

Oh, The Things You Can Learn Stamp Collecting!

Iceland's 1930 Parliament Issue by Mike Schumacher

To set the stage for Iceland's 1930 Parliament issue it is important to look at Iceland's early history. According to *Landnamabok* (the Book of Settlements) the settlement of Iceland began in 874, when Norwegian Ingolfur Arnarson became the first permanent settler. Over the next several decades more people of Norse and Celtic descent settled in Iceland. Ingolfur's descendants grew to be a powerful family and other chieftains felt a need to form an assembly to limit their power and establish a unified code of law. Grimur Geitskor was delegated the task of rallying support for an assembly and finding a suitable location. About that time, the owner of Blaskogar (the area now known as Pingvellir) was found guilty of murder and his land was declared to be public land. The area was reasonably accessible to the most populous regions of the country and thus was chosen to be the site of the national assembly. Iceland's parliament was founded at Pingvellir in 930. The name Pingvellir is derived from the Old Norse word Pingvollr – *ping* meaning “assembly” and *vollr* meaning “field”. The first parliamentary proceedings laid the groundwork for a common cultural heritage and national identity.



Centuries later, as the year 1930 approached, Icelanders began to contemplate how to celebrate the upcoming 1000th Anniversary of Iceland's Parliament. A Millennium committee was formed in 1926 to plan the festivities. Along about the same time the Society of the Friends of Iceland¹ from Vienna, Austria presented the committee with a proposal to supply Iceland with a special set of commemorative stamps at no cost [Figure C1] for the millennium celebration (provided the society could retain a certain quantity to offset their costs for designing and printing the stamps). The committee advised the Icelandic Postal Administration (IPA) of the proposal. The IPA promptly refused the offer &

Sigurdur Briem, Reykjavik's head Postmaster stated he would not deal with the Society.

The society not willing to take “no” for an answer, sent their proposal to the Icelandic government, who accepted it. An agreement was reached for the Society to issue a set of 16 millennium anniversary stamps with a total face value of 813,000 kronur, of which 600,000 kronur worth, were to be provided to the Icelandic Post Office well prior to the festivities. The Society of the Friends of Iceland was to retain the remaining 213,000 kronur worth of stamps to offset their costs. The stamps were printed (offset/litho) by Elbemuhl A.G. in Vienna and the agreement was completed when Ludwig Hesshaimer delivered the stamps to the Icelandic Post Office in late 1929. The stamps issued on January 1, 1930 and were only valid for use until July 31, 1930. The frame of the stamps, as well as some of the stamps were designed by Ludwig Hesshaimer. Stamps from the set not designed by Ludwig Hesshaimer were designed by a variety of other Icelandic artists.

However, in early 1930 the Icelandic government received word of fraud associated with these stamps and that the amount of the stamps printed was considerably larger than agreed upon. A significant number of the stamps had already been sold, so the Icelandic government could not just call for them to be destroyed. The Icelandic government called for a discreet investigation into the matter. The investigation discovered that the paperwork to the printing company had been altered to request stamps in the value of 1,813,000 kronur. A number of additional stamps were recovered, including some in the care of Ludwig Hesshaimer and were destroyed. However, it appears that Ludwig Hesshaimer did not turn over all of the stamps in his possession, because in the fall of 1930, he entered an exhibit on this issue in the Berlin Philatelic Exhibition containing a wide variety of errors and anomalies, including a 45 aur stamp that was never issued.



Figure C2

The question must now be asked and answered – “Who was Ludwig Hesshaimer?” [Figure C2].

Ludwig Hesshaimer was born in 1872 in Brasov, Romania (died 1956 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil). He served as a career military officer in the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy and World War I and had a talent for art. After his military career he attended the art school in Vienna and was a successful painter and graphic artist. He is best known for his work “The World War – A Dance of Death” - which contain a series of his art from his experiences in the war [Figure C3].



Figure C3

He was also a philatelist and founded the first Association of Austrian Philatelists Club in 1921 and in 1926 was one of the founders of the Federation Internationale de Philatelie (F.I.P.). In 1933 he was one of the principal organizers of Vienna’s WIPA Stamp Exhibition. Aside from his involvement with Iceland’s 1930 Parliamentary issue he also designed stamps for Liechtenstein [Figure C4].



Figure C4

Footnote ¹It appears that the Society of Friends of Iceland was founded for the purpose of providing this philatelic gift.



Update on the Estate of James Pullin by The Editor



With the passing of James Pullin earlier this year, the CFSC was gifted with a substantial amount of philatelic material and “stuff”. The haul included a large number of reference books, carry bags and philatelic tools -- all of which filled the trunk of my car. Most all of the items have been distributed to members of the CFSC for the benefit of the treasury, per the instructions of Jim’s wife. So far, the total has reached just short of \$600 with another \$100 or so expected to finish off the process. The membership of the CFSC would like to thank the Pullin estate for supporting the club and our mission.

Additional information on Jim can be found by referencing Insert 06.2019d in the newsletter archives of the website.