

## Synopsis - The Philately of the 1920 Antwerp Olympics

### PURPOSE

This is a one frame class exhibit, which deals with the stamps and cancellations issued for the 1920 Antwerp Olympics.

### SCOPE

The exhibit covers the period from May 20, 1920 - the date the stamps were released, until January 15, 1921 - when they were invalidated for sale. The Epilogue briefly discusses the overprints of this issue, which followed their removal from sale. The various cancels under consideration fall within this time span.

### ORGANIZATION AND TREATMENT

The exhibit begins with historical background on the Antwerp Olympics. This will be followed by a discussion of the stamps issued, including the reasons for their issue and their design and production. This is followed by examples of the stamps shown in a variety of usages, including both legal and illegal uses to foreign destinations.

The second section of the exhibit will deal with the ten promotional cancellations which were created as advertising for the games. These cancels were issued in Belgium's largest cities and demonstrate the country's bilingual history. The discussion of these cancels will consider the reason for the relative scarcity of some of the cancellations, as well as known existing errors. The section on cancellations will conclude with a discussion of a rare Circular Date Stamp, which was only available on the Olympic grounds during the games.

The exhibit closes with a brief epilogue, which discusses the way in which the unsold remainder of the stamps (90% of the issue) were overprinted and disposed of over the next ten years.

### CHALLENGE

I have been collecting this topic for over fifteen years and the challenges experienced in mounting this exhibit are quite substantial. While the stamps themselves are quite common, the issue itself was unpopular with the public and only 10% of the

stamps were actually sold. Finding interesting uses of the stamp on something other than postcards is quite challenging, as is finding examples of the ten machine cancels, which range from common to extremely rare. Last of all, acquiring a copy of the CDS, which was issued only on the grounds during the games is a lifetime challenge because of its rarity.

### SIGNIFICANT ITEMS (Outlined in red)

- **Olympic Travel Permit [1/1]**
- **Non-UPU sanctioned use to Brazil [1/2]**
- **Olympic Circular Date Stamp on Postal Card [1/10]**
- **Gent 1 promotional cancellation on post card {1/17}**
- **Charleroy 1 promotional cancellation [1/30]**
- **Gent 3 machine cancel [ 1/37]**

### ORIGINAL RESEARCH

The principal question that has existed surrounding this material is the reason for the varying degrees of scarcity among the machine cancellations. The main reason currently advanced, is that the rarer cancellations occurred in cities where there were fewer or no Olympic events held. In this exhibit I present primary source research conducted at the Belgian State Archives, which advances an explanation for the scarcity which is based on Post Office importance, location and service provided.

### REFERENCES:

- Harrison, Reg & Martin, Nick, The 1920 Antwerp Olympic Games, Part One, *Belgapost* (March 2013), pages 26-30.
- Harrison, Reg & Martin, Nick, The 1920 Antwerp Olympic Games, Part Two, *Belgapost* (June 2013), pages 75-82.
- Redner, Gregg, The Philately of the 1920 Antwerp Olympic, *The Canadian Philatelist* (November 2021), pages 263-266.
- Van Rompay, R., *Les Jeux Olympiques de 1920 a Anvers*. (Belgian Olympic Philatelic Club)