LITHUANIA

Independent Lithuanian Government

Kybartai
4 January 1919



German forces occupied the Russian Province of Lithuania from 1915 to 1918. However, their troops began to withdraw in mid-November 1918 under the terms of the Armistice, enabling the Lithuanian authorities to establish a functioning government. The first two stamps of the independent administration, consisting of 10 and 15 skatiku values, were printed in Vilnius in quantities of 5,000 each and issued on 27 December 1918.

The stamps on the cover above were insufficient to meet the local registry rate so an additional 15 sk. was paid in cash as indicated by the oval marking in the lower left corner.

LITHUANIA

Kaunas
11 January 1919



Supplies of the first issue were quickly exhausted. Thus, a second printing was ordered and placed on sale on 31 December 1918. The design was the same as the first Vilnius issue but with the denominations in thicker type and six values instead of two.

Example shows three values of second Vilnius issue on registered front to Switzerland. Note handwritten registration marking (Kovno) in red and black rectangular censorship mark applied during transit at Königsberg.

LITHUANIA

Kaunas
12 March 1919
8 April 1919



With the Russian and Polish occupation of Vilnius, the Lithuanian government was established in Kaunas. New stamps of a similar design to the earlier ones but having only three lines of text instead of four were printed in Kaunas and issued on 18 February 1919.

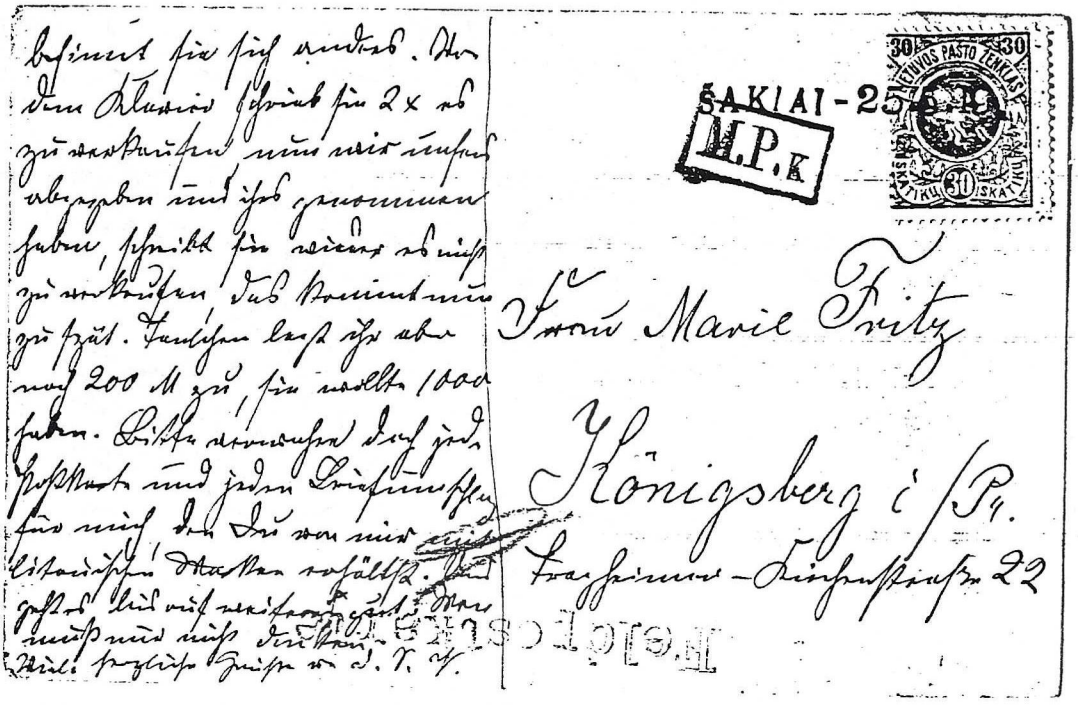
Examples shown of registered and ordinary letters to Germany, the former with provisional handwritten registration box marking in red.

LITHUANIA

Vilkaviskis
16 May 1919

Sakiai
25 May 1919





The first three denominations of definitive Lithuanian stamps were printed in Berlin on gray ration card stock and issued on 19 February 1919. This was followed by the second Berlin issue on 20 March, with different perforations and additional denominations. All of these depicted "Vytis," the national emblem of Lithuania.

Examples shown of registered letter and postcard to Germany, the latter with late use of provisional postmark.

LITHUANIA

Mazeikiai
26 August 1921

Kaunas
14 November 1921



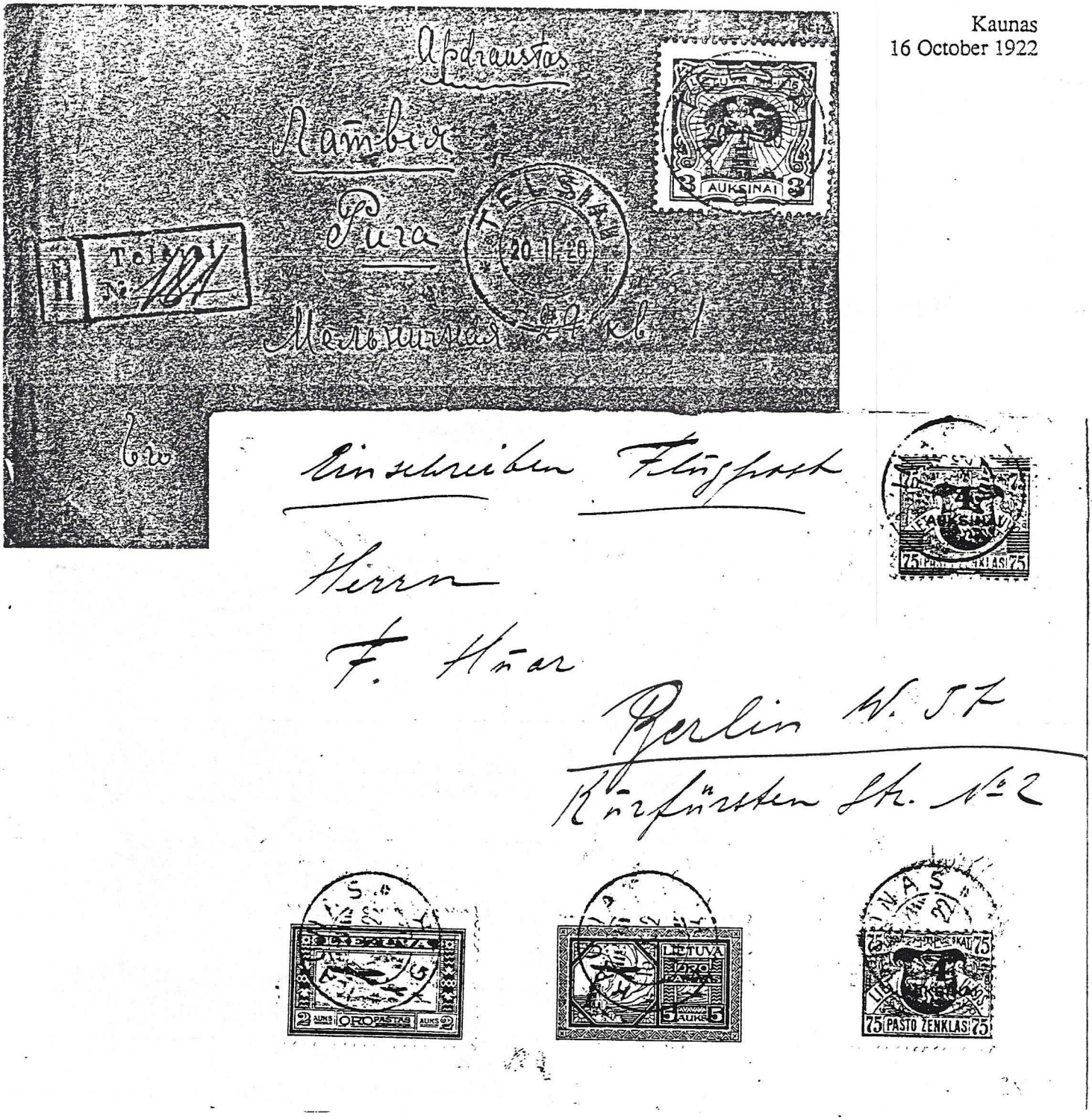
Between May 1921 and September 1922, a new set of replacement definitives was issued.

Examples shown of use of high values of this series: money order form (10.50 auk.) and registered letter to Switzerland (25 auk.).

LITHUANIA

Telsiai
20 February 1920

Kaunas
16 October 1922

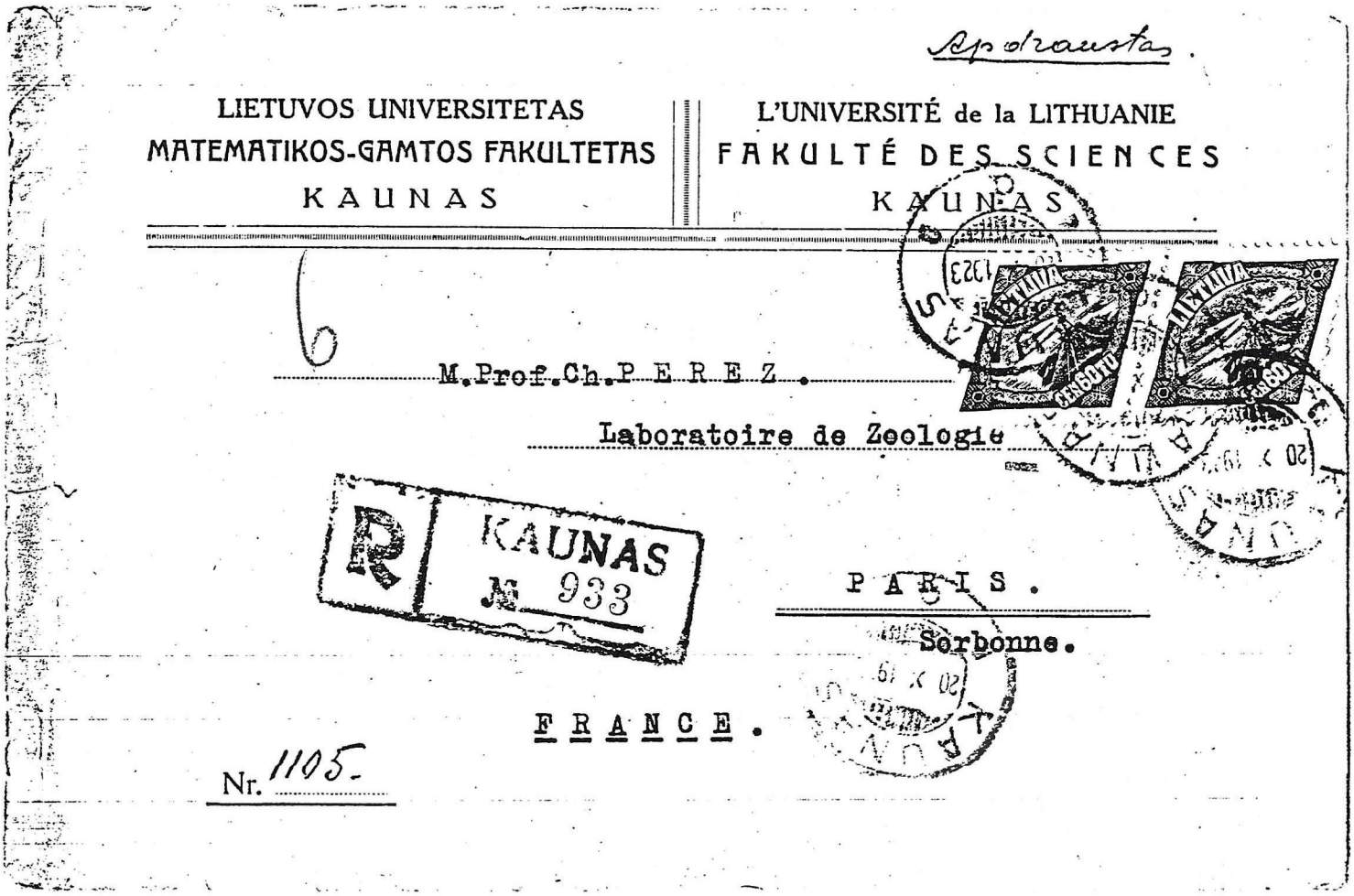


Lithuania also issued several series of commemorative and airmail stamps in the period under review. The first commemorative set came out on 16 February 1920 for the second anniversary of the declaration of independence. Between June and October 1921 the first special stamps for airmail use were issued.

Examples show use of high value of the first commemorative series and the two top values of the first airmail set.

LITHUANIA

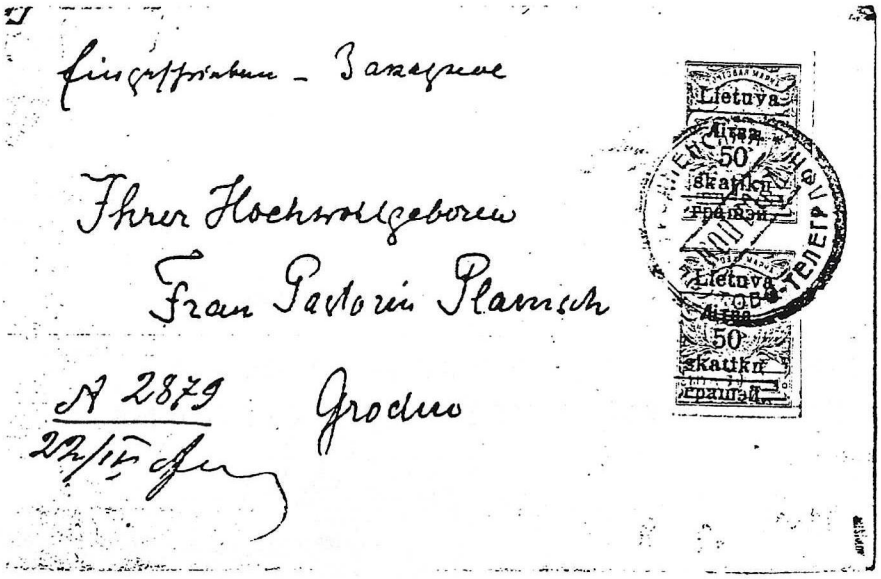
Kaunas
20 October 1923

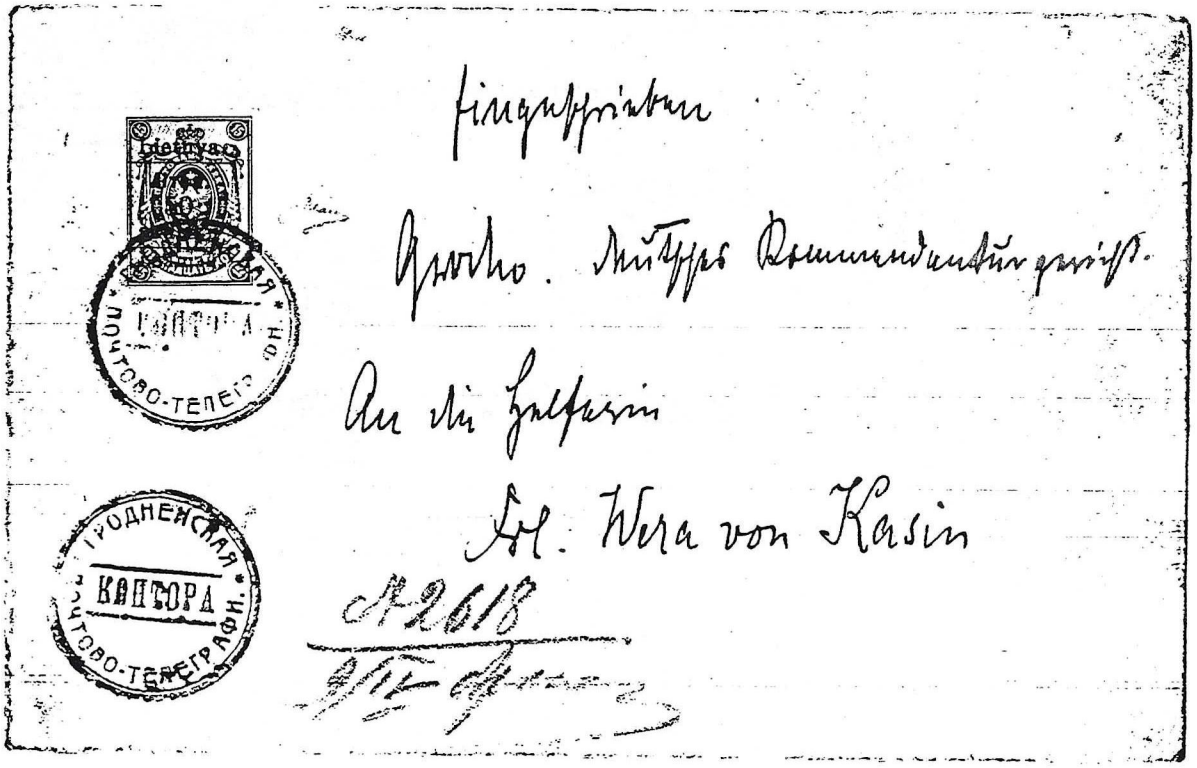


On 15 January 1923, Lithuania annexed the port of Klaipeda (Memel) and the surrounding territory, which had been taken from Germany by the Treaty of Versailles and held under League of Nations administration. This event was commemorated by a special set of stamps issued on 12 July 1923.

Use of these stamps on commercial mail is very unusual.

Grodno
9 April 1919
22 April 1919





Three local issues have been accorded catalog status (Michel), the most significant being provisional overprints on Imperial Russian stamps for the Grodno district of South Lithuania, which was initially assigned to Lithuania but taken over by Poland shortly thereafter.

Properly used covers with this issue are extremely elusive. Examples of registered mail shown above (Köhler certificates) bear Cyrillic postmark of "Grodno Post & Telegraph Office" and are franked with imperforate stamps of 50 skatiku on 1 kopek and 15 kopeks, which were issued in quantities of 50 and 20 pieces, respectively.

Raseiniai
4 March 1919

Telsiai
14 January 1920



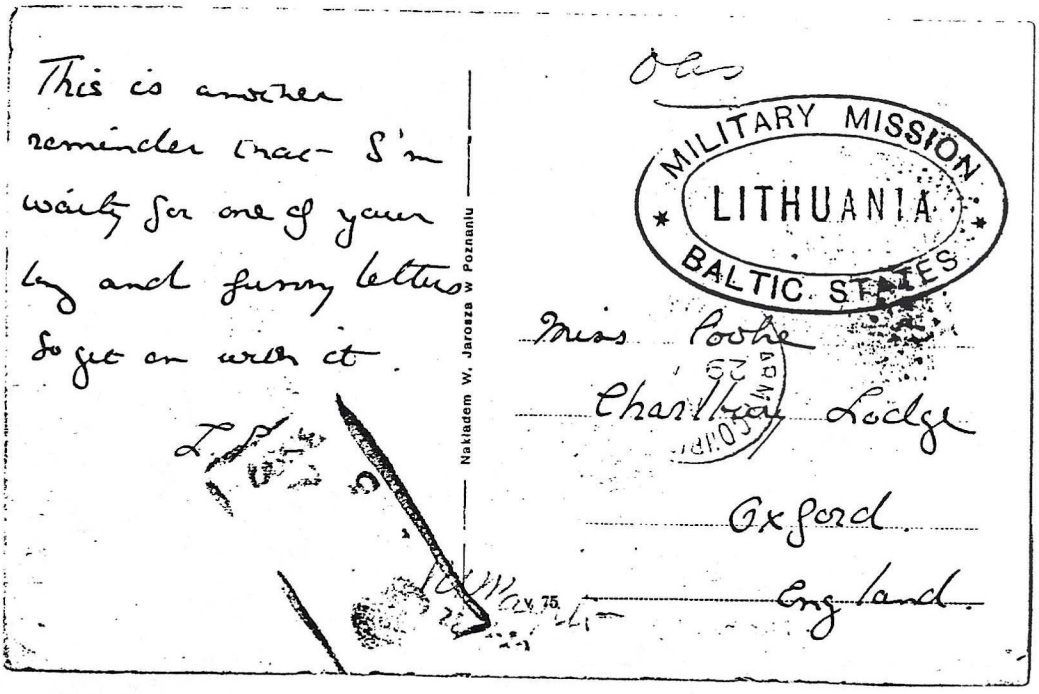
A second local issue was a single 15 kopek stamp ordered by the District Committee in Raseiniai to meet a stamp shortage which developed due to the war front nearby. Issued on 2 January 1919, it was used into March when the situation stabilized and ordinary Lithuanian stamps became available again.

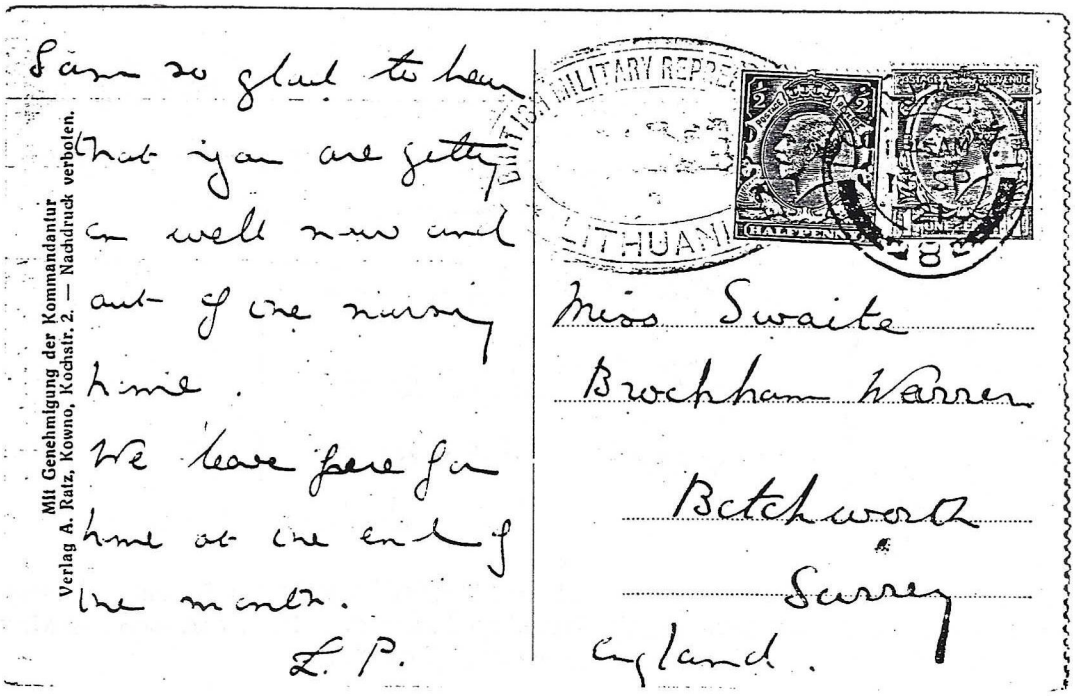
The third local issue relates to Telsiai (Telschen) where a "stamp" was printed by the hectographic process by the postmaster during a stamp shortage. The design includes the seal of the P.O., the word "Apmokita" (Paid), and a space for the value paid to be inserted by hand. A total of 450 were printed, of which 54 were on lined paper. Examples of a postcard and letter are shown, both cancelled on the first day of issue.

LITHUANIA
British Military Mission

Military Mission/Baltic States/Lithuania
August 1921

British Military Representative/Lithuania
September 1921

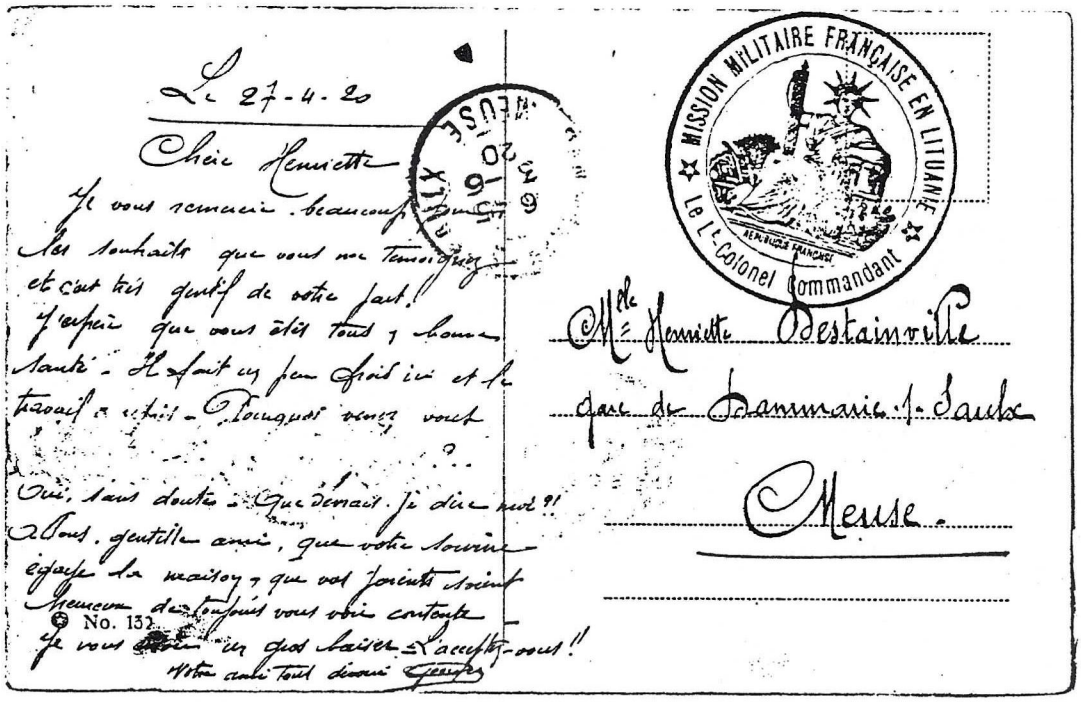


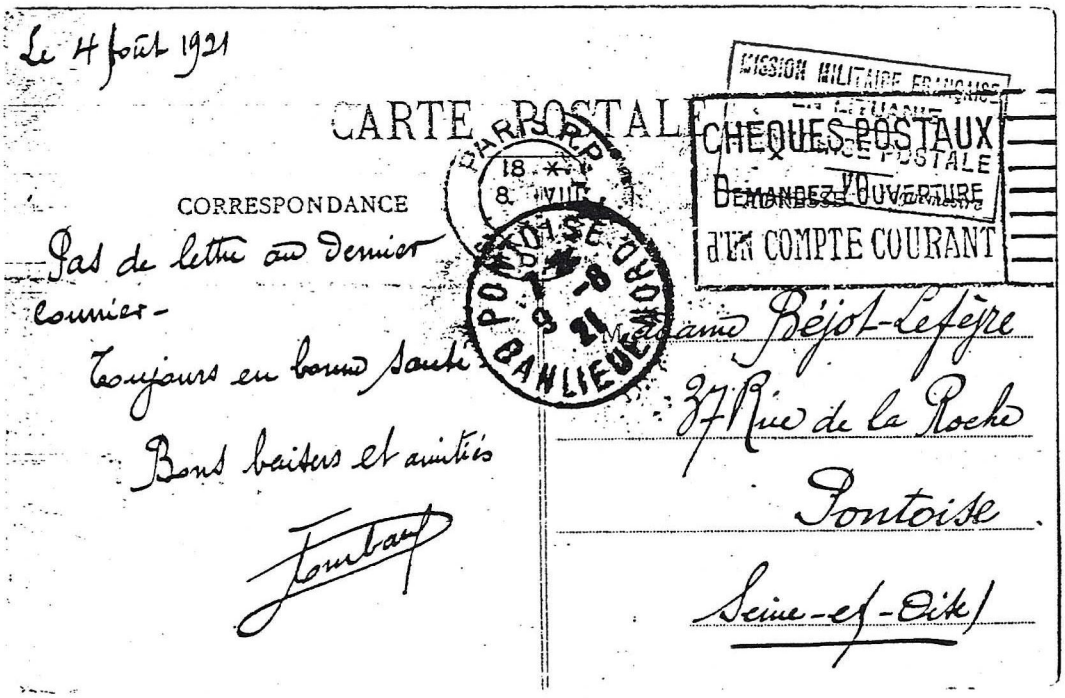


Because there were no British fieldpost facilities in the Baltic countries, mail was sent by military pouch, generally direct to London. However, the upper card addressed to Oxford went via the Army Courier Service S.5 in Berlin. **Examples of these markings are exceedingly scarce.**

LITHUANIA
French Military Mission

Mission Militare Francaise en Lituanie
27 April 1920
4 August 1921

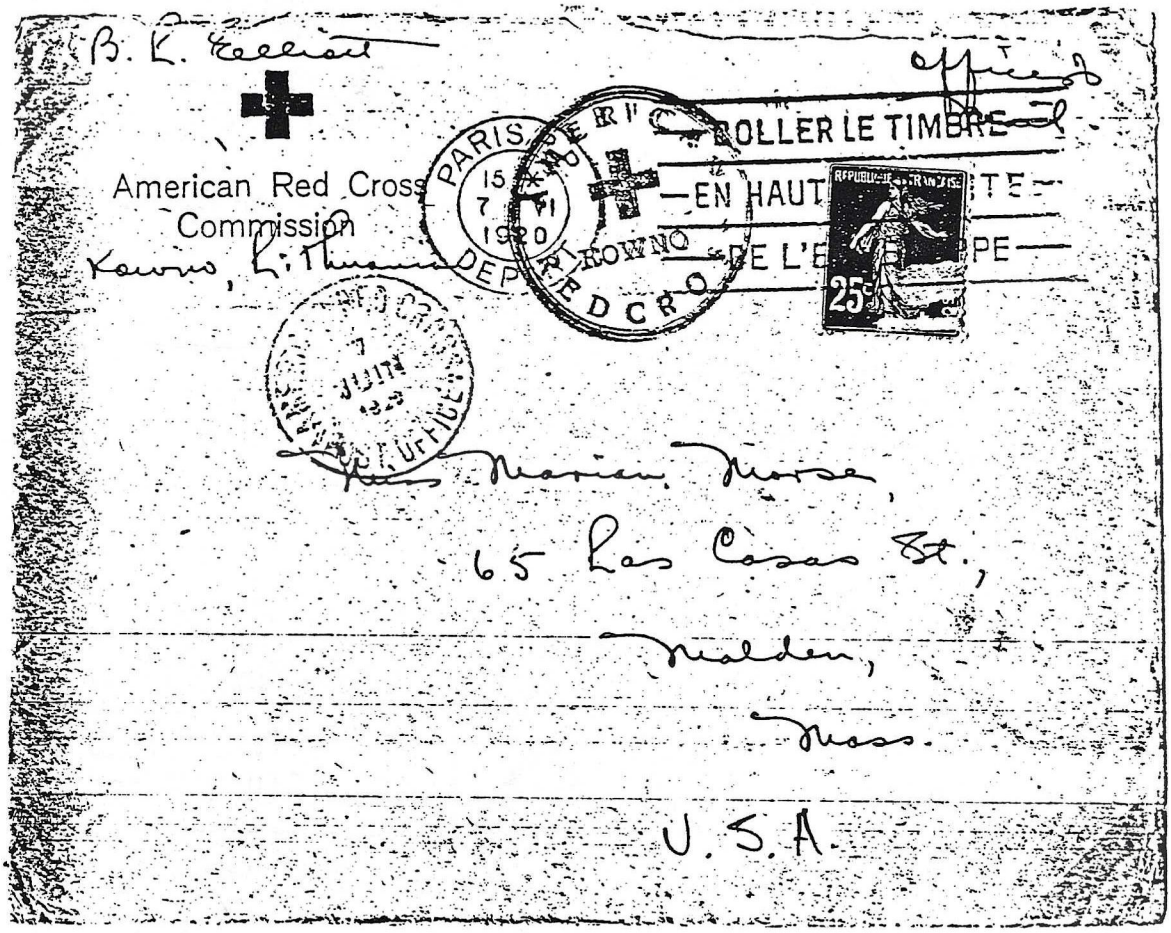




A small group of French military technicians was sent to train the Lithuanian army. No fieldpost offices were provided, but a unit cachet sufficed to obtain free franking for the mail.

LITHUANIA
American Relief Organizations

Kowno
June 1920



The American Red Cross participated in relief operations in Lithuania, providing food and other supplies to the general population. Cover above sent via Red Cross courier to Paris where it was placed in the mail stream.

MEMEL

Free City

Memel
23 September 1920

Stonischken
29 September 1920



In order to give Lithuania access to a port on the Baltic Sea, the Allies decided to make Memel a free city under the jurisdiction of the League of Nations, with France as the administrator. The area was officially detached from Germany on 10 January 1920. Stamps and postal stationery of the Germania design were overprinted "Memel Territory" and issued on 1 August 1920. However, they were invalidated after only three months, with only French overprints being valid as from 1 November 1920.

Examples of postal card and money order card. Fewer than five used examples of the latter are recorded.

MEMEL
Free City

Memel
1 December 1920
7 December 1920

Ramutten
13 November 1921

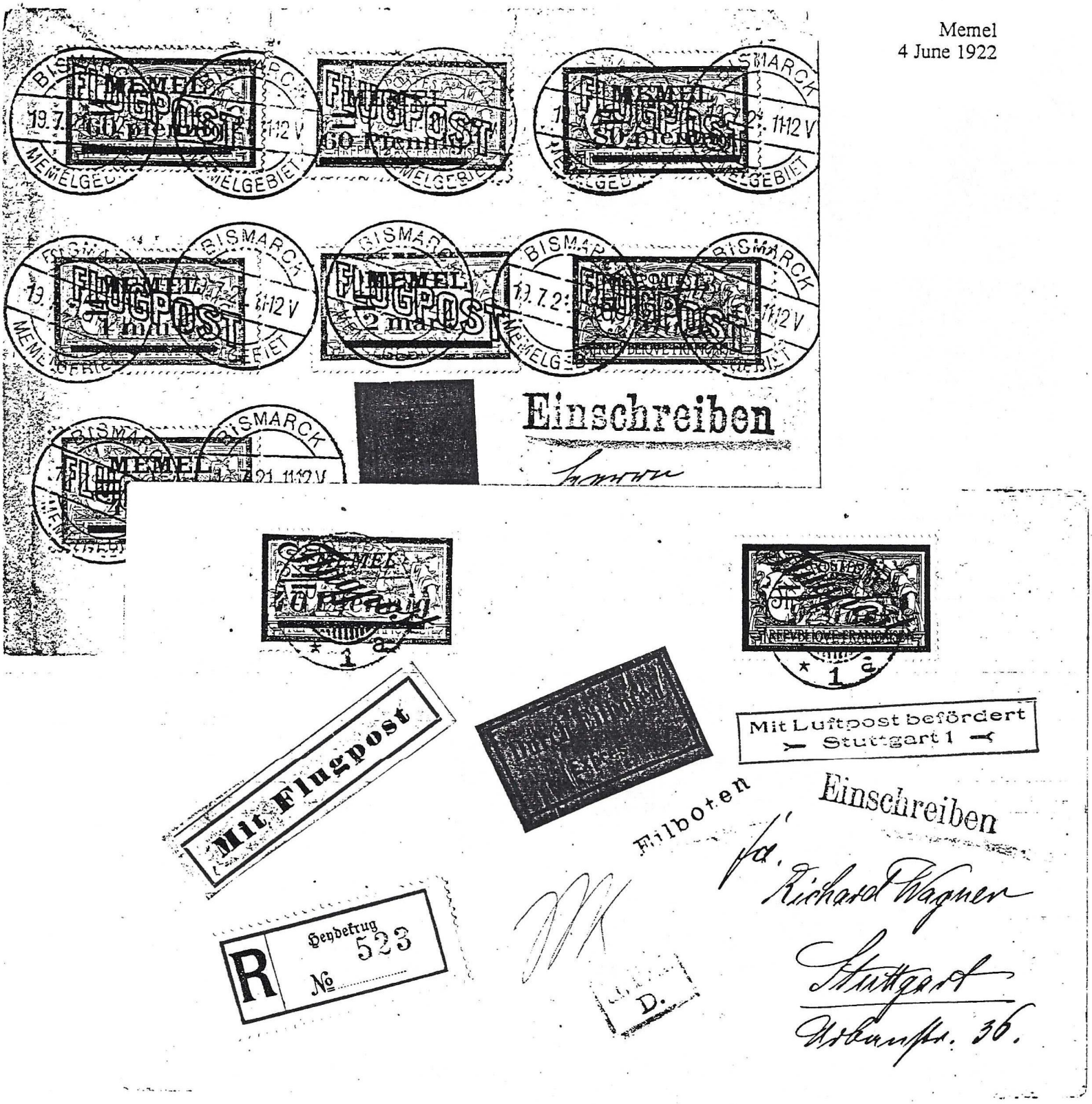


The primary postage used in Memel during the period of the French administration consisted of overprints with the name of the territory and denominations in German currency on current French definitives and postal cards. Several such series were issued between 7 July 1920 and December 1922, some with surcharges of new values.

MEMEL
Free City

Bismarck
19 July 1921

Memel
4 June 1922



Airmail service was in demand for quick communication with Germany and other countries. As a result, the French created airmails by overprinting "Flugpost" on the basic stamps. The first set with large open capital letters was issued on 6 July 1921. A second set with script-type overprint was issued on 12 May 1922.

MEMEL
Lithuanian Occupation

Lankuppen
26 February 1923

Heydekrug
21 March 1923



On 10 January 1923, Lithuanian troops seized control of the city and on 5 February introduced their own stamps overprinted "Klaipeda" (the name of the territory in Lithuanian).

The French stamps continued to be valid until 31 March 1923, and could be used in combination franking with the Lithuanian overprints.