

TWO CZECHOSLOVAK METER STAMP ANNIVERSARIES

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The enormous expansion of postal operations at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries was driven by the social turbulence of the period. There was an urgent need to streamline and speed up postal processing and that included simplifying the methods of payment for postal services. New technologies were needed to replace the traditional but slow process of applying adhesive stamps one letter at a time and then having to cancel them.

Postage meters were introduced in this period. At first they were only slowly adopted by various postal agencies, but at the Universal Postal Union Congress of 1920 in Madrid and the next Congress in 1924, Stockholm, the use of postage meters to frank international mail was approved and affirmed. Two years later, in 1926, postage meters

were adopted for use in Czechoslovakia and they have remained in use in the country for 95 years (1926 to 2021).

The Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs of Czechoslovakia approved the use of meter franking in September 1926. This was announced in the Ministry's *Bulletin No. 44*, dated 9 September, 1926. The first meters approved were products of the Francotyp company of Germany. Authorization to use postage meters was given to only two commercial businesses, both banks in Prague. The Trade Bank (*Zivnostenská banka*) was assigned a Francotyp Model A machine, and The Czech Industrial and Economic Bank (*Česká průmyslová a hospodářská banka*) received a Francotyp Model B.

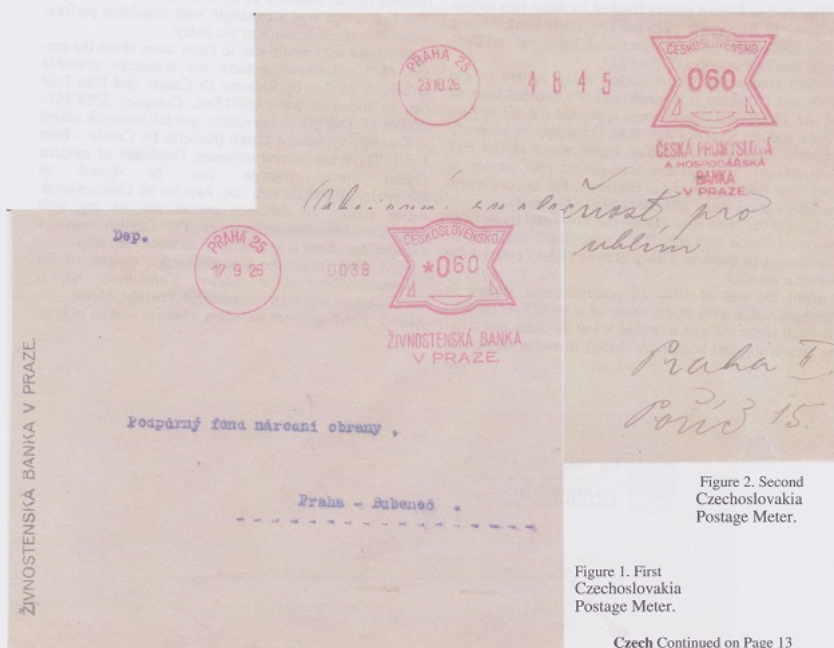


Figure 2. Second Czechoslovakia Postage Meter.

Figure 1. First Czechoslovakia Postage Meter.

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The earliest known covers franked by these two meters are dated 17 September 1926 for The Trade Bank (Figure 1) and 23 October 1926 for The Czech Industrial and Economic Bank's Francotyp (Figure 2).

More commercial firms started using meters in the 1920s and 1930s but it was not until two decades later, in the late 1940s, that meters were approved for use in post offices and for meters other than Francotyp to be made available. The first Post Office meter was a Hasler F22 (Switzerland). The machine was placed into service in 1946. The first day of use is unknown; but my collection contains a cover dated 15th November. (Figure 3)

Around the same time Hasler machines and those from Universal Postal Frankers (UK) were made available to commercial businesses. Pitney Bowes (USA) entered the market soon after.

Until the end of 1946 all postage meter stamps in Czechoslovakia were in the shape of a 'wind rose', a double-lined rectangle with indented V's at the sides and bulging arcs at top and bottom. A change in stamp shape was

ordered by the Ministry of Posts in its *Bulletin No. 62*. The new shape was a rectangle with simulated perforations. This shape remains in use today.

For those who would like to know more about the meters of Czechoslovakia there are resources available online. A catalog by Roberto Di Casola and Ivan Leiš can be found at www.kf0015.cz, *Category SPECIALIZOVANÉ OBORY – Literatura specializovaných oborů – Katalogy výplatn.ch otisků* (Roberto Di Casola – Ivan Leiš). There are several volumes. Databases of modern digital meter stamps can be found at the modry.kf0015.cz web site. Articles on Czechoslovak meter stamps of different period are on my web site, www.historiapostalis-etc.cz. For English speakers Google Translator is available on all these web sites.

And don't forget the Czechoslovakia chapter of the *International Postage Meter Catalogue*, https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/International_Postage_Meter_Stamp_Catalog/Czechoslovakia which is written in English.

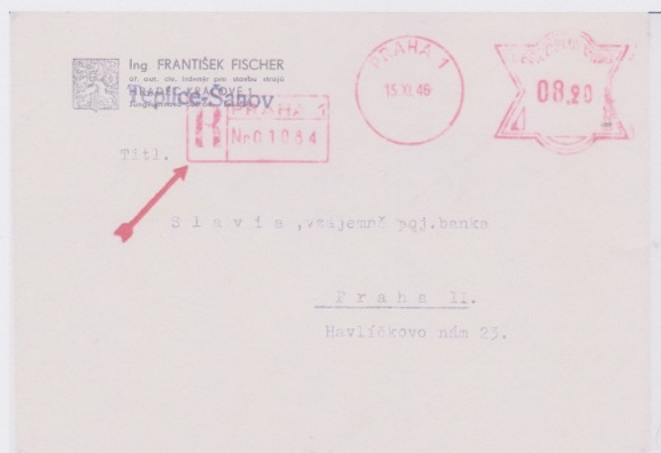


Figure 3. First Czechoslovakia Post Office Meter..

