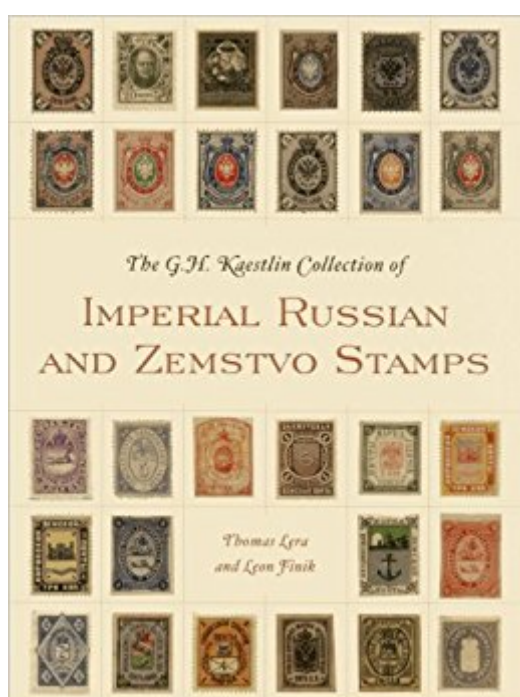


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The GH Kaestlin Collection Of Imperial Russian And Zemstvo Stamps (Smithsonian Contribution To Knowledge)



Synopsis

A quiet philatelist, George H. Kaestlin joined the original Rossika Society in 1935 along with the better known Theo B. Lavroff and K. Szymanowski. Whereas Lavroff contributed significantly to Russian philately as an author and researcher and Szymanowski was an avid collector, Kaestlin collected privately. Born in Moscow, circa 1893, Kaestlin arrived in England in 1939. After World War II, When the original Rossika dissolved, he did not join the newly reconstituted Rossika Society of the United States. He never wrote for any philatelic magazine, never joined the London-based British Society of Russian Philately, and never showed his material at any exhibition. Thus he managed to elude notice in the literature of the times and receded into obscurity. Kaestlin's exceedingly remarkable contribution, however, is found in the quality and scope of his collection and in the preservation of the treasures he acquired (many from the legendary Fabergé collection). Kaestlin's attention to detail and fastidious collecting habits are evident in the layout and handwriting in his albums. His collection, donated to the Smithsonian Institution in 1984 by his niece Vera Madeleine Kaestlin-Bock, includes more than 1,250 album pages on which he organized more than 14,000 Imperial Russian and zemstvo stamps. The quality of the stamps is outstanding. With the publication of this book, Kaestlin can finally take his place among the greats of Russian philately. The G.H. Kaestlin Collection of Imperial Russian and Zemstvo Stamps is one of the greatest museum collections outside of Russia.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Thomas Lera is the Winton M. Blount Research Chair at the Smithsonian National Postal Museum. He is the editor of The Winton M. Blount Symposia: Select Papers 2006–2009 (2010) and The Winton M. Blount Symposia: Select Papers 2010–2011 (2012), and author of Bats in Philately (1995) and Cave Post Offices (2011). Leon Finik has amassed outstanding collections of Imperial Russian and zemstvo stamps, served as an expertiser for the American Philatelic Society and the Rossica Society of Russian Philately, and runs the Loral Stamp Company. He is author of several articles for the Rossica Journal.

This book provides an informative overview of the postal system of Imperial Russia during the second half of the 19th century and the first decade and a half of the 20th century. It is well made and beautifully illustrated. For readers who read Russian the inclusion of facsimiles of some of the relevant original government documents is particularly interesting. I found the text to be most helpful in sorting out (literally) the different stamps from the different issues that otherwise closely resemble each other and in many instances can be difficult to tell apart. Please note, however, that only the first 70 of 307 pages of this book cover the stamps that most collectors are likely to find on the market today. The greater portion of the text covers Zemstvo stamps, an interesting subject to be sure, but a bit disappointing in that most collectors will likely not have many - if any - of these stamps in their collections. Nonetheless, if you want to know more about the Russian stamps in your collection from the tsarist period, then you should definitely consider buying this book. A similar book covering the stamps in circulation during the 1917 Revolution, early RFSSR, and the Civil War years would be a fascinating companion for this book.

Absolutely amazing book that is well researched and accurate. The pictures are of high resolution and are especially well done in format and color validity to the actual stamps. This is a book that every Russian stamp collector must own. If not a stamp collector, the historical text is worthwhile by itself. I have spent hours with the book (someone else's) and fell in love with it so here I am buying my own copy for my philatelic library. Much more than a coffee table tome.

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