

Philately of Franz Josef Land: 1872-1932

The goal of this exhibit is to introduce the philatelic items related to the Franz Josef Land during the 60 years of the Arctic expeditions' heroic age.

The Franz Josef Land (FJL) is an uninhabited archipelago of 191 islands located in the Arctic Ocean, Barents Sea and Kara Sea, which was officially discovered by the Austro-Hungarian North Pole Expedition in 1872. The expedition led by Julius von Payer named the archipelago in honour of Franz Josef I. of Austria. The Austro-Hungarian Empire never annexed the newly discovered land which finally became the northernmost territory of the Soviet Union (today: Russia) on 15th April 1926.

Despite uninhabited it has a gripping history leading us through the fascinating stories of dozens arctic expeditions which resulted in rarities of arctic philately such as: the "Grillparzer Verein" triangles, the "Windward" stamp, the "Malyguin-Zeppelin" stamps (1931) or the philatelic curiosity of the first polar flight (1932).

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Literature:

1. Jackson, F.G.: The lure of unknown lands. London, 1935.
2. Payer, J.: New lands within the arctic circle. New York, 1877.
3. Polar Philately, www.arctic.ru
4. Vogel, H., Kahn, S.: Ahead of the pack. Liberec, 2022.



FRANZ JOSEF LAND

Discovery of Franz Josef Land

Austro-Hungarian Expedition (1872-74)
J. Payer, K. Weyprecht and Dr. Gy. Kepes
(original photo)

The expedition led by Julius Payer and Karl Weyprecht did not reach the North Pole, but they were the first to land on a previously unknown landmass. The new area was named Franz Josef Land in honour of the Emperor of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The explorers were celebrated as national heroes.



Commemorating the successful completion of the expedition, the Viennese stamp dealer and publisher Sigmund Friedl issued a series of private stamps in 1874. The specially labelled version presented here was also given to the emperor (Franz Josef I.) as a gift.



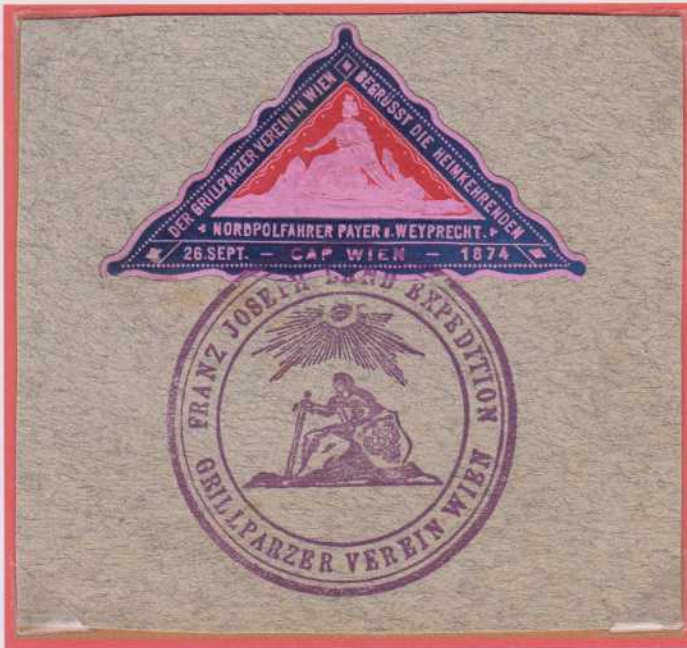
Of four stamps, two were rectangular and two were triangular. The triangular stamps were printed in orange and green and looked very similar to the famous "Cape of Good Hope" stamps. The rectangular ones were also printed in two colours (red and green) and depicted the ruler. The greater part of the sets was imperforate, but a small number of perforated sets were also produced.

Another series of non-postal stamps were issued in 1874 by the "Grillparzer Patriotic Association" in Vienna. The sets were almost entirely purchased by stamp collectors. They are extremely rare on covers. Few were used during the latter "Jackson-Harmsworth" expedition (1894-96).

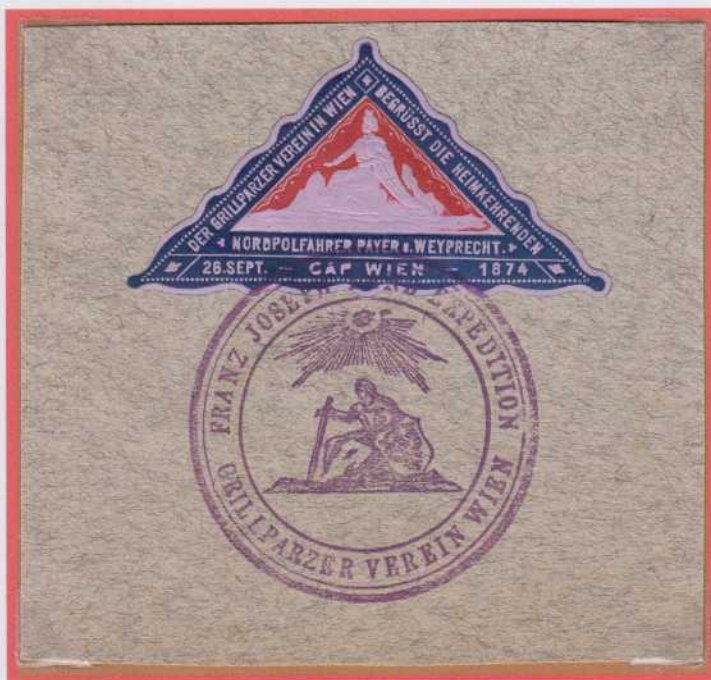


The triangular wavy stamps were issued in two types, on one version, "Budapest" was written in the mid third inscription on the bottom, and "Vienna" was on the other version. The middle section is very similar to the drawing of the famous "Cape of Good Hope" stamp depicting the allegory of "Empire" as a woman. On the Budapest stamps the woman appears with a sword, while on the Vienna stamps without a sword. The triangulars were produced in 21 colour variations with wavy edges. It is now almost impossible to collect all the 21 variants.

The stamps of the Grillparzer Association were extremely rarely affixed to envelopes. The triangulars with the contemporary handstamp are considered a real curiosity. The envelope details below show the unique handstamps issued by the Grillparzer Association on the occasion of the expedition's return home. In today's sense, they are "first-day handstamps".



Wavy triangular with pink allegory bearing the Grillparzer's Franz Josef Land expedition handstamp. The handstamp shows "Empire" with a sword similarly to the "Budapest" triangulars. A difference compared to the stamps is the "masonic eye" above the woman's figure.
(Only known specimen.)



Wavy triangular with lilac allegory bearing the Grillparzer's Franz Josef Land expedition handstamp. The handstamp shows "Empire" with a sword similarly to the "Budapest" triangulars. A difference compared to the stamps is the "masonic eye" above the woman's figure.
(Only known specimen.)

Nansen's expedition was an attempt to reach the North Pole by harnessing the natural current of the Arctic Ocean. They did not fulfil the goal, but they achieved a record furthest North latitude before a long retreat to reach safety in Franz Josef Land, where they spent the winter of 1895-96 and were rescued by the Jackson's expedition on 17/06/1896.



"Fram" was built with an outer layer of greenheart wood to withstand the ice and with almost no keel to handle the shallow waters Nansen expected to encounter.

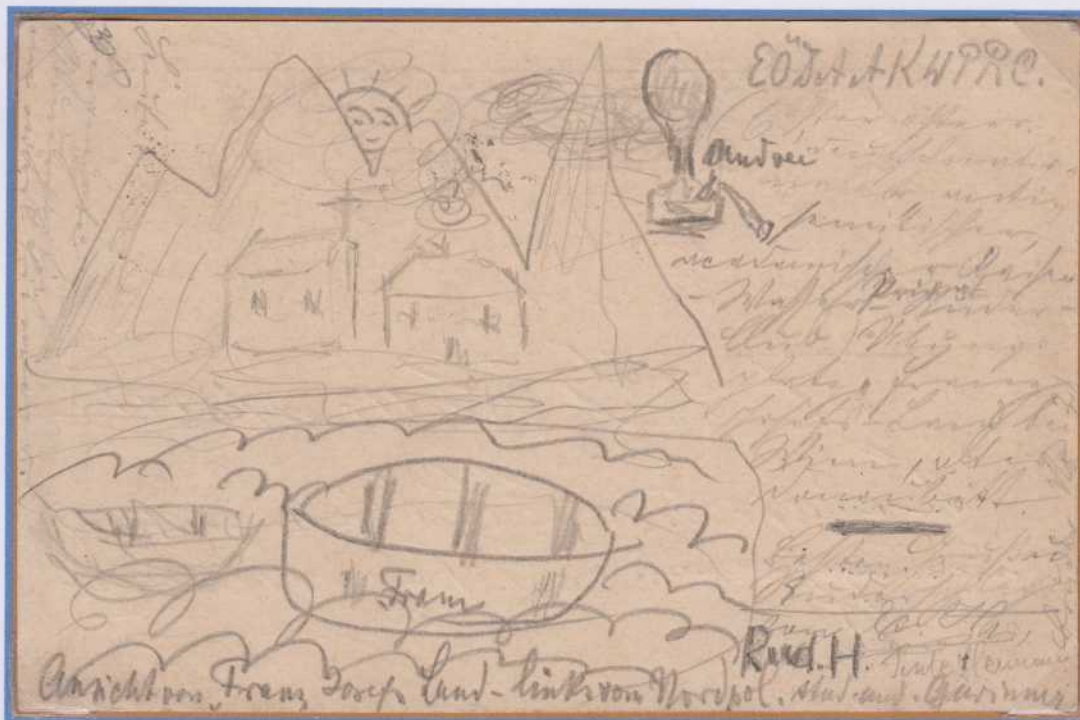


21/07/1897. Picture postcard depicting the members of the expedition with very interesting handwritten information about the technical details of the ship: "The Fram is constructed of three kinds of wood, oak, hickory and birsch."

Nansen's "Fram" reached the Spitsbergen on 13th August 1896, where the Swedish explorer S. A. Andrée was preparing for his famous balloon flight that he hoped would take him to the pole. The hand drawn postcard shown below is from this period of the Nansen expedition.

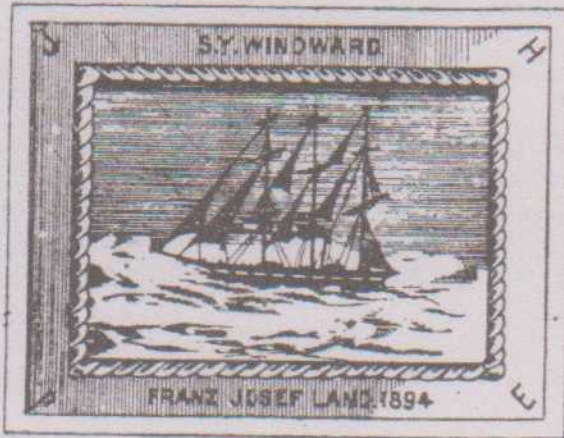


1896. Stationery postcard (2kr) sent from Vienna (Austria) to Hildesheim (Germany). Copy of the rear (70%) with the Austrian and German postmarks.



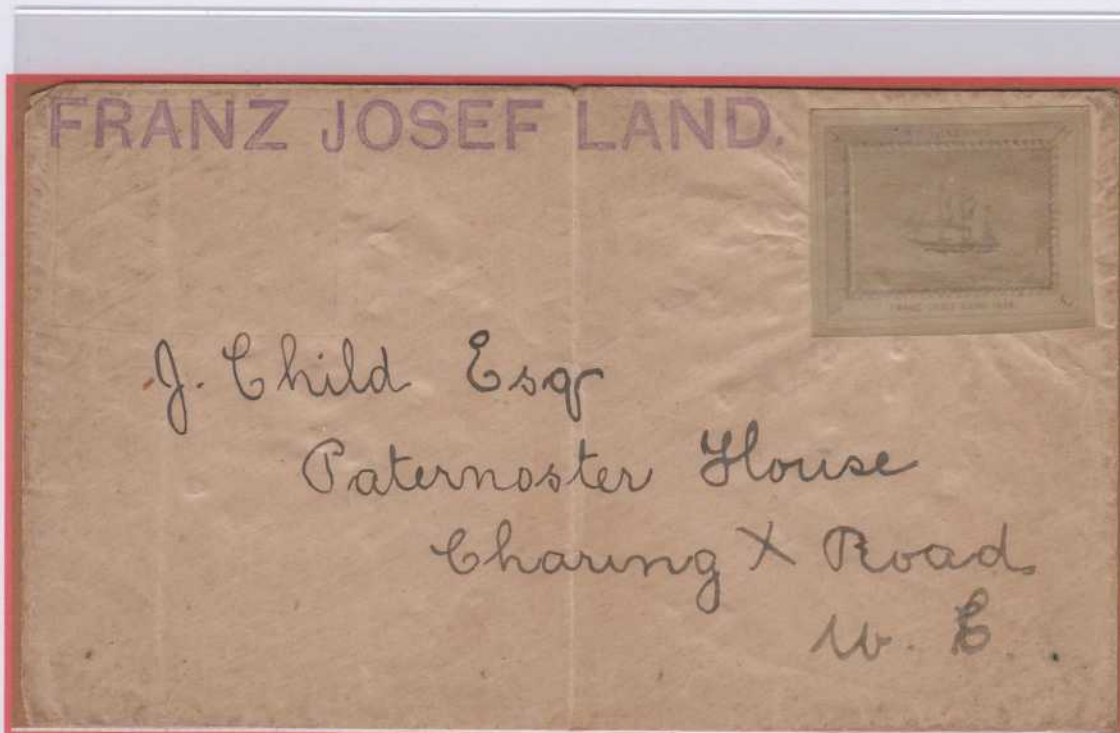
1896. Stationery postcard (2kr) with very interesting content sent from Vienna (Austria) to Hildesheim (Germany). According to the handwriting the landscape depicts the Franz Josef Land. Note the "Fram" on the ship and the "Andree" next to the balloon.

The goal of the Jackson-Harmsworth expedition was also to conquer the North Pole using the Franz Josef Land as a base. During their expeditions on the Franz Josef Land, they found and rescued Nansen (17/06/1896), who had wintered elsewhere on FJL after leaving his ship "Fram" on 14/03/1895.



THE "WINDWARD"
POSTAGE STAMP.

The expedition entered the philatelic history in connection with the "Windward" stamps. The stamp is a tribute to the creativity of Herbert Ward (a well-known graphologist of the time) and a passenger traveling between London and Arkhangelsk on the Windward ship. Mr. Ward vividly drew the Windward drifting in the ice, and the passenger reduced it to the size of a postage stamp using a photographic process. "J.H.P.E." can be seen in the four corners (Jackson-Harmsworth Polar Expedition). The inscription below the picture is "Franz Josef Land 1894".



15/04/1895. Letter sent to London from the expedition franked solely by the "Windward" stamp and bearing the bold violet "Franz Josef Land" straight line handstamp. No more than a hundred stamps were printed and allotted to each member of the crew for homeward letters. At that time, a government printer and publisher worked in the "Paternoster House" (see address) under the name "Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co. Ltd".

(One of the seven currently recorded "Windward" letters.)

The expedition members prepared their homeward letters on 15/04/1895 and the expedition's site handstamp "FRANZ JOSEF LAND" was placed aboard "Windward" on that day too. Ice conditions finally permitted "Windward" to leave for England on 03/07/1895 with the first season's (1894-95) mail.



Lieutenant Albert B. Armitage
2nd in command of the Expedition




15/04/1895. Letter written by Mr. Armitage, 2nd in command of the expedition and sent to his wife in London (Mrs. Armitage) franked by the "Windward" stamp and bearing the bold violet "Franz Josef Land" straight line handstamp. The letter was written just over a year before the meeting with Nansen.

(One of the seven currently recorded "Windward" letters.)

Frederick George Jackson departed London, aboard their ship "Windward" on 12/07/1894, on the **Royal Geographical Society sponsored** (and newspaper owner Alfred Harmsworth financed) Arctic expedition to explore Franz Josef Land more fully.

Sir
Clements Markham
 KCB FRS FRSGS



President of the
 Royal Geographical Society

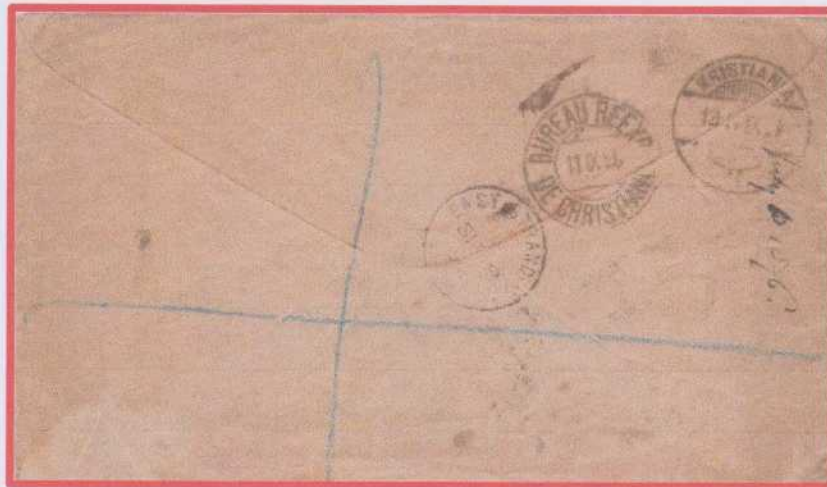
In office
 29 May 1893 – 22 May 1905

The addressee of the letter below.



15/04/1895. Seriously damaged letter sent to the President of the Royal Geographical Society in London franked by the "Windward" stamp and bearing the bold violet "Franz Josef Land" straight line handstamp. **(One of the seven currently recorded "Windward" letters.)**

The "Windward" ship returned to the Franz Josef Land on 26/07/1896 and departed on 07/08/1896 with Nansen and the second season's mail including this item aboard, reaching Vardo (Norway) on 13/08/1896 from where telegrams were sent informing the world of Nansen's safe return, before the "Windward" carried on to London, arriving on 03/09/1896.



Copy of the rear (70%) with East Strand and Kristiania postmarks.



10/07/1896. Letter *written by Frederick G. Jackson expedition leader* from Franz Josef Land and posted from East Strand PO (UK) registered on 08/09/1896 with British franking of 2+2.5 pennies. The letter was sent to and received in Christiania (now: Oslo, Norway) on 12/09/1896. The second season's letters no longer have the "Windward" stamp, because all 100 copies were used in 1895. The "Franz Josef Land" straight line handstamp, however, continued to appear on the covers. **(Letters from the second season (1896) are very rare.)**

Duke Abruzzi on the board of the "Stella Polare" wanted to advance as far North as possible along the western islands of the Franz Josef Land. They did not reach the North Pole but had come as close as anyone before them. The expedition reached latitude 86°34'N - a record for the time.



Copy of the rear (70%) with the Austrian and French postmarks.



23/12/1899. Picture postcard depicting the leaders of the expedition sent from Austria to Grenoble (France) with 5 Heller franking and bearing Austrian and French postmarks.

Despite the fact that the expedition did not reach the North Pole, the returnees were celebrated as national heroes across the country. Postcards issued in honour of the expedition could be purchased and mailed to the Duke free of charge at post offices.



Copy of the rear (70%). The postcard was sent to Turin (Italy) to the Duke of Abruzzi.

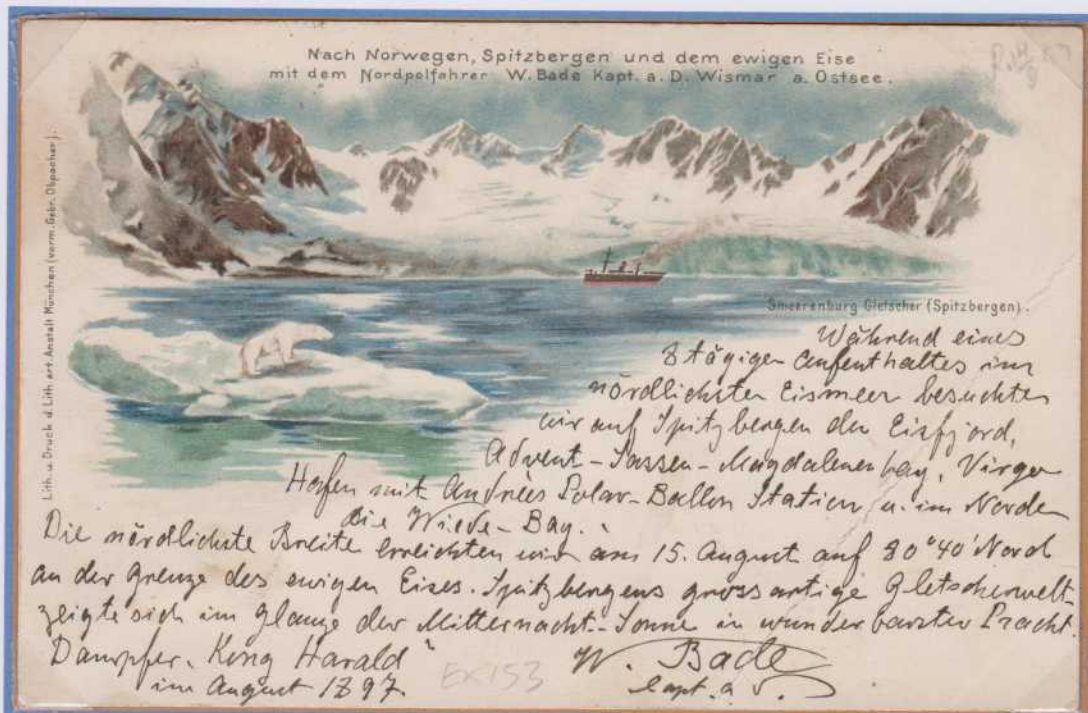


1900. Free congratulatory card sent from Ragusa (Italy) to Turin (Italy) to the Duke on his return home from the Arctic. (Portrait of the Duke on the left.)

Although Captain Bade was an experienced Arctic explorer and navy officer, did not take on the role of captain on any of his cruises, but rather acted as a tour guide. As a special highlight, he frequently offered his guests meetings with polar explorers who were on site. **Andrée's Arctic balloon expedition of 1897** was a failed Swedish effort to reach the North Pole, resulting in the deaths of all three expedition members.



24/08/1897. Captain Bade mails a cruise postcard to Germany (Mannheim's receipt stamp 27/08/97) at a Norway Northern Railway TPO at the conclusion of his Svalbard charter aboard "King Harald". A Spitsbergen local is tied by various onboard fixed-date Spitsbergen location strikes dated between 14-19/08/1897. In the upper left corner is his self-produced personal stamp depicting Captain Bade on skis. (Copy of the rear (70%).)

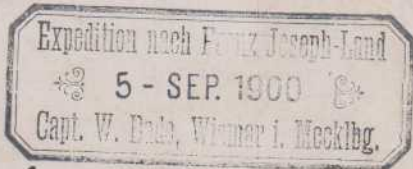


In August 1897, at the time the postcard was written, Andrée and two companions were heading in the direction of the Franz Josef Land across the ice. Bade mentions in his message that he visited "Andrée's Polar Balloon station".

Captain Bade's trip on the Hertha was primarily designed as a hunting trip, but there was also the hope of encountering the "Stella Polare" and getting first-hand information about the course of the North Pole expedition. Due to the weather conditions Captain Bade was unable to land on the Franz Josef Land, but on the way back in Hammerfest (Norway) they met the "Stella Polare". Hertha's passengers were invited on board by the Duke of Abruzzi and learned that they did not reach the geographic North Pole, but had come as close as anyone before them.

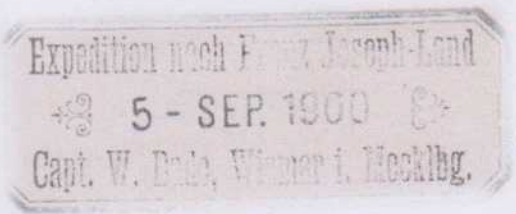


„Hertha“ im Eise bei Franz-Joseph-Land.



1/1. 1903

Sehr geehrter Herr Fischer.
 Mit verbindlichen Dank für
 Ihre freundlichen Neujahrswünsche
 erwidere ich dieselben auf das
 Herzlichste.
 Ihre Frau Gemahlin so wie Ihnen
 einen ergebenen Gruss. W. Bade
 Capt. a. D.



1900. Captain Bade's FJ-Land handstamp.

01/01/1903. Captain Bade's autograph postcard commemorating his trip to the Franz Josef Land aboard the "Hertha" ship (5th August – 15th September 1900) sent from Weimar (Germany) to Bad Nauheim (Germany) with 5 Pfenning German franking and postmarks.



01/01/1903. Copy of the rear (70%) with 5 Pfenning German franking and postmarks.

Until 1926 the Franz Josef Land remained "Terra nullius" (land belonging to no one) meanwhile the former Soviet Union annexed it on 15th April 1926. In the Soviet Union, the history of polar philately began in 1931, when special stamps were issued to commemorate the meeting of the Malyguin icebreaker with the LZ 127 Graf Zeppelin in Tikhaya Bay (Franz Josef Land) in July 1931.

The polar journey, like other Zeppelin flights, was largely financed by stamp collectors; Graf Zeppelin carried approximately 50000 letters sent by philatelists and made a water-landing to exchange mail with the Soviet icebreaker Malyguin, which itself carried a large quantity of mail sent by stamp collectors.



22/07/1931.
 Airmail letter sent from Budapest (Hungary) to Leningrad (now: Saint Petersburg, Russia) with Hungarian franking of 4 pengő and bearing Hungarian, German and Russian postmarks.



18/07/1931.
 Registered letter sent from Archangelsk (Soviet Union, now: Russia) to Friedrichshafen (Germany) with USSR franking of 2.35 rubel and bearing the Malyguin's and German postmarks.

During the second International Polar Year in 1932-1933, the Soviet Union (now: Russia) became the leader in Arctic research. A series of stamps dedicated to the flight from Franz Josef Land to Arkhangelsk to commemorate this event were issued. The stamps were cancelled with a special handstamp with "Franz Josef Land" engraved on it, and the envelopes had the date, 26.08.32, with the words "Second International Polar Year 1932/33: First polar flight 1932".

However, the flight did not take place due to technical problems, the envelopes and the stamps had already been issued. Now they are very rare and are considered a philatelic curiosity: there are stamps but no flight.



26/08/1932.
Postcard sent from Franz Josef Land (now: Russia) to Moscow (Russia) with 30 kop USSR franking and bearing the special postmarks.



26/08/1932. First weight step letter sent from Franz Josef Land (now: Russia) to Moscow (Russia) with 1 rubel USSR franking and bearing the special postmarks.