

January 2023 New Issues Polonus Bulletin

Kraków Nativity Scenes

These three stamps, each valued at 3.90 zł, display the winning designs in the 2021 Kraków Nativity Scene Contest (Szopki Krakowskie), a Christmas tradition that takes place on the first Thursday in December each year. The tradition dates back to the 19th century when Kraków's craftsmen (masons, woodworkers) began making nativity scenes as a seasonal decoration in order to earn extra income in the winter. Nativity scenes depict the baby Jesus with Mary, Joseph, barn animals, and the three wise men from the bible. An unusual and characteristic feature of the Kraków szopki is the use of historical local buildings as a backdrop for the scene, the most common being St. Mary's Basilica (with its easily recognized spires), Wawel Castle, Sukiennice Trade Hall, and the Kraków Barbican Fortification.

The traditional competition occurs on the Main Market Square in Kraków, next to the Adam Mickiewicz Monument. The szopki are assessed by an esteemed jury, and the best are then displayed at the nearby Historical Museum of Kraków, located in the Krzysztofory Palace. They can be quite small in size or as large as two meters high and three meters wide. The first Kraków Nativity Scenes Contest was held in 1937.

In Christian culture, the nativity scene originated with Saint Francis of Assisi in the 13th century, and the tradition quickly spread to Poland, where a nativity-based play also became popular, known as Jasełka, usually performed by children in schools or churches.

Date of Issue	January 5, 2023
Sheet Format	3 Different Stamps in Pane of 6
Printing Method	Offset
Designer	Joanna Fleszar-Haspert



League for Nature Protection

This A-denominated (3.90-zł) postal card celebrates the 95th anniversary of the founding of the Nature Conservation League (Liga Ochrony Przyrody). The imprinted postage on the card shows the League's logo, a European bison or wisent (Bison bonosus) (Polish: Żubr); and the left side shows a gang (or obstinancy) of European bison in a forest.

The tradition of protecting Poland's natural resources dates back to the 10th Century, extending through the reigns of many of its famous kings. In 1868, the National Parliament passed a law protecting the Tatra Mountains. In 1920, the State Council for Nature was established, headed by the noted botanist and naturalist from the Jagiellonian University, Professor Władysław Szafer. Beginning in 1923, he began efforts to create a Nature Conservation League, inspired by the Swiss League for the Protection of Nature organized in 1909. He proposed a League in Poland that would consist of a union of over 100 existing local nature societies scattered across Poland. The members of these societies would pay a small membership fee when joining the new League for the purpose of acquiring land reservations for the protection of Poland's natural resources. On January 9, 1928, the first congress of the Nature Conservation League was held, and in March 1928 the League was legalized by the Governance Commissariat in Warsaw. In memory of the League's founding, every year on January 9, Nature Conservation Day is now celebrated in Poland.

After the disruptions of World War II, the League was recreated on the initiative of Professors Edward Potęga and Szafer (again) in July 1945. At its 1956 congress, the League significantly broadened its goals and operations. In 1957, publication of the League's magazine "Nature Poland" ("Przyroda Polska") began; and in 1963, its activities were extended into Polish schools. The League's operations remain primarily

decentralized, today emphasizing the activities of youths in protecting the natural environment.

Date of Issue
Printing Method
Designer

January 9, 2023
Offset
Jan Konarzewski



160th Anniversary of the Battle of Węgrów

This A-denominated (3.90-zł) postal card recalls an important episode during the January Uprising – the Battle of Węgrów on February 3, 1863.

At the time, the town was located in east Masovia, within the Russian partition of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, an area known as the Kingdom of Poland or Congress Poland. In early January 1863, the civil government in the Kingdom instituted a new policy on the conscription of Poles into the Russian army. This infuriated the people and resulted in a massive uprising in protest and armed skirmishes throughout the Kingdom.

Angry partisans in Węgrów rose up to liberate the town, successfully overwhelming the occupying Russian forces on January 22, 1863. In response, the Russian army planned to quickly recapture the town by encirclement, attacking with Russian armed forces from the south, west, and north. The Polish insurgents in the town, under the command of Jan "Sokół" ("Falcon") Matliński and Władysław Jabłonowski, had grown to about 3,500 armed with scythes, pikes, and hunting rifles. Anticipating the inevitable Russian onslaught, the Poles planned an orderly retreat from the town under the cover of a force of 400-500 fighters that would stay behind to cover the retreat. Fighting ensued on February 3 between the heavily armed Russian troops and the remaining Polish fighters.

Most of the insurgents in the town were able to escape. Later, the French poet Henri Auguste Barbier wrote a poem entitled "Attack at Węgrów", comparing the Polish fighters to the Spartans at the Battle of Thermopylae; and the Polish poets Cyprian Norwid and Maria Konopnica also compared the insurgent action to Thermopylae.

The Polish fighters who remained behind suffered very heavy casualties from fierce Russian infantry fire; and the town was recaptured and later looted by the Russians. Many townspeople were arrested and wounded partisan fighters were killed. The imprinted postage on the card shows a stone monument dedicated to the fallen insurgent fighters; and an adjacent tab shows a watercolor of a Polish horseman by Makysmillian Oborski, entitled "Janko Sokół". The left side of the card shows an anonymous Viennese lithograph of the battle.

Date of Issue	January 19, 2023
Printing Method	Offset
Designer	Jan Konarzewski



160th Anniversary of the January Uprising

This A-denominated (3.90-zł) postal card commemorates the entire January Uprising (“Powstanie Styczniowe”) of 1863.

Following Russia’s loss in the Crimean War in 1856, hopes for regaining independence were rekindled in the Kingdom of Poland or Congress Poland under Russian rule. Patriotic demonstrations occurred and covert independence organizations were formed by Polish nationalists. In January 1861, Tsar Alexander II, fearing the spreading spontaneous unrest, began to liberalize Russian rule by creating civil authorities in Congress Poland and introducing reforms allowing some autonomy. [Note that earlier in 1860 the first Polish stamp was issued.] Nevertheless, the demonstrations for independence continued.

By January 1863, the head of the civil government, Margrave Wielopolski, became increasingly concerned about the activities of the covert organizations in the independence movement. In an attempt to stop these clandestine activities, he introduced rules for the conscription of Polish men into the Russian army; this allowed the selection of individuals for induction who were suspected to be underground activists in the nationalist movement. This action sparked a spontaneous uprising

throughout Congress Poland, including the creation of a Polish National Government directed by a National Council (“Rada Narodowa” or “RN”). Although, the insurrectionists lacked military equipment, they attacked Russian outposts throughout Congress Poland, including Węgrów. An estimated 650 battles and skirmishes were fought, often employing guerilla tactics against far superior Russian army forces. The main fighting continued until most of the insurgents was captured or killed by the Russians in 1864. It is estimated that over 20,000 insurgents were killed and 40,000 sent to Siberia. Russian retribution was harsh – the limited autonomy in Congress Poland was rescinded; the economy was disrupted by abolishing serfdom and imposing a war indemnity tax; and the process of Russification of Poles was promoted.

The imprinted postage on the card shows a portrait of the Polish actress Helena Kirkorowa née Majewska by the artist Alexander Sochaczewski; she served as an agent and courier for the Polish National Government during the January Uprising, and secretly housed Romuald Traugutt, a leader of the Uprising. The left side of the card shows another Sochaczewski painting entitled “Farewell to Europe” that shows a group of Polish exiles in Siberia, including himself.

Date of Issue	January 20, 2023
Printing Method	Offset
Designer	Jan Korarzewski



**160. ROCZNICA
POWSTANIA
STYCZNIOWEGO**

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Kartka Poczтовая, Poczta Polska S.A., 12023, nakład: 5 000, proj. J. Korarzewski. Obrazy Aleksandra Sochaczewskiego. Ze zbiorów Muzeum X. Pawilonu Cytadeli Warszawskiej, oddział Muzeum Niepodległości w Warszawie

Chinese Zodiac Signs

This 4.60-zł stamp, one more in a recurring series on this general subject, celebrates the year of the rabbit (królik), which began on January 22, 2023, and will end on February 9, 2024. The rabbit is the fourth in the 12-year sequence of animals in the Chinese zodiac. It is a symbol of longevity, peace, and prosperity. The gullible believe that a person's horoscope, personality, and love compatibility are associated with his/her zodiac sign in accordance with their birth year. People born in the year of the rabbit are believed to be vigilant, witty, quick-minded, and ingenious. But for faithful followers of the system, there's also a complex cycle of 10 heavenly stems and 12 earthly branches to consider.

The new lunar year was celebrated as a public holiday from January 21-27 in 2023 in many nations in Southeast Asia, in addition to China. These colorful stamps are perforated in both square and circular formats.

Date of Issue	January 23, 2023
Sheet Format	Single in Pane of 8
Printing Method	Offset
Designer	Andrzej Gosik



Polish Cities – Kruszwica

The town of Kruszwica (German: Kruschwitz) is highlighted on this 60-gr stamp. The town is located on Lake Gopło in central Poland in the Kuyavian-Pomeranian

Voivodeship. It is the oldest town in the region, originally founded in the 6th century. Serving as a market town and administrative center historically, it became one of the first fortified settlements in the region.

King Casimir III the Great built a medieval castle in the town. The only remaining part of the castle is a 32-meter high octagonal watch tower known as the Mice Tower (Mysia Wieża), along with fragments of the adjacent castle walls. The name of the tower derives from mythology – the legend of Wicked Prince Popiel. After poisoning members of his family who were conspiring to overthrow him, he secretly disposed of their bodies in Lake Gopło. Mice then consumed them. This infuriated the townspeople, who rose up and chased the Prince and his wife up into the tower. Mice then ascended the tower and consumed them. Later the Piast Dynasty assumed rule in the land until 1370.

The town is now most famous for its tourism. The stamp shows an oblique view of the Mice Tower and nearby Lake Gopło.

Date of Issue	January 27, 2023
Sheet Format	Single in Sheet of 100
Printing Method	Photogravure
Designer	Waldemar Kawiński



550th Anniversary of the Birth of Nicolaus Copernicus

This 3.90-zł stamp honors Nicolaus Copernicus (Mikołaj Kopernik) (1473-1543), the famous astronomer and mathematician who postulated the heliocentric theory that the earth was a moving heavenly body, one of the planets, that all revolved around the sun. Before Copernicus, the prevailing view favored the geocentric theory of Ptolemy, with a stationary earth at the center of everything. Copernicus based his theory on his own and others' precise observations of planetary motions, and used complex geometric calculations to substantiate his theory. All of his observations were with the naked eye,

since the telescope hadn't yet been invented. His theory was revolutionary in that it provided a more accurate explanation of observed planetary motions compared to the geocentric theory.

The portrait of Copernicus shown on the stamp is from Frombork Cathedral in the town of Frombork (Frauenburg) where he served as a canon, carried out his astronomical observations and studies, and was later entombed on his death. The small circular oil painting shown on the stamp is known as the "epitaph portrait" at Frombork. It is the work of an unknown artist from 1582-89 that shows a youthful-looking Copernicus facing left, with his hands folded loosely in prayer. He has a small moustache and is wearing a black cloak overlaid with a red tunic. The epitaph below (not shown on the stamp) reads in Latin: "To Nicholas Copernicus of Toruń, formerly a canon of this cathedral church of Varmia, a most renowned astronomer, whose name and glory have filled both spheres (heaven and earth). The prelates, canons, and the entire chapter of Varmia have erected, in token of brotherly love and esteem, this monument." It dates to 1735, replacing an earlier epitaph from 1580 that was destroyed in wartime. [A very similar painting of him is found in an "epitaph portrait" at St. John's Church in Toruń. However, it is larger and rectangular in shape and also shows a crucifixion scene, a skull, and a shelf showing astronomical instruments.]

The stamp is perforated in both square and circular formats. And the official first day cover shows a sketch of the grand cathedral in Frombork.

Date of Issue	January 29, 2023
Sheet Format	Single in Pane of 8
Printing Method	Offset
Designer	Poczta Polska SA



160th Anniversary of the January Uprising

This A-denominated (3.90-zł) postal card, the third focusing on the January Uprising, honors one of the last leaders of the rebellion, Father General Stanisław Brzóska (1832-65). He was a Polish priest and leader in the January Uprising who commanded the partisan detachment in the Podlaskie region of eastern Poland, fighting in many skirmishes with the Russian army in 1863-4. However, by early 1865, he and his adjutant, a blacksmith named Franciszek Wilczyński, had gone into hiding first in the village of Paczuski-Duże and later in Krasnodęby-Sypytki. They were finally captured in April and executed by public hanging in the market square in the nearby town of Sokołów Podlaskie on May 23, 1865.

In 1924, a monument was erected to honor them at the site of their execution. It was partially destroyed by the Nazis in 1940, and restored in 1985. The monument is about 10 m high, and made of granite and bronze; there are several commemorative plaques at the base of the monument. The imprinted postage on the card shows a wounded Brzóska and the left side of the card shows Brzóska's straight saber with its sheath and the insurgent emblem.

Date of Issue	January 30, 2023
Printing Method	Offset
Designer	Jan Konarzewski



Szabla ks. gen. Stanisława Brzóska fot. Tomasz Goląb/ GOSĆ NIEDZIELNY



160. ROCZNICA POWSTANIA STYCZNIOWEGO

**KS. GEN. STANISŁAW BRZÓSKA, (1832- 1865)
- KAPELAN I OSTATNI WALCZĄCY PARTYZANT.**

Kartka Poczтовая, Poczta Polska S.A., I 2023, nakład: 5 000, proj. J. Konarzewski

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