

Six Wide-ranging Issues from Greenland

On January 20, Post Greenland released a total of nine stamps in six different sets. Physiographically a part of the continent of North America, Greenland is an autonomous country located between the Arctic and Atlantic Oceans. In 1979 Denmark granted home rule to Greenland, in a relationship known in Danish as Rigsfællesskabet (Commonwealth of the Realm). Today the Danish royal government is in charge only of foreign affairs, security and financial policy, and the Danish krone is the currency used in Greenland—1 DKK being worth approximately US 18¢.

Greenlandic stamps are a reflection of its vast history and impressive landscape and commemorate many relevant local themes that also are of interest to collectors worldwide. Reflecting this combination, one of the January issues was a SEPAC issue. It is part of a joint release from the Small European Postal Administrations Cooperation, an organization that comprises the smallest postal administrations in Europe, working together, among other goals, to gain wider distribution of their postal products. (As reported previously by our Associate Editor, Dave Kent, one of the criteria for belonging to the group is that each has a small home market with more than half of their philatelic customers living outside the country.)

The SEPAC flowers theme is played out by Greenland Post with a photograph of rhodiola, a plant that grows in Southern and Middle Greenland and which is used as both a spice and in salads.

Two musical themes—Songs and Musical Instruments—come next.

The “songs” stamps depict two “characteristic” (as opposed to specific) landscapes inspired by regional Greenlandic songs. As explained by artist Camilla Nielsen, “The images on the stamps are part of a series of illustrations which I have made for John Hansen in connection with a guitar teaching book that has the goal of ‘improving knowledge about the songs of Greenland’. I am most grateful for this assignment as the beautiful lyrics and melodies have a great richness of emotion, joy of life and beauty to me, which have inspired me greatly.”

In keeping with the EUROPA 2014 “National Musical Instruments” theme, artist Frederik “Kunngi” Kristensen has created designs

that depict a drum on one stamp and a violin and accordion on the other. The sizes of the drums vary, with the largest spanning more than three feet in diameter. As explained in the Greenland information release, more than 2,000 years ago, the people who came to the country were mostly whalers and they played the music they liked. For instruments they mainly used the violin, accordion, harmonica and wind instruments.

A very different theme in the January 20 releases is Mining. The 10 DKK stamp focuses on the lead mine at Mesters Vig, which was opened at the mountain “Blyklippen” (the lead cliff) in the autumn of 1952, due to findings made in 1948 by the geologist Lauge Koch. The 50-year concession was issued to the newly started Nordisk Mineselskab A/S (“Nordmine”) for exploration for minerals in central Eastern Greenland.

The 56 DKK stamp features the lead-zinc mine, “The Black Angel” at Maarmorilik, which started its ore production in 1973 following a find by an employee at a nearby marble quarry.

The “Additional Value” (semi-postal) stamp for 2014 was issued in support of the homeless in Nuuk. The 10 + 1 DKK stamp was designed by Niels “Mo” Motzfeldt, who stated, “It makes me so happy, when I see that other people help me and the other homeless in Nuuk, the capital of Greenland. It makes me feel a bit more like a human being.”

As explained further, in addition to having to endure the harsh winter climate of Greenland, the homeless also must bear the stigma of being thought of as alcoholics, drug addicts or thieves. So the purpose of this stamp is not just to raise funds, but also to raise awareness of their plight.

Finally, on January 20 Post Greenland changed its franking labels. The new designs that adorn the franking labels have all been selected from beautiful Greenlandic scenery, with the white area being where the value would be printed out.

The stamps of Greenland, including many past issues, are available from the World Online Philatelic Agency. These, as well as the issues of 20 other postal administrations, may be accessed at www.wopa-stamps.com.

