

How Russia delivered the mail: Auxiliary Offices and the Police Post, 1805 to 1918

1. Introduction:

Context: The Russian Empire’s immense area, limited transport systems, scattered and ethnically diverse population, and love of bureaucracy resulted in numerous Auxiliary Post Office types regulated by the Imperial Post, but locally staffed and housed. Even the rural police were enlisted to carry mail, a circumstance seen elsewhere in Europe only in Scandinavia.

Purpose and scope: This exhibit presents material from the scarcest auxiliary Post Offices, Russia’s miscellany of “Other” offices, plus the Police Post. Urban and rural Auxiliary offices appeared between the 1880s and 1918. Most were named according to the ethnic group served or the institution housing the office; for some types, only 1 to 3 offices existed. Auxiliary Offices abroad date from 1804 (in the Septinsular Republic), but were few and scattered.

Importance: The material presented here is rare for several reasons:

- a) The number of auxiliary offices was small—about 1000 out of 17,000 Imperial post offices.
- b) They were opened only where mail volume was too small for the office to be profitable.
- c) They were typically only open for a few years before being closed or upgraded.
- d) Police station lacked postal cancellers, so police mail transport is largely invisible.

This exhibit is based on the largest collection of this material ever assembled, incorporating the collections of Maslowski, Moyes, and Faberge, plus recently discovered material.

Research: Relative rarity of the material presented can be evaluated by type of office using three statistics: 1) the total # of offices of a type; 2) the # of office-years (sum total of years that offices of a type were open); and 3) the average number of years the offices were open.

Political Organization: Provinces in Russia were either civilian (“Gubernia”) or military (“Oblast”). Russia’s 100 provinces were organized into 30 “Post-Telegraph (or P-T) Districts”, with geographic units like Siberia and Ukraine each having several P-T Districts. Provinces contained multiple districts (“Uezdii”), connected to the province capital by postal roads. From the Uezd centers, smaller roads spread out to Rural Administration locations. Uezdii were roughly equivalent to US counties, and Rural Administration locations to townships. However, not all Uezdii in peripheral parts of the empire had Rural Administrations and these administrations were given different names e.g., “Khutir” and “Poselok”: (depending on village type and the ethnic group served), leading to the large number of rural office types.

Rarest items are matted in Platinum
Very significant items are matted in Red
Significant items are matted in Blue
Illustrative items are matted in Black

Original research
by exhibitor:



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Cyrillic:	Transliteration:	Translation:	Cyrillic:	Transliteration:	Translation:
ОБЛАСТЬ	Oblast	Military Prov.	ПОЧТОВ.	Pochtov.	Postal
ГУБЕРНІА	Gubernia	Province	ОПЕРАЦИЯ	Operatsia	Operation
УЕЗДЪ	Uezd	District	(У)ПРАВЛЕНИЕ	(U)pravlenie	Sub-Office
ЭКСПЕДИЦІА	Expeditisia	Dispatch office	ОТДЕЛЕНИЕ	Otdelenie	Sub-Office
КОНТОРА	Kontora	Main office	ВОЛОСТЬ	Volost	Rural admin.