

A Brief Overview Of Holy Land Philately

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Note: This was presented at a stamp club meeting as a slide show and touches on both the history of Palestine and Israel and the philately of Palestine and Israel. The stamps and covers were auction lots in past NEGEV HOLYLAND Auctions. The maps were taken from various web sites.

Holy Land Philately is a most interesting and challenging part of the hobby of stamp collecting. There is room in it for the novice collector as well as the most advanced philatelist. It also tells the history of the area. The Holy Land is defined as the area on the Eastern Shore of the Mediterranean Sea stretching to the Jordan River. Holy Land Philately includes Palestine prior to 1948, the modern State of Israel, the West Bank of the Jordan River from 1948 to date, and (by extension) the Sinai and Gaza from 1948 to date.

There are distinct periods involved: Ottoman, Mandate, Interim, and Israel. The actual postal history (that is, the history of the mails) is very extensive. I will just skim over the topics otherwise we will not get done.

TURKISH PERIOD



Figure 1
Map of Ottoman Empire 1885

Prior to World War One, most of the area now known as the Middle East was part of the Ottoman (or Turkish) Empire. The empire lasted from around 1300 to the end of World War I. Compared to other area in the Empires, Palestine was a dusty, sparsely populated backwater. (Figure 1)

Turkey had its own post offices in Palestine. Many
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Europeans frequently were in Palestine for business or religious purposes. As modes of travel improved, this trend grew. As the Ottoman Postal System had very poor service, the visitors preferred that their own governments handle the mails.



Figure 2
Petach Tiqvah local stamp

One of the earliest Jewish communities in Palestine was Petach Tiqvah. It was founded in 1878 by a group of pioneers from Jerusalem. The local government issued its own stamp (Figure 2). Russian Jewish immigrants founded Rishon Le Zion in 1882.

During the later half of the 19th century, as the Ottoman Empire grew weak, the European powers were able to obtain Capitulation Treaties from Turkey. Under these treaties, five nations (Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Russia) and Egypt were able to expand their postal systems into Palestine.

FORERUNNER PERIOD

The first such post office opened around 1850. These nations either overprinted their regular stamps or issued stamps for usage in Palestine (Figures 3 – 5). They used their own postmarks. In brief, an overprint is defined as a stamp that, after being printed, has additional printing such as a change in value or a country name. The study of these postmarks (the devices used to cancel the stamp) is quite extensive) (Figures 6 – 8).

The Ottoman Empire was nearly bankrupt during the latter part of the nineteenth century. One way to raise money was to require the usage of revenue stamps on nearly everything.

Again, the revenue stamps are an interesting study in and of themselves. I will just show you three examples in Figures 9 – 11.

During World War One, the Ottoman Empire collapsed. All foreign post offices were closed at the end of the war, in 1917.

BRITISH MANDATE PERIOD

At the end of the war, under the British command, the military Egyptian Expeditionary Forces occupied and controlled Palestine (Figures 11 – 12). The League of Nations mandated Palestine to Great Britain in June 1922. For philatelic purposes, the MANDATE PERIOD is considered to have begun at the end of World War I. By the way, the Mandate area also included TransJordan (what is now called Jordan) which is on the East bank of the Jordan River.

May I get political for a moment here and violate the dictum of not mixing politics and philately? TransJordan was to be the Palestinian state and Palestine was to be the Jewish state.

On November 2, 1917, Lord James Balfour wrote a letter to Walter Rothschild, a leader of the British Jewish community. It contained what has come to be known as the BALFOUR DECLARATION. In part it read, “His Majesty's government view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.”

The first set of British stamps for Palestine, called the BLUES, was issued in 1917. In lieu of country name, they had in the design the letters EEF which stands for Egyptian Expeditionary Forces (Figures 13– 14). At first there were no civilian posts. Civilians could use the military postal system (Figure 15). Military control lasted until 1920.

The next set, called the TYPOGRAPHERS were issued in mid to late 1920 (Figure 16). Typography is a method of printing stamps but we will not go into the technical details of the printing now.

Over the next 10 years, these stamps were re-issued with various overprints. Each line has the word Palestine with top line is arabic, the second line is in english and the third line is in hebrew. After that hebrew word are the hebrew letters ALEPH and YUD which stand for ERETZ ISRAEL – The Land of Israel. There are two main types of overprints.



Figure 11
Autographed Photo of General Allenby



Figure 12
General Allenby Entering Jerusalem



Figure 13
“The Blues” - first stamp



Figure 14
“The Blues” - overprinted to change value



Figure 15
Civilian use of military posts



Figure 3
Austrian stamp overprinted
for use in the Holy Land



Figure 4
Italian stamp overprinted for
use in the Holy Land



Figure 5
Russian stamp overprinted for
use in the Holy Land



Figure 9
Hejaz Railway – to help pay
for the railroad,



Figure 10
Court Fees;



Figure 11
Stamp Duty



Figure 6
Austrian post card with handstamps – last Christmas in 19th century



Figure 7
Turkish World War I field post cover and cancellations

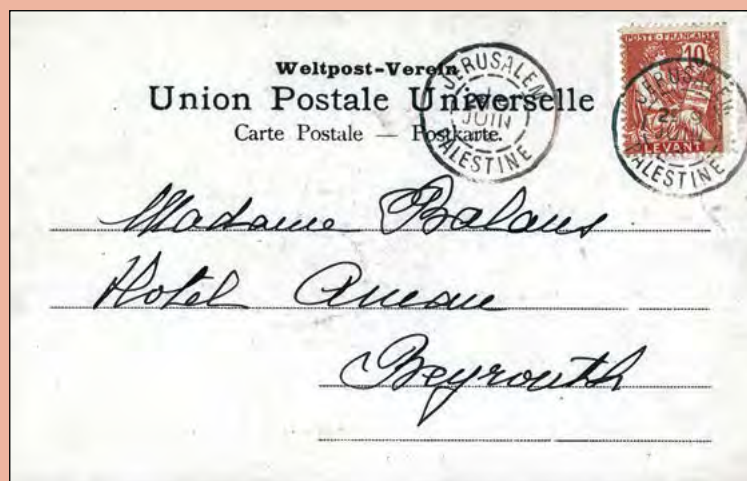


Figure 8
French post card with Jerusalem cancellation



Figure 16
Representative typography stamps

The first overprint was made in JERUSALEM and the letters have serifs (Figure 17). There are three sub-types. The second type was made in LONDON (Figure 18) and e letters do not have serifs. There are two sub-types. Here is a “cheat sheet” showing how to tell them apart (Figure 19).

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Specialists – with very good eyesight and/or a powerful magnifying glass – have field days checking these stamps for the many varieties and errors. I will not delve into this.

In 1927, the PICTORIAL issue began. These remained in use till the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 (Figure 20). Four views of Palestine were used:

- Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem
- Dome of the Rock (Mosque of Omar) in Jerusalem
- Tower of David on the Walls of the Old City of Jerusalem and
- City of Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee.

There are many color shadings and FIVE types of paper:

- thin
- vertical ribbed
- wove
- horizontal ribbed and
- transparent.

There is also a coil stamp.

In this time period, the population



Figure 17
Jerusalem over printed stamps



Figure 19
“Cheat Sheet”

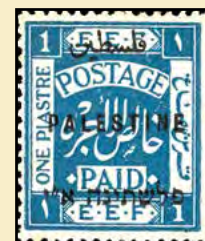


Figure 18
London over printed stamps



Figure 20
Pictorial stamps



Figure 20
Commerical Cover

of Palestine grew. Many Jews decided to move there and as a consequence new towns and kibbutzim were founded and commerce grew quite rapidly.

Here is an advertising cover from a business in Tel Aviv (Figure 20). The word COVER means the envelope used to mail the letter. It includes the stamps and any postal markings.



International trade fairs were also held (Figure 21) and Levant Fair special postmark (Figure 22).

Figure 21
Levant Fair label



Figure 23
Shnorer Cover containing money

Religious schools were established. One interesting area of these is what collectors euphemistically call SHNORER COVERS. By SHNORER we mean the response envelopes for a religious establishment asking for money. (Figure 23). Some



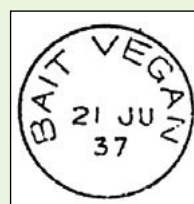
Figure 24
Keren Tel Chai fund raising labels

religious or service organizations also issued fund raising labels. One of these was KEREN TEL CHAI (Figure 24).

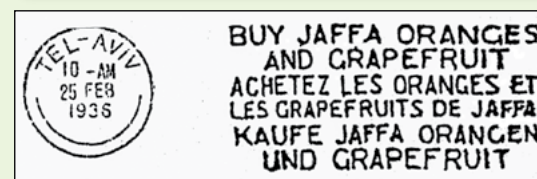
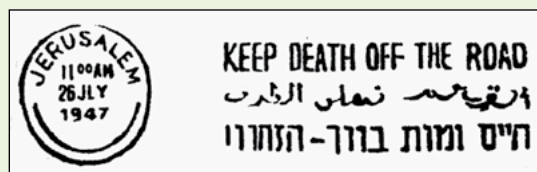
The various postmarks used in each city (Jaffa, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and Haifa) as well as those used in the smaller towns are also the subject of detailed study. These can be



Figure 22
Levant Fair slogan cancellation



Figures 25
Bait Vegan, Metulla, Safad
(small communities)



Figures 25
Jerusalem, Tel Aviv slogan cancellations

quite complicated as the spellings of some of the town names were changed and new canceling devices used. The various postal rates are also studied. ■

To be continued