

# The Cover Story

## The Germania Stamp by Robert Fisher

The Germania stamp of Imperial Germany is one of the most popular stamps coveted by collectors of German stamps. It was the most widely used stamp design in German philatelic history. The design concept of this stamp started with the pencil drawing shown in **Figure 1 on the front cover**.

The initial issue from January 1, 1900 replaced the standard issue depicting numerals and eagles. The stamp was issued several times with a variety of watermarks, perforations and colors until its final release in 1922. Prior to the war, they were overprinted and used in the German offices in China, Turkey and Morocco, as well as the colony of Kiauchau in China. During World War I Germania stamps were overprinted and used in many of the countries that were occupied by German forces. These included Belgium, France, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania. After the war, the stamps were used in the Kingdom of Bavaria and the plebiscite regions of Allenstein, Danzig, Marienwerder, Memel, Saar, Schleswig and Upper Silesia.

During the early 1900's, it was common for monarchies to place an image of the ruling monarch or coat of arms on the face of a stamp. The German Empire, however, was created during the 1870s from a patchwork of kingdoms, duchies, free city-states and confederations. The image of Germania made it a unifying feature because it was the personification of the Germanic nation and peoples as a whole. As a symbol of German unity, it did not complicate the relationship with other German royalty and the coexisting German postal authorities of Bavaria and Wurttemberg.

The engraving was performed by artist Paul Eduard Waldraff (1870–1917) who used the theater and film actress Anna Furing (1866 – 1929) as the model [**Figure 2, on front cover**]. Wearing an octagonal imperial crown she is holding a sword and an olive branch. The Art Nouveau design [**Figure 3, on front cover**] was personally chosen by the Emperor Wilhelm II for use as the new definitive stamp issue for the new century.

# Reminiscences

By Michael Rogers



**M**RI conducts a public auction or mail sale every month. A beautiful color catalogue is packed deep with stamps and postal history owned by a great many consignors. Bidding is conducted through the Internet or snail mail, with one event followed by another. Though we make it look easy, it depends on teamwork that things go smoothly.

Goodness golly! What we've sold recently! We shipped in from California 174 cartons of worldwide unexploded booklets and flight covers, the Judd Nevenz 19th century Mexico collections, from Ohio came many exhibits of censored and flown covers, and dispersed a retired German dealer's inventory of highly specialized material. Who would have thought a Hindenburg crash cover would sell for a higher price in Winter Park than anywhere else? And all the China and Asia that everyone knows us for.

Material will stream in by post office and FEDEX. At times we'll see it in person on the road. Terms are agreed to by contract. Once the contract is signed, we can describe a collection. We put the better material into public auction and some of the lesser valued material into mail sale. There's just a handful of public auction houses that have mail sales, so we have a pretty unusual product.

Woe-be-it to the auction house that attempts to write up material it cannot! I remember one house that assigned an internee to write up a great collection of Indiana postal history who, having skimmed a book overnight, proceeded the next day to describe the collection being unaware of the difference between a folded letter and an envelope!

Competition is fierce. Not long ago, a splendid Japanese collection came on the market. The consignor approached me and I made my pitch as did another house not known for Asian material. I found out this glib fellow secured the consignment when he asked to borrow the appropriate literature from my library that would be used to describe this difficult material. Chutzpah!

We place an estimate for each lot, reserving each at 50% of the ECV. While most auction houses sell their lots on an unreserved basis, they are selling on average 45-55% of all lots on offer. Ours are reserved and we are selling on average 85%. Material that we don't sell is re-offered.

That means other auction houses have a cushion of lots to build upon for their next auction, material left unsold. Since we've sold almost everything, we're pretty much starting from scratch, starting almost empty. And since we hold an event every month, it's a testament to our organization, our teamwork, to hold the public auctions/mail sales efficiently.

When the consignments are received, a 5 digit number is assigned. The consignor number is marked initially on the cartons his material arrives in, and by the describer on every envelope his material is placed in, as well as his every invoice.

Each envelope carries information which tells the computer whether it's a public auction or a mail sale lot as well as a category to place it correctly. Once entered, proofers read the manuscript before it goes to our desktop publisher who polishes the text, inserts the photos and further proofreads. Then the sale goes to the printer who returns to us the match prints, which are proofs of the color pages that simulate the actual press run, so we can make sure the colors are dead-on. Red orange cannot be orange red.

After the catalogue is plotted and we know how many pages it will be, we check the weight. We then stamp the mailing envelopes. Unless a client requests a postal meter or it's a foreign country where usage of stamps will encourage loss in the mailstream, we're going to use postage stamps. And that takes time. It's intuitive for a stamp dealer to use postage stamps, don't you think? (We have no control over the Post Office using crayon to obliterate the older beautiful stamps we use.)

Placement on the website is timed to the mailing of the catalogues. Bids are accepted by email, on our website, fax and by mail. Phone bids must be backed up

with written confirmation to avoid misunderstandings. Staffers enter the bids, a few merit special attention: unreadable faxes written in pencil, tiny numbers where a 1 could be construed to be a 7 coming in by post, and sometimes hard to understand phone voices.

A mail sale is a clerical event while a public auction is organized the same except it goes a further step: it's held live action. A rule we try to follow is that material valued under \$220 goes into mail sales while higher priced is entered into public auction. We watch our realizations carefully noting where placement is best, mail sale or public auction.

Public auction or mail sale, many hundreds of invoices stream out of the computer. Those who pay by credit card are shipped first (cash flow!), afterwards we ship folks known to us, then we set aside and invoice bidders with insufficient credit. The office goes into a controlled frenzy as upwards of three hundred winners are invoiced, charged, packaged and shipped in a tight time space. Of course, there will always be someone who cannot understand why the process cannot be accomplished immediately.

Invoices are due upon receipt because we pay the consignors promptly. More paperwork is caused by declined charge cards. Some dealers lament that they need time to sell the new purchase before remitting; this is not our problem. We're not a financial institution: anyone who doesn't remit, doesn't bid with us again.

I've described the co-ordinates for one event. At the same time, other auctions and mail sales overlap, either ending or being worked on. We're responsible for the property of many hundreds of consignors as well as the proper execution of tens of thousands of bids. Teamwork: we contribute together. ☒