Update on the First Cat Stamps

by GREG BALAGIAN

Cat Mews featured an article in 2008 citing the 1851 stamp from the Italian state of Tuscany as the very first cat stamp (Tuscany 2). The stamp depicts the illustrious Marzocco sculpture of a seated (sejant) lion by Donatello.

Three years later, I wrote an update having found the 1850 stamp from the German State of Hanover with a heraldic demi-lion to be the first cat stamp (Hanover 1).

Recently I received an email from a Romanian stamp collector named Constantin Calin who brought two other heraldic lion stamps to my attention, both issued in 1850— the first stamps of Austria and Lombardy-Venetia.

Since the stamp from Hanover was issued in December of 1850, and both stamps from the Empire of Austria and Lombardy-Venetia were issued in June of 1850, these stamps are the oldest feline stamps ever!

The stamps depict the Austrian Imperial coat of arms. The escutcheon (shield) is divided into three vertical sections showing the arms of Hapsburg, Badenberg and Lorraine.

Imperial Austria Coat of Arms

In the left section, the Hapsburg crowned lion rampant appears. The House of Hapsburg, also called House of Austria, was one of the most influential and outstanding royal houses of Europe, and the throne of the Holy Roman Empire was continuously occupied by Hapsburgs between 1438 and 1740. The lion of Hapsburg is marshalled in the escutcheon first, symbolizing its significance to the Austrian Empire

Austria Scott 1 is a 1 kreuzer (k) yellow stamp with orange and brown varieties.

Lombardy-Venetia was a northern Italian kingdom, part of the Austrian Empire. In 1850, the government issued its inaugural set of stamps identical to the first set from Austria, only denominated in Italian centisimi rather than Austrian kreuzers.

Lombardy-Venetia Scott 1 is a 5c buff stamp with yellow, orange, and lemon-yellow varieties.

I would like to give credit to Constantin Calin for bringing this fascinating and important discovery to my attention.

Empire of Austria Scott 1

Lombardy-Venetia Scott 1

Hapsburg Coat of Arms

The first cat stamps were issued by Austria and Lombardy-Venetia on June 1, 1850. A crowned lion rampant, from the Hapsburg coat of arms, is in the Imperial Arms of Austria.

Scott Standard Postage Stamp Catalogues, Scott Publishing.