

The First Cat Stamp Motif

By Greg Balagian

Most of us consider the first feline stamp to be the 1851 issue of Tuscany depicting the Marzocco lion. I was also under the same impression until I recently acquired a folded letter with # 2 from the German State of Hanover (or Hannover) having heraldic lions in the motif.

I discovered that Hanover #1 issued in 1850, has the same lions and is the very first motif.

The 1-groschen stamp design depicts the crowned demi-lion (half lion) and white

demi-unicorn supporters. Three lions passant are beneath the crown in the first and fourth quadrants; a lion rampant is in the second quadrant. (Ireland's golden harp is in the third quadrant.)

This basic motif appears on 1-groschen stamps of Hanover issued between 1850 and 1856: 1850 (#1, gray blue); 1851 (#2, gray green), and 1856 (#11, black green).

The second lion motif (Scott 3, 5, 6, 8, 12-14) is identical to #1 except the shield has no pattern and the colors and values vary.

Hanover, in Northern Germany, became a kingdom of England in 1814, employing the British lions and Scottish unicorn in their insignia.

Although the King of England was also King of Hanover, the Royal Great Hanoverian Post Office was independent of Britain. The last stamps from Hanover were issued in 1864. ♣



The first cats on a stamp are a heraldic demi-lion, a tiny lion rampant, and lions passant from the German state of Hanover (Scott 1), issued in 1850.

The first Lion of Tuscany stamp (Scott 1), issued 1851, was considered the first cat stamp until the author discovered Hanover Scott 1 issued a year earlier. The Lion of Tuscany is depicted on a recent stamp from Vatican City [on page 66].

