



Any mail sent from "New Montenegro" in the early years is elusive. This cover is addressed to the captain of the steamer *Kerka* at Teodo. It is franked with three values totaling 15 novcica, which underpaid the concessionary rate for registered letters to Austria-Hungary by 2 novcica. Thus, upon consideration, the postal clerk blacked out the registration box and forwarded the piece without registry.

FIRST DEFINITIVES OF PRINCE NICHOLAS
Postal Cards of 1888

Cetinje
27 July 1894

The first postal cards in Montenegro were issued in 1888 in denominations of 2 novcica for domestic use and 3 novcica for international destinations. These were printed on light gray card stock, had a border around the cards and inscriptions in five lines in the color of the indicia.



The 2 novcica card is uprated with 1, 3 and 7 novcica adhesives to pay the international rate plus registration fee to Finland. Note transit mark of St. Petersburg reading 21 July 1894 since Russia used the Julian calendar which was 12 days earlier than the Gregorian calendar used in Montenegro (due to the Austrian influence).

FIRST DEFINITIVES OF PRINCE NICHOLAS -- CONTINUED

Third Printing of 1890

Podgorica
23 October 1896

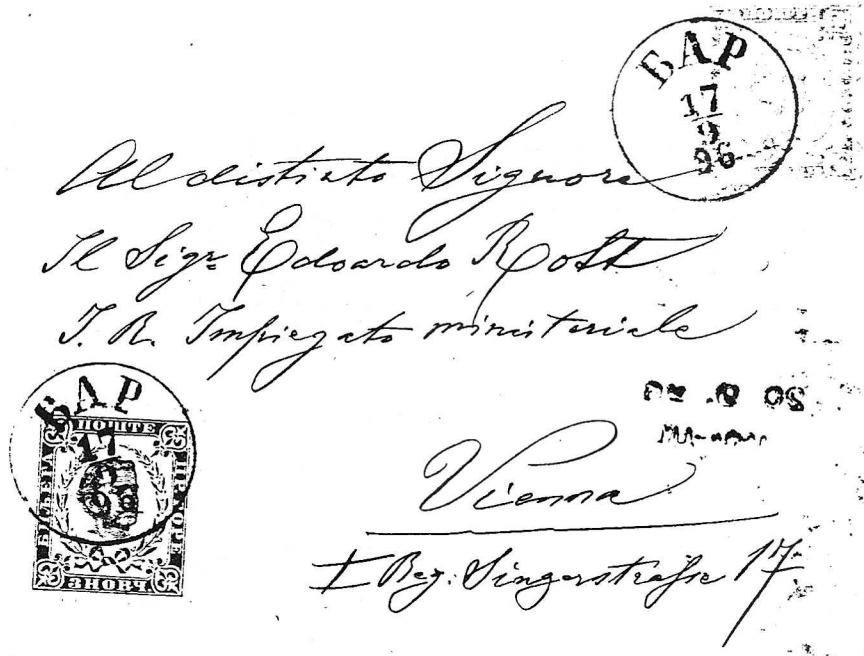
To make this issue even more complicated, a third printing was ordered in 1890. This time the stamps were printed from new plates on paper that was thin, smooth and hard. They were watermarked "Zeitungs-Marken" and perforated 10 1/2-11 1/2. Numbers printed were not reported, but a large quantity of these stamps were overprinted in 1893 to commemorate the first book printed in Montenegro.



Example of 2 and 3 novcica stamps from the third printing paying the reduced border rate for letters to Austria. Backstamped on reverse for transit in Cetinje (on 24 October) and for receipt in Trieste (on 28 October).

FIRST DEFINITIVES OF PRINCE NICHOLAS
Third Printing of 1890

Bar
17 September 1896



Cover above sent from Bar (Antivari) to Vienna, Austria at the 5 novcica concession rate. In this case, stamps of both perforations used for this printing were utilized simultaneously -- 10 1/2 in the case of the 2n and 11 1/2 for the 3n. Backstamped for receipt on 20 September.