

# Early Mail and Stampless Letter Postal Markings of Sweden

## Synopsis

As a marcophily exhibit, this study tells the story of Sweden's early mails and their postal markings. The earliest mail was delivered by messengers (couriers) and normally does not have handstamp markings. Following the messenger mail is the Crown Post for official mail that was in effect from the 17<sup>th</sup> century until 1874 when official postage stamps were introduced. Thus several systems of mail existed in parallel use rather than sequentially.

The General Mail was established in 1636. The first handstamp markings were the crown over B (Betalda or paid) and the crown over F (Fribrev or free letter). The first place-name cancellations were undated and consisted of STOCKHOLM enclosed in a ribbon. These are shown chronologically from internally dated contents and known periods of use of the varieties. The normal straight line town name cancels in capital letters are presented alphabetically and again are dated by letter contents or periods of known use.

The exhibit continues with the same treatment of the arc cancels (year date in curved format) followed by the rectangular or box cancels. The latter two are dated and again are shown alphabetically by town name with periods of use indicated. With all three categories—straight line, arc, and box cancellations—a complete showing would be impossible with the limited number of frames. The examples shown are lesser known towns and less common varieties. In a few cases auxiliary manuscript notations are mentioned, e.g. “urgent.”

The next section shows examples of Free Letter (Fr Br) handstamps followed by postage due markings. The final frame takes a look at foreign mails to and from Sweden with their associated postal markings.

What the exhibit does not include—the Circle Cancels, with year date in horizontal format, which began during the pre-stamp period, are not shown as they are extremely numerous. The exhibit does not show rate and route information since the focus is on the postal markings. The exhibit reflects over 50 years of study and acquisition by the exhibitor.

### Treatment

Overall the approach is to show the markings that were used somewhat chronologically. However this cannot be done literally as there were different mail systems used in parallel and the periods of use of types of markings overlap. The types of markings are the over-riding differentiators.

### Importance

Sweden is an important Nordic country with a rich postal history. The evolution of stampless mail postal markings in all the Nordic countries is interesting and those of Sweden are somewhat complex with many types and varieties.

### Philatelic Knowledge

Most of the literature in this field is in the Swedish language, offering a challenge for the exhibitor to obtain and understand the many sources.

## Rarity and Condition

The material is generally not found outside Sweden and was mostly obtained from Swedish dealers and auction houses. Key pieces are noted with boxed text. Most surviving stampless mail has held up well over time due to the high fiber content of the paper.

## References

Since most important references are in Swedish, only the following English language ones are cited.

Lithén, Gunnar, ed. *FACIT Postal IX*, Facit Förlags, Malmö, Sweden, 2015. Postal history catalog; descriptions are in Swedish and English.

Stenquist, Ulf. "Swedish Crown Mail Cancellations 1720-1873," in the Monacophil 2013 Exhibition Catalog, edited by Jonas Hällström.

Hallar, Eric. "Sweden: Its Pre-Adhesive and Postal History and Covers," *The Collectors Club Philatelist*, vol. XXX, no. 11 (March 1951) pp 85-98.

## **Awards Track Record**

1. DELPEX 1967 (local show) – Second Award
2. SEPAD 1985 (Philadelphia) – Vermeil
3. COMPEX 1987 (Chicago) – SCC Grand Award
4. SARAPEX 1988 (Sarasota) – Gold
5. PLYMOUTH SHOW 1988 (Michigan) – Gold
6. SESCAL 1988 (Los Angeles) – Vermeil, Best Scandinavian non-traditional award
7. ARIPEX 1991 (Tucson) – Gold
8. NORDIA 2013 (Garðabær, Iceland) – Vermeil
9. Royal 2013 Royale (Winnipeg) – Gold, SCC Jed Richter Award for best classic philately
10. PNSE 2014 (Philadelphia) – Vermeil, AAPE award of honor
11. WESTPEX 2017 (San Francisco) – Large Vermeil, AAPE award of honor

*Alan Warren, 2017*