



THE 1966 POLISH MILLENNIUM STAMP

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Introduction

The 1966 Polish Millennium stamp is an outlier among modern U.S. commemorative issues for its religious nature, the efforts taken on behalf of the stamp issue, and ultimately its broad appeal when issued (Figure 1). In fact on July 29, 1966, the day before the first day of issue, Postmaster General Lawrence F. O'Brien took the unusual step of ordering a second printing of 10 million stamps due to "heavy advance demand."

Lobbying for the Stamp

The 1966 Polish Millennium stamp issue has been described as a "masterpiece of Polish lobbying in the U.S." There is no doubt that the efforts undertaken that resulted in the stamp's issue were well coordinated and involved a wide variety of influential people. There were politicians who looked to highlight their support of Poland and the Polish expat communities located in the United States. In fact, Chicago is often referred to as the largest Polish city in the world outside of Poland. It therefore made sense for politicians representing these cities, whether of Polish heritage or not, to favor the issue of a stamp that many of their constituents would appreciate. In fact, a group of Polish politicians in Congress banded together to lobby the Post Office Department on behalf of the Polish Millennium stamp, referring to themselves as the "Group of Nine."

Figure 2 perfectly illustrates the link between Polish communities in the United States and the stamp issue – a photograph of a float from the 1966 Pulaski Day parade in New York City. The centerpiece of the float is an image of the Millennium stamp.

There were also a significant number of clergies who worked tirelessly with their congregations to lobby for the stamp. Clergy members would take a moment during the Mass or worship service to mention that the Christianization of Poland, which occurred in 966, was having its millennium anniversary in 1966, and request that their parishioners write to the representatives or directly to the postmaster general to lobby for the stamp. As we will see, when the stamp was ultimately issued, many of these religious institutions created first day covers in celebration.

The third group of lobbyists for the stamp were lay people of Polish descent. Many people took it upon themselves to write letters directly to the postmaster general or their representatives. In the files of the Third Assistant Postmaster General collection located at the Smithsonian National Postal Museum, there are hundreds of such letters along with the accompanying responses from the PMG. One of these letters can be seen in Figure 3, with the return letter from the postmaster general in Figure 4. In the letter, penned by Barbara Szydłowski, she advocated for a stamp issue to commemorate the coming Polish Millennium celebration. The reply she received simply indicated that the stamp was on the agenda of the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee (CSAC).

This lobbying triumvirate proved very successful in convincing the Post Office Department to issue the Polish Millennium stamp despite some significant hurdles that needed to be overcome. Perhaps the most significant of these was the perceived religious nature of the stamp. For this reason, while the Post Office Department initially referred to the issue as commemorating the 1,000th anniversary of Christianity, it shifted to describing the stamp as commemorating

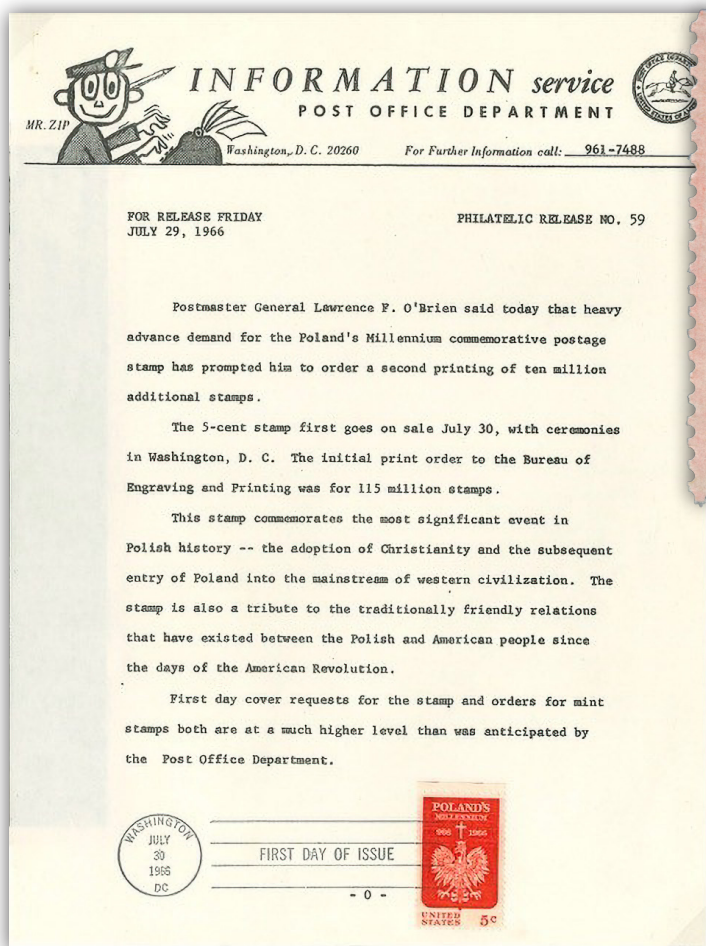


Figure 1. An official news release and the Millennium stamp.

All three arms of the lobbying triumvirate [flooded] the postmaster general with requests and advice regarding the stamp issue.



Figure 2. Millennium stamp parade float from the 1966 Pulaski Day parade in New York City.

Poland's Millennium. (Although a cross does appear on the stamp.)

The lobbyists' success can likely be traced to the fact that the Polish-American community had a lot of practice in organizing and "getting out the vote" in support of the issuance of a stamp commemorating Poland or Polish peoples. An organized lobbying structure was created as early as 1958 to encourage the POD to issue a stamp in honor of the 350th anniversary of the landing of the first Poles in the United States. An essay for that potential stamp can be seen in Figure 5, which was drawn by Arthur Waldo, the historian for the Polish Falcons, a significant Polish social organization. The Polish Falcons organized petition drives with its membership for the 350th anniversary, and politicians also lent their support to this effort. There were additional efforts undertaken in 1963 on behalf of a stamp to commemorate the 600th anniversary of the founding of the Yagiellonion University in Krakow, one of the oldest universities in Europe. (Neither stamp was ever issued.)

As a result, by the time lobbying efforts for the Polish Millennium stamp were necessary, there was already a well-organized lobbying machine in place to offer its support to the effort.

Lobbying for the 1966 stamp began early in 1964 with a letter from the recently formed "Poland's Millennium of Christianity – Chicagoland Observance" committee. The committee chairman, Sig Sakowicz, wrote to then-Postmaster General John Gronouski (later to be named Ambassador to Poland) on March 31, 1964, to suggest that a stamp might be issued in 1966 to commemorate this "worldwide event." Sakowicz was a longtime radio personality in Chicago, having begun his career in 1954 on WGN.

Lobbying efforts continued in 1965 with perhaps the most notable event being the introduction of the bill H.R. 11654 by Congressman Henry Helstoski of New Jersey on October 19, 1965. This bill specifically



Figure 3. Letter written by Barbara Szydlawski in May 1965 to Postmaster General Lawrence F. O'Brien requesting that a stamp be issued for the Polish Millennium.

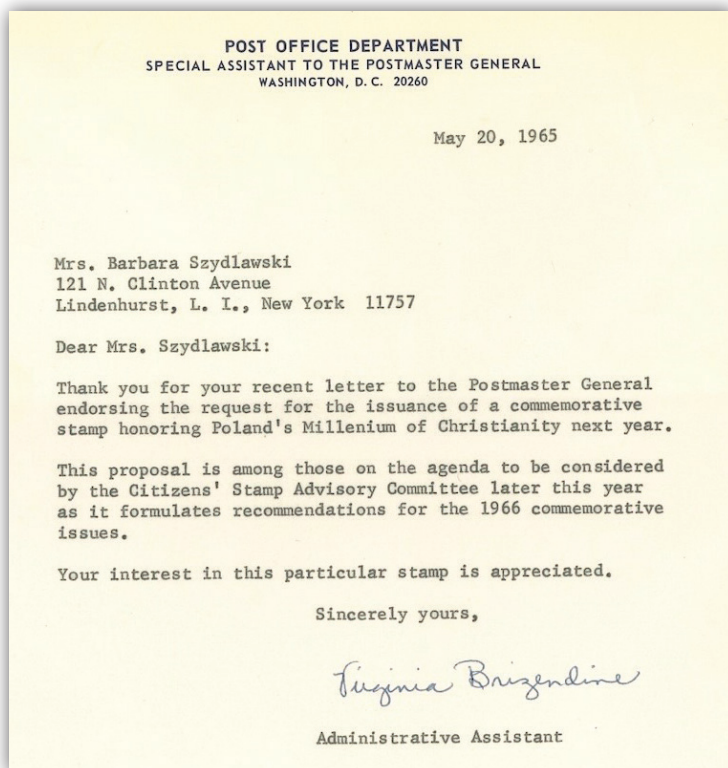


Figure 4. Form letter sent from the Special Assistant to the Postmaster General to Barbara Szydlawski acknowledging receipt of her letter.

requested the issue of a "series of postage stamps in commemoration of the millennium of the Polish nation in the calendar year 1966." Notice that the stated motivation for the stamp has already shifted from the millennium of Christianity to the millennium of the Polish nation. This was to avoid the issue being labeled a religious stamp, instead encouraging its consideration as a secular stamp.

In 1966, lobbying efforts reached their peak with all three arms of the lobbying triumvirate flooding the postmaster general with requests and advice regarding the issue. The standard form letter response thanked the writer for their letter and indicated that the stamp would be considered by CSAC for 1966. The lobbying continued until February 27, 1966, when O'Brien formally announced that the Polish Millennium stamp had been added to the program for 1966. Finally, on June 1, 1966, the design was officially unveiled by O'Brien (Figure 6).

The stamp design

There was no shortage of design suggestions for the Polish Millennium stamp. Several individuals lobbying for the stamp also included design suggestions with their letters. First day cover collectors may be familiar with one of the more popular essays, as submitted by Thaddeus J. Dulski (Buffalo, New York) who served in the United States House of Representatives from 1959 to 1974. The images Dulski submitted were drawn by Sister Mary Geraldine, a member of the Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph of Hamburg, New York, which was in Dulski's district. As seen in Figure 7, the essay designs were replicated in several first day covers; specifically seen here is one of the two designs drawn by Sister Mary Geraldine, along with her signature on the cover. Another example of the Dulski/Geraldine design is seen in Figure 8, this time with an error, the red missing from the cachet. Dulski was a well-known congressional servicer of FDCs who typically used his penalty envelopes as the cachet for his covers. His first FDC was serviced in 1959 for the St. Lawrence Seaway stamp.

The essay shown in Figure 9 was submitted by Myron E. Steczynski, a member of the Millennium Stamp Committee as well as president of Polonus Philatelic Society. The Society was instrumental in organizing and lobbying for the stamp. A series of four essays (Figure 10) were also drawn and submitted by Dr. Chester S. Cole who was Chairman of the Stamp Committee Chicagoland Observance. Finally, the essay shown in Figure 11 was submitted by Reverend Chester A. Bieluch of Hartford, Connecticut. The examples shown illustrate the variety of suggestions/essays sent to Postmaster General O'Brien, ranging from well-executed stamp representations to basic



Figure 5. Essay for a proposed stamp for the 350th Anniversary of the Landing of the First Poles in the United States.



Figure 6. Official press release photo of the official release of the Polish Millennium stamp.

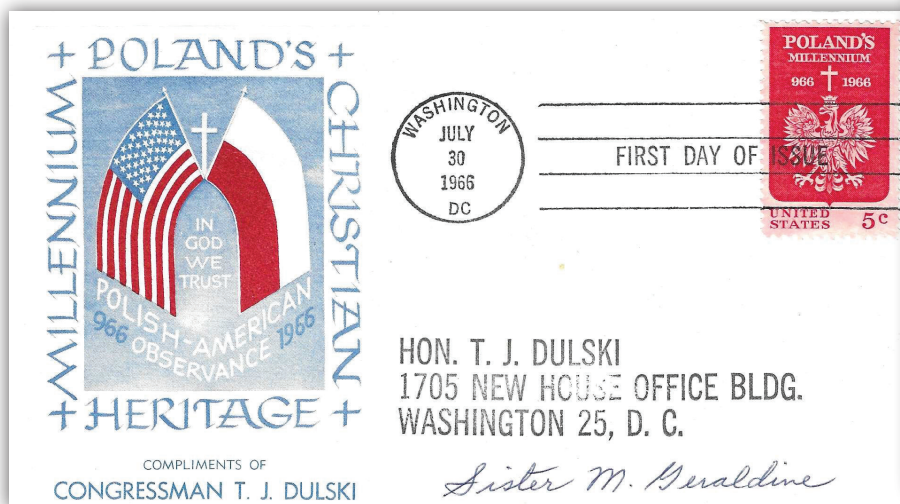


Figure 7. Congressman Dulski FDC signed by cachet artist Sister Mary Geraldine.

rudimentary illustrations.

After much consideration, and due in part to the short timeline available for the execution of the stamp, two Polish American artists were chosen to submit their designs for consideration. Design specifications outlined in the letter suggested that the image might be the King and Queen holding a torch, and the wording "Poland's Millennium 966-1966 U. S. Postage 5c."

In late February 1966, Edmund Lewandowski of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and Stefan Mroszewski of San Francisco, California, were asked to send design suggestions along with sample of their work for consideration.

Stefan Mroszewski was born in Czeszochowa, Poland, in 1894 and was a graphic artist, book illustrator, and painter working mainly in woodcut, which was the method he used for his Polish Millennium essay. He studied art at the National School of Decorative Arts in Poznan and the School of Fine Arts in Warsaw, among other places. He also took part in the art competition at the 1936 Berlin Olympics.

Stefan Mroszewski submitted a woodcut design, the style for which he was best known (Figure 12). This woodcut was from a series of scenes representing the history of Poland. Mroszewski used this design as a cachet for two identical FDCs (Figure 13) in red and black as well as a souvenir card. The FDCs are very difficult to find as just 35 of each were printed. Mroszewski sent this image as an example of his work and later sent the essay seen in Figure 14 as his

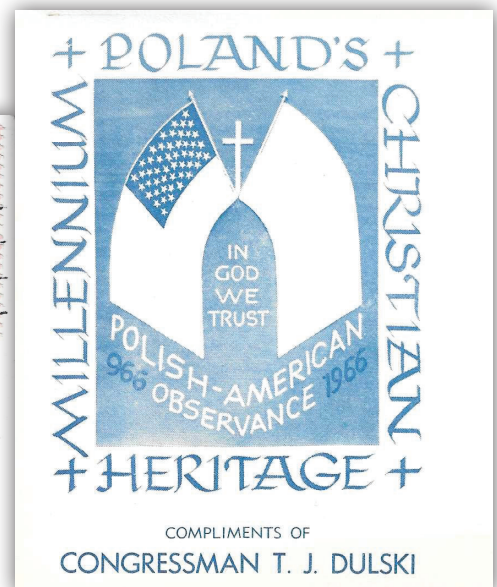


Figure 8. Dulski cachet with missing red printing error.

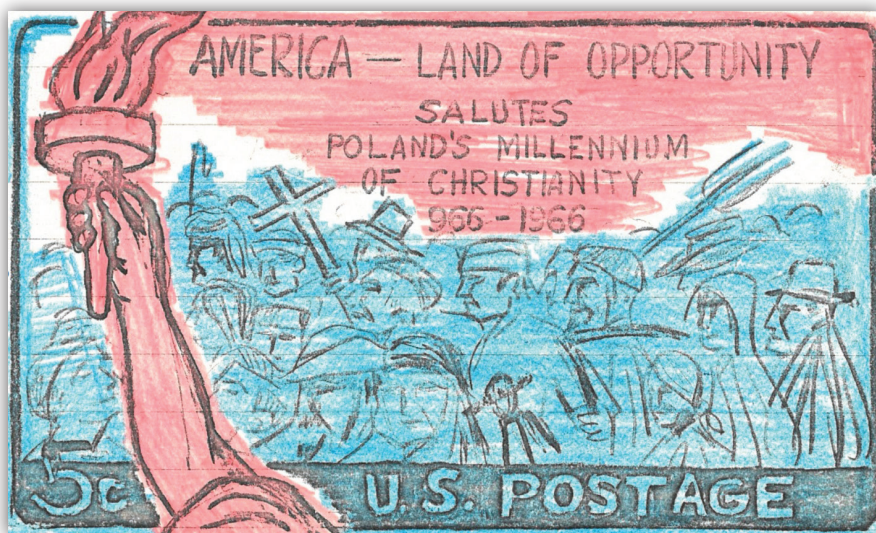
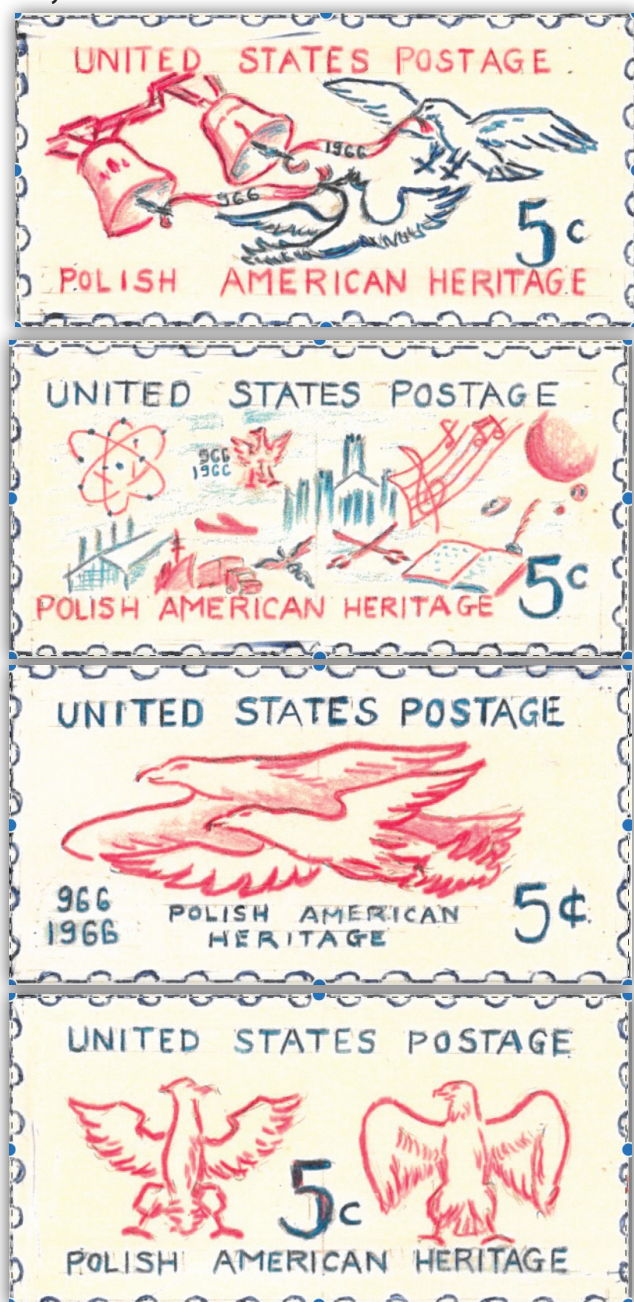


Figure 9. Myron E. Steczynski, President of Polonus Philatelic Society, Millennium stamp essay.

Herman Herst [objected] to a stamp commemorating a religious event ... because these stamps opened the door to additional religious stamps.



suggestion for the Millennium stamp. Unfortunately, this design suggestion was rejected.

Edmund Lewandowski, born in Milwaukee in 1914, was the son of Polish immigrants. He received his formal art education at the Layton School of Art and taught public school while pursuing his career as an artist. In 1936, he began painting for the United States post office, completing murals for the post office in Caledonia, Minnesota, titled "Hog Raising"; Hamilton, Illinois, titled "On the River"; and Stoughton, Wisconsin, titled "Air Mail Service".

Lewandowski, whose design was ultimately accepted, sent a design very similar to the issued stamp, although in his initial design the years "966-1966" were omitted and the POD requested that they be added. Figure 15 is an example of a rejected essay from Lewandowski. Although very close to the final approved design, notice that on this rejected essay "United States" is not spelled out but rather appears simply as "US."

Protests and politics

The earliest controversy around the Polish Millennium stamp arose before the stamp was even announced. In 1964, while the stamp was still being considered by CSAC, noted stamp dealer Herman Herst wrote to the postmaster general objecting to the issue of several stamps (mainly Christmas stamps), which had, in his opinion, a religious purpose (Figure 16). Herst's objection to a stamp commemorating a religious event, namely the Christian Millennium in Poland, was because these stamps opened the door to additional religious stamps. This same objection was voiced to Postmaster General O'Brien by several independent citizen letter writers as well.

Figure 10. Chester Cole essays. From top: Bells & Doves of Peace symbolizing Polish American friendship; recognizing Polish contributions to the arts and sciences; two eagles in flight; and the American and Polish Eagles (the Polish Eagle at left faces the wrong direction).

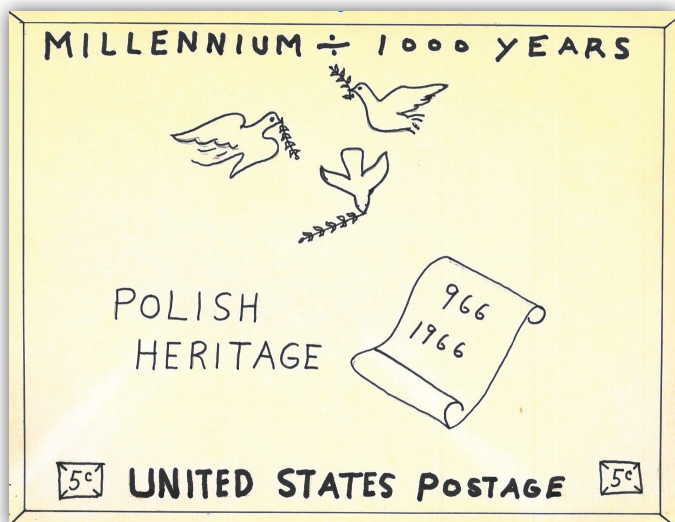


Figure 11. Rev Chester Bieluch Millennium stamp essay.

A second controversy, though less significant than the first, was regarding the stamp's first day of issue location. Virtually every large city with a significant Polish population lobbied the Post Office to suggest that the first day ceremony should take place in their city. Certainly, the strongest case was made by Chicago, home to the largest Polish community in the United States. As early as 1964, plans were being made to have Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, then-Primate of Poland, officiate the 1966 Millennium Mass at Soldier Field in Chicago. Ultimately, the Post Office Department decided against these suggestions and held the first day ceremony in Washington, D.C. on June 30, 1966.

Another interesting situation arose because of an Art-Craft cachet, and the map included as part of the cachet. Following the stamp's issue, plans were made to ship 5,000 FDCs to Poland for distribution there. The State Department chose the ArtCraft first day cover for this honor and subsequently sent the 5,000 by diplomatic pouch to Poland. Figure 17 shows a State Department telegram reply from Warsaw to Washington and O'Brien regarding the cachet depicted on the ArtCraft FDCs. Not only was the stamp itself a sensitive topic in diplomatic circles, but the map contained some inaccuracies that concerned the U.S. Embassy in Warsaw. As the telegram indicates, the location of the borders drawn on the cachet place several cities in the wrong country. The covers were returned to Washington by pouch. Figure 18 shows the original artwork for the Art-Craft cachet, with Breslau circled, clearly showing Breslau to be inside German borders instead of as a part of Poland. The embassy asked that these covers be replaced; however, I have not found any record that replacements were ever sent.

The most significant controversy arising from the stamp was lodged by the Communist Polish government. When the stamp was unveiled, the Polish government objected to the design – specifically the coat of arms eagle as depicted by Lewandowski. Figure 19 shows the coat of arms that was used in Poland prior to the rise of the Communist government, and was still used by the Polish government in exile.



Figure 12. Example of work that Stefan Mroszewski provided to the Post Office.

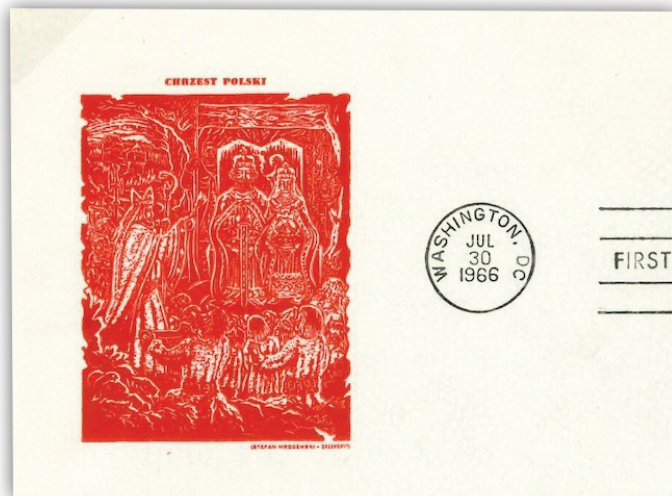


Figure 13. Mroszewski artwork used as the cachet for Millennium first day cover in red.

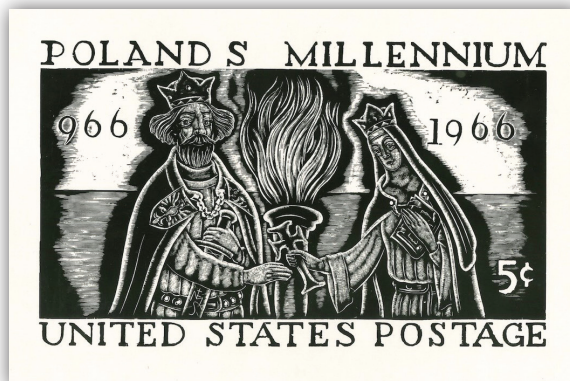


Figure 14. Rejected essay submitted by Stefan Mroszewski.



Figure 15. Essay submitted by Lewandowski with "US" instead of "United States."

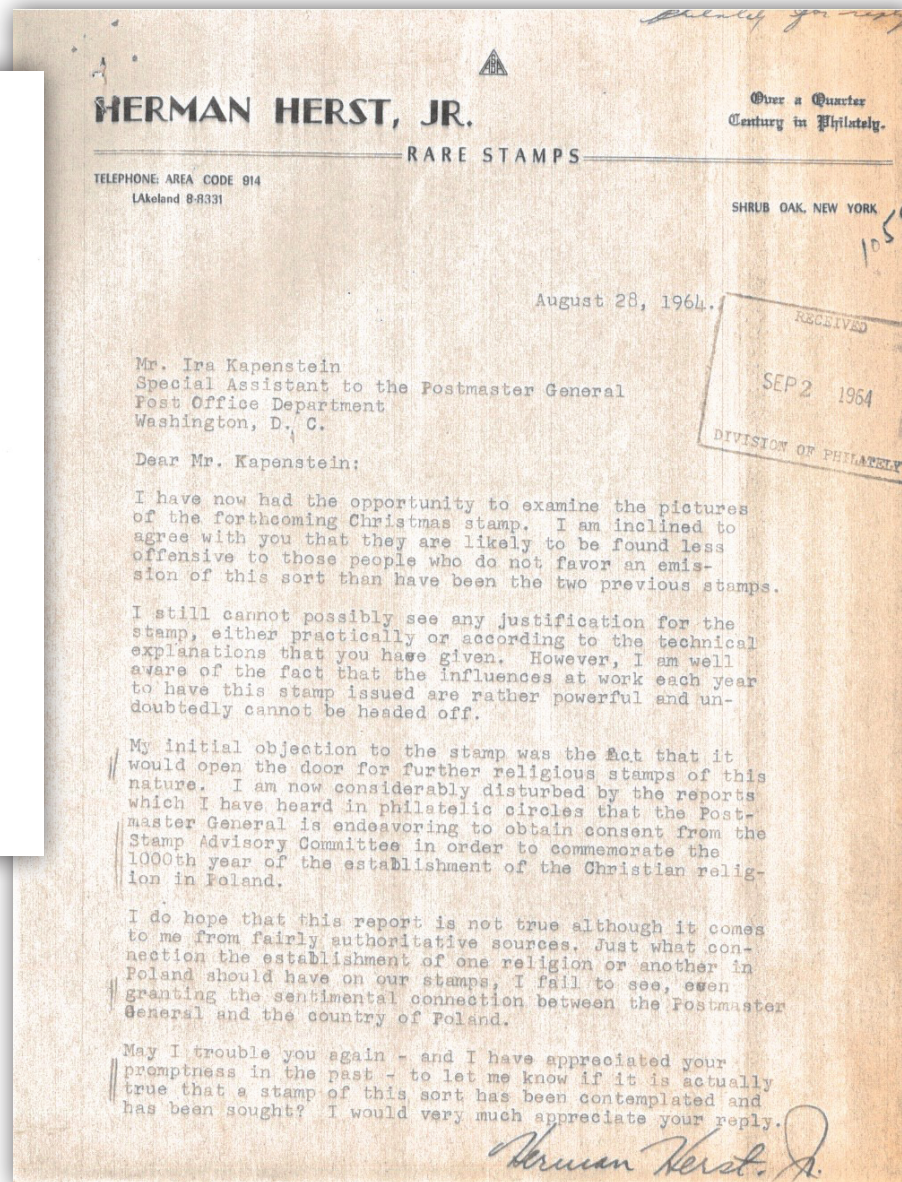


Figure 16. Letter from noted stamp dealer Herman Herst voicing concerns about "religious" stamps.

Figure 20 shows the coat of arms adopted upon the Communist government's assumption of power in Poland, which was changed from the original. The most significant change was the removal of the crown, which the Communist government saw as a symbol of the monarchy, associated with the pre-communist era. Lewandowski himself was asked several years later if he intentionally designed a stamp that included an eagle very similar to the pre-communist coat of arms eagle. He insisted that he did not intend to draw an eagle that would cause controversy, but rather that he designed the stamp based on his own interpretation of the specifications from the Post Office.

Figure 21 shows a letter sent to Ira Kapenstein, special assistant to the postmaster general, from Virginia Brizen-dine, head of the division of philately of the Post Office Department and executive secretary of the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee. In this letter, dated June 17, 1966, the Post Office Department is advised that the Polish govern-

ment has lodged a formal protest about the stamp. While the reason for the protest of the stamp is ambiguous (was it the cross, the crown, or the eagle the Polish government objected to?), the threatened actions are specific, suggesting the possibility that the Polish government would "bar mail" franked with the stamp. Figure 22 is a response to the official complaint, a detailed examination of the differences between the Polish Millennium stamp and the pre-war Polish eagle and crown. Ultimately diplomacy prevailed and the Polish government did not follow through on its threat to ban U.S. mail franked by the stamp. Figure 23 shows a postcard mailed to Krakow, Poland, in September 1966 which was delivered without issue. Figure 24 is a registered letter which was addressed to Krakow, and which was returned to the sender as undeliverable, with a handstamp "DECEDE" which in French means deceased. So, in both cases the presence of the Polish Millennium stamp did not impede delivery (attempts) in Poland.

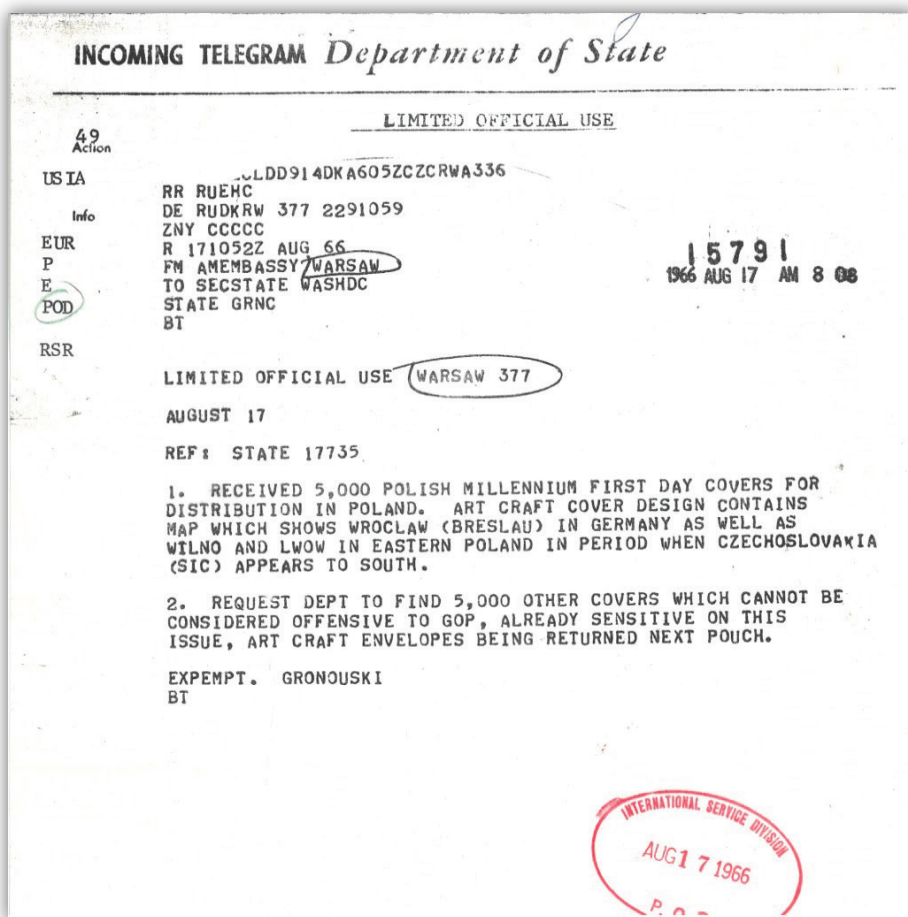


Figure 17. Telegram from embassy in Warsaw sharing the concern about the map on the ArtCraft cachet.

The first day of issue

The first day of issue ceremony was held at the Sheraton Park Hotel in Washington, D. C. on July 30, 1966. Postmaster General O'Brien delivered the opening address to the crowd (Figure 25). The master of ceremonies was Senator Edmund Muskie of Maine, whose father, Stefan Marciszewski, had left Poland at the age of 17 before finally settling in America (Figure 26). Many of the people and organizations who lobbied so diligently for the stamp's issue attended the ceremony.

One of the organizations most involved in the issue of the stamp was Polonus Philatelic Society, located in Chicago. A large contingent of Polonus members traveled to Washington for the ceremony and those present signed a sheet, which is seen in Figure 27, and an accompanying key which identifies several of the signatories.

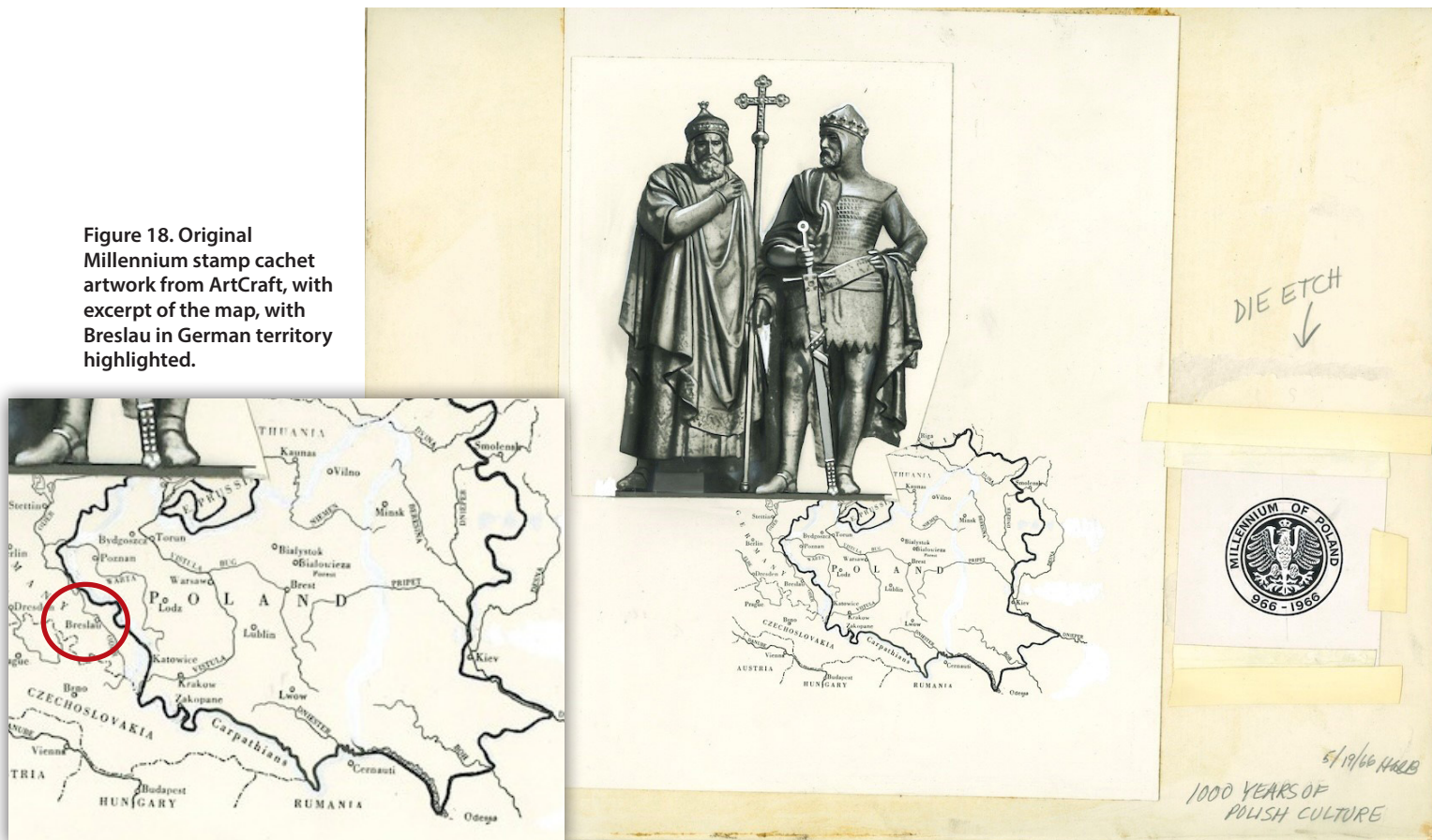




Figure 19. Pre-war, and Polish Government in Exile, Polish Coat of Arms with Eagle.



Figure 20. Communist Poland Coat of Arms with Eagle and no crown.

First day covers

Collecting first day covers for the Polish Millennium stamp can be a challenge because so many cachets were created by non-traditional (mainly religious) servicers. These covers didn't enter the hobby through traditional means such as philatelic subscription services or stamp stores. Instead, many of these non-traditional FDCs were made available via the religious institutions that created them. In addition, in many cases these covers were the first and only first day cover created by the organization.

One of the most important FDCs, while a common cachet, is the one from Fleetwood shown in Figure 28. This cover was sent by U.S. Rep. John D. Dingell of Michigan. This

Polish stamp

June 17, 1966

Virginia Brizendine

Mr. Kapenstein

Mr. Dean Chamberlin of U.S.I.A. called me today to say that the Polish Ambassador came to State Department yesterday to lodge a formal protest about the Polish stamp. They did not mention the cross or the crown but rather the type eagle used (see attached that came in shortly after he talked to me). It may be, of course, they are using this as a cover up for the real objection -- Mr. Chamberlin thought it might be that. By putting the emphasis on the eagle they can bar the mail without disclosing the real motive.

In view of the above, Mr. Chamberlin thinks we should hold up on Mr. Gronouski's request for exhibit material. They are holding the request for 2500 first day covers in abeyance. They will keep us posted on any new developments and they asked us to pass on to them any reports we might get on the subject.

Figure 21. Letter from Special Assistant to the Postmaster General clarifying the objections of the Polish government.

6/22/66

Copies to:

Mr. Kapenstein
Mr. Zachar
Mrs. Brizendine
Gronouski pouch.

POLAND'S MILLENNIUM STAMP

The design of the stamp to be issued commemorating Poland's Millennium contains the traditional Polish eagle and crown. The eagle and crown were done in a stylized version by the stamp artist, Mr. Edmund Lewandowski of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. They are not replicas of the pre-war official Polish eagle and crown.

Careful scrutiny of Lewandowski's design shows the following points of difference between the official pre-war eagle and the U. S. stamp design:

The pre-war eagle is more flamboyant and firmer in design: the wings of Lewandowski's eagle are shorter.

The crown is completely different: the crown in the stamp has a design of five dots, the spikes and the circlet are simplified -- the pre-war eagle has a more detailed and bejeweled crown.

The eye of the stamp eagle is different: its iris is not placed in the center of the eye, giving the eagle a markedly different expression.

The beak of the Polish pre-war eagle is entirely different: it has a powerful upper mandible, a tongue extending beyond the beak and a very short lower mandible; Lewandowski's eagle has the lower mandible longer than the upper one and no tongue.

The stamp eagle has a longer and less curved neck.

The body of Lewandowski's eagle lacks the definite scallops found on the other eagles.

The scallop design (engraving) on the wings does not extend completely around the rosettes as it does on the pre-war eagle.

The pre-war eagle has legs firmly feathered to the toes: Lewandowski's eagle has legs of a different design and loosely feathered.

The claws, the crown and the beak are white in the stamp as the rest of the eagle: the pre-war Polish eagle had the crown, the claws and the beak in gold.

Figure 22. Documentation from the Post Office regarding the distinctions between the pre-war and Communist government Eagle.

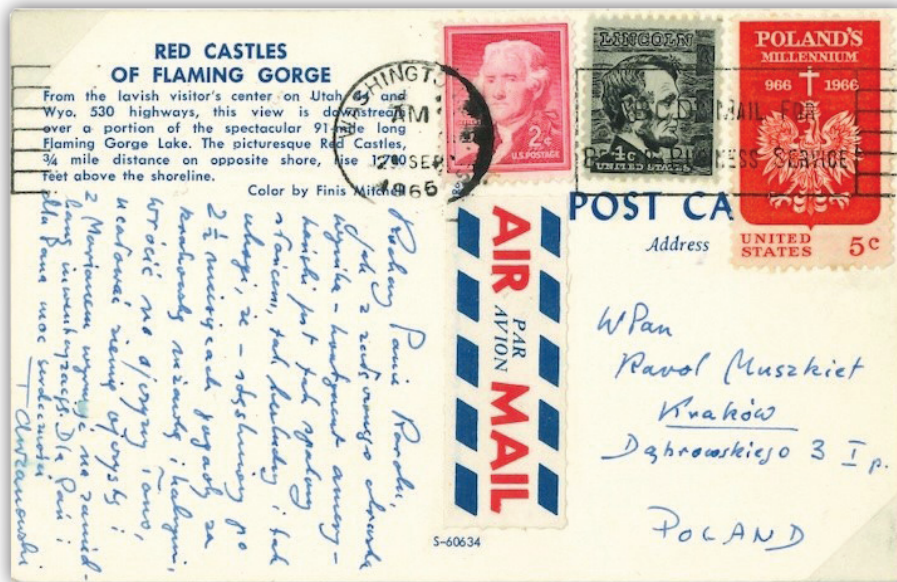


Figure 23. Postcard mailed to Poland with the Millennium stamp.



Figure 24. Registered letter to Poland returned due to the addressee's death, not the presence of the Millennium stamp.



Figure 25. Kolor Kover FDC signed by PMG Lawrence F. O'Brien.



Figure 26. ArtCraft FDC signed by Senator Edmund Muskie.

cover is important because it documents the so-called "group of nine" congressmen who combined their lobbying efforts to help get the stamp issued. Dingell, as did many congressmen, used the official Polonus/Fleetwood cachet to send the letter to his constituents. It is important to keep in mind that these covers sent by politicians went, in most cases, to residents in their respective districts. Many of the recipients were not stamp collectors and so many did not survive, making even a common cachet difficult to find, not to mention one that includes the enclosure.

Figure 29 was created by St. Stanislaus B.M. Church in Chicopee, Massachusetts. Founded in 1891, it is one of the oldest parishes in New England. Figure 30 was created by the Polish community of Denver. Denver is the location of the oldest Polish National Church in the western United States. Figure 31 was created by the Ladies Auxiliary of Polish Birth and was printed on both a white and a bluish green envelope. The cachet, which depicts the Our Lady of Czestochowa Shrine in Poland, was drawn by Walt Krawiec who worked for 60 years as a cartoonist for *Dziennik Chicagoski*, the Polish daily news of Chicago. Figure 32 was issued by Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church in New Bedford, Massachusetts.



Figure 27. Sheet signed by members of Polonus Philatelic Society.



Figure 28. Fleetwood and Polonus official first day cover for the Millennium stamp. Right, the letter sent with the Fleetwood FDC, which documents the "Group of Nine" congressman who lobbied for the stamp.

All hand colored and/or hand drawn first day covers are typically issued in limited quantities due to the labor-intensive method of production. Marvin Frey created the one-of-a-kind cachet in (Figure 33) for collector John Truczak. Ralph Dyer, a longtime cachet artist, also created a basic cachet as well as a more ornate cachet in lesser quantity. Figure 34 is Dyer's more ornate cachet, which he typically created for special clients or for trade to other FDC servicers. Figure 35 was drawn and colored by Marie G. Eldred who owned Jayhawk Enterprises with her husband, Albert, in Emporia, Kansas. Marie was responsible for creating Meg-Art FDCs. Figure 36 is the first cachet made by Ron Myers, who used a letterpress in his garage to complete his FDCs. Figure 37 is by Herman Maul.

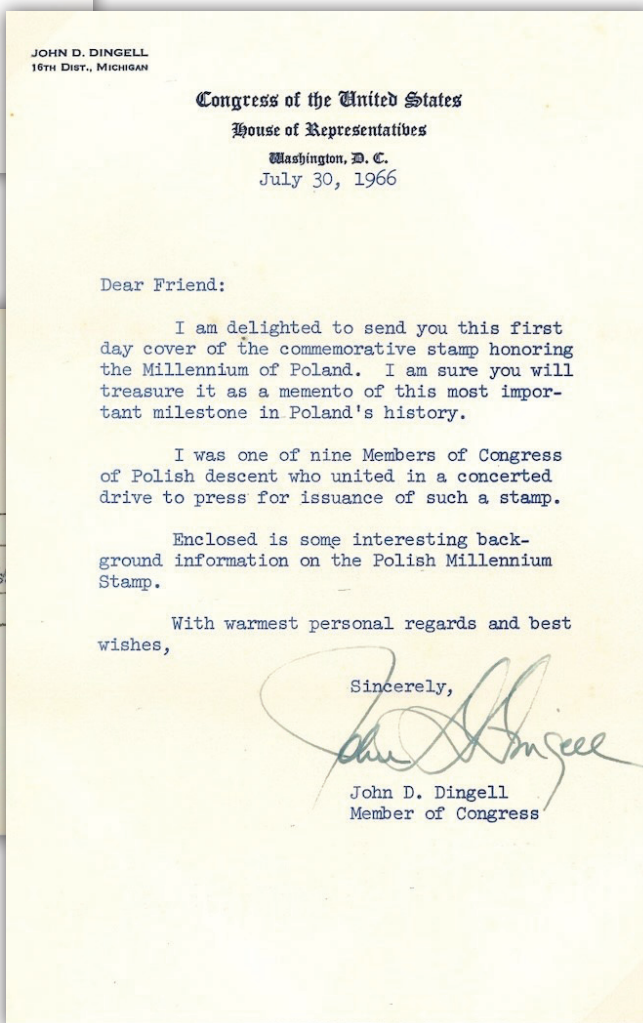




Figure 29. First (and only) cachet – St. Stanislaus B(ishop) and M(artyr) Church

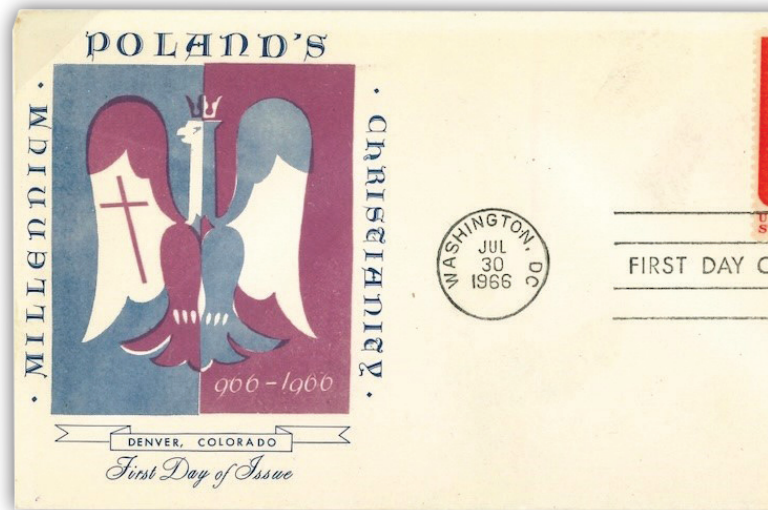


Figure 30. First (and only) cachet – Polish Community of Denver, Colorado.

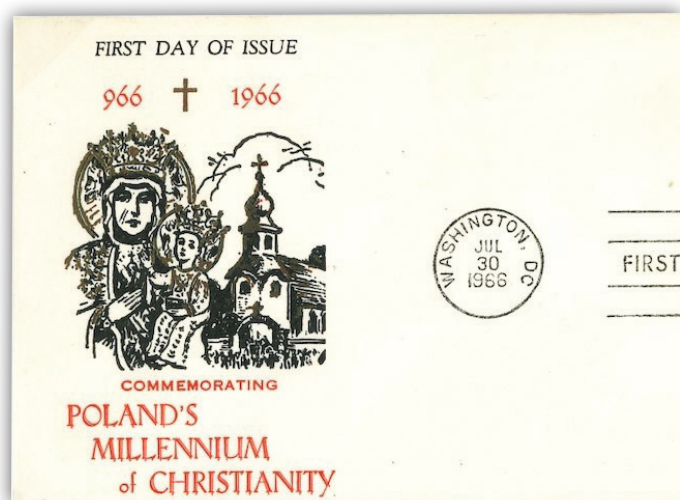


Figure 31. First (and only) cachet – Ladies Auxiliaries of Polish Birth.



Figure 32. First (and only) cachet – Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church.

The Millennium celebration concludes

The Millennium celebration in the United States concluded with the Chicagoland Observance at Soldier Field on August 28, 1966. Reverend Cody officiated because Cardinal Stefan Wyszynski Primate of Poland and Archbishop of Warsaw, who had originally planned to travel to Chicago for the Mass, was denied an exit visa by the Polish Government. Holy cards were available for attendees and Figure 38 shows the front and back of a prayer card, which was canceled at Polpex, the annual exhibition of the Polonus Philatelic Society.

Epilogue

The Millennium celebration was a truly worldwide event. There were stamps issued in Poland, the Vatican, Australia, Brazil, and, of course, the United States. In addition, commemorative cancellations were used in several countries. Like the United States, there were also controversies in Poland regarding the celebration. The church recognized



Figure 33. Marvin Frey cachet, hand drawn and colored, one-of-a-kind drawn for John Truczak.

In many cases these [religious] covers were the first and only first day cover created by the organization.



Figure 34. Ralph Dyer cachet, hand drawn and colored cachet with Polish Flag and Coat of Arms.

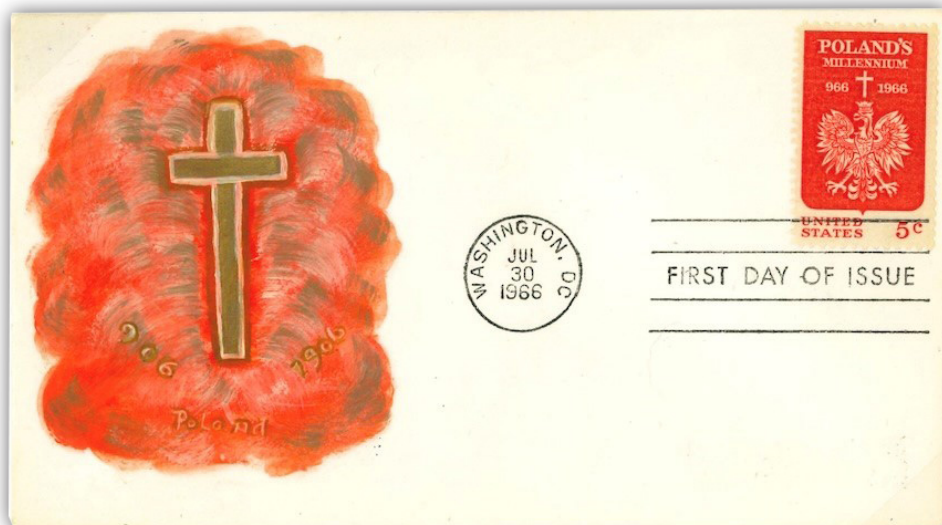


Figure 35. First cachet, hand drawn and colored – Marie G. Eldred.



Figure 36. First cachet, hand colored – Ron Myers.

the celebration as the Millennium of Christianity, while the Communist government in Poland simply referred to the celebration as a thousand-year celebration of statehood.

The final event for any United States commemorative stamp is its removal from sale. The Postal Bulletin reported that the Polish Millennium stamp was removed from sale on September 30, 1968.

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Figure 37. Herman Maul, hand drawn and colored.

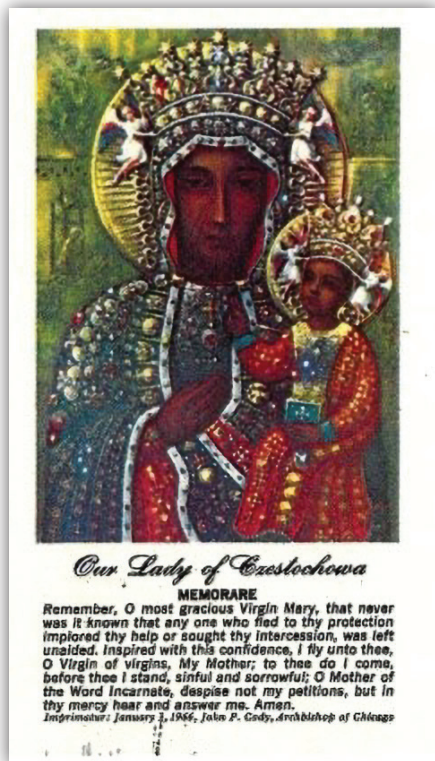


Figure 38. Front (left) and reverse (right) of the prayer card available for attendees of the Millennium Mass. The reverse has the Millennium stamp canceled at the Polpex Station.

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The Author

Ronald J. Klimley began stamp collecting in 1970 when his mother returned from a vacation with a first day cover of the Landing of the Pilgrims issue for him. He joined the APS in 1982 and years later, as his pursuit of stamp collecting became more serious, he returned to his first day cover roots, creating several successful exhibits, including one for the 1964 New York World's Fair commemorative stamp. He has also written articles, which have appeared in several society journals as well as the *Journal of the American Association of Philatelic Exhibitors*. Ron is currently the president of Polonus Polish Philatelic Society and invites all who share his enthusiasm for Polish philately, if they are not already members, to join the Society. For more information about Polish stamp collecting and Polonus, Ron invites you to visit the website at www.polonus.org.