HISTORY OF TWO ARDATOV ZEMSTVO POSTS

BY LEON FINIK AND NIKOLAI SOROKIN

On July 10, 1914, case assessor Sokolov of the State Gentry Land Bank office in Simbirsk mailed a registered letter to Fedor Yegorovich Tupitsin, residing in the town (selo) of Bolshoye Talyzino in the Ardatov district (uyezd) of Simbirsk province (gubernia). It was an official, pre-printed form warning Tupitsin of a pending foreclosure on his property in "Bolshoye Talyzino and other [locations]" if he didn't pay the sum of 20 rubles, 60 kopeks that was past due on his loan.

The letter clearly explained that if he didn't settle his debt soon, then in no less than six weeks after the date the warning was mailed just one notice would be published in the Pravitel’stenyi Vestnik, the official government newspaper of record, announcing that his property would be sold at auction on a date no less than six weeks from the date of the notice’s publication. For complete clarity, the reverse side of the form contained the printed text of the addendum to Article 78 of the State Gentry Land Bank’s Charter, stipulating the notification procedures to be followed in foreclosures.

The official bank envelope (Figure 1) was franked with a Nicholas II 7-kopek stamp and date-stamped at the Simbirsk post office on July 11, 1914. In addition to the black-ink registration mark, a purple-ink two-line text was applied, stating that the registered letter required a signed acknowledgement of receipt. As was usual for such official mail, a bank label seal was attached to the flap on the reverse side of the envelope (Figure 2). When the letter arrived in Talyzino on July 14, 1914, a receiver cancel was applied to the reverse side.

But then something happened. The next cancellation, in chronological order, ties an Ardatov zemstvo stamp to the cover. The date is July 21, 1914. Then, on July 24, the same Talyzino government post office cancelling device was used for a second receiver date stamp. Four days later the letter was back in Simbirsk, where it was stamped with a July 28, 1914, circular date stamp. And an internal Land Bank rectangular receiver cancel was stamped on the front of the cover on
August 1, 2014.

Mr. Tupitsin never saw his stern warning. A handwritten inscription on the back of the envelope explains why: "Return, due to addressee's death." The mystery of this cover is what happened to it in the ten days between July 14 and 24, 1914.

At first glance, for those who are not zemstvo aficionados, a reasonable explanation may suggest itself. It was late July, summer, Mr. Tupitsin was not at his main residence in Talyzino, and may have been relaxing at his dacha somewhere in the country. After all, the official bank letter did note the existence of properties in other locations. Consequently, the letter was taken to the local zemstvo post office in Talyzino to be delivered to wherever he was residing at the time. But when the zemstvo postman arrived at the dacha, it was learned that Mr. Tupitsin had passed away. The letter was then returned to the main Talyzino post office and sent back to Simbirsk. The cancelled Ardatov zemstvo post stamp certainly suggests that scenario.

But is it true? An Ardatov district issued many stamps beginning in 1878, but it was a different Ardatov, located in the province of Nizhniy Novgorod, and not the Simbirsk province Ardatov. So the stamp on the back of the bank's envelope was from a different area approximately 110 miles as the crow flies west of the district seat that issued it. A fake? That conclusion certainly suggests itself, but the cancel appears believable, and the letter seems quite genuine in every other respect. Still, was there even a zemstvo post in the Simbirsk Ardatov district? When alerted to the existence of this cover, we decided to do some digging. In the process we unearthed some fascinating information about zemstvo posts--those that issued stamps and those that didn't.

**The Ardatov Zemstvo Stamp**

The obvious first step in trying to learn more about this cover was to look at the zemstvo stamp. It is a 3-kopek 1909 issue printed on bluish-green paper, listed as No. 28 in the Chuchin catalog and as No. 32 in Schmidt’s. It is listed under the Nizhni Novgorod’s Ardatov [NN Ardatov] district. Even today it is a relatively inexpensive stamp, of which, according to the Gurevich, et al., catalog two thousand were originally printed. What distinguishes this stamp and a set of others very similar to it in appearance, all printed between 1909 and 1911, is that unlike previous NN Ardatov stamps, they have no indication of the province from which they originate. The design's text says only "Ardatov zemstvo post stamp." Prior to these stamps, beginning with the first NN Ardatov stamps in 1878, all of the stamp designs featured the

*Figure 2 with bank letter insert.*
district seal—an oval with two crossed iron hammers below and a stag from Nizhni Novgorod’s coat of arms above—which made identification easy (Figure 3).

Interestingly enough, even when the new stamps without the coat of arms were printed, the earlier design was still around. From 1902 to 1916, the State Securities Printing Office was providing NN Ardatov with the earlier “Ardatov type” stamps. Thus by simply looking at the design of the 1909 stamp, one would be hard-pressed to tell which of the Ardatov districts issued it. That gave rise to a suspicion that perhaps the catalogs were wrong, and it was actually some enterprising dealers in the Simbirsk Ardatov who printed the stamps, rather than the NN Ardatov zemstvo post. But that suspicion was soon proven wrong by a document that lists a payment made by the NN Ardatov zemstvo for printing those stamps.

![Figure 3](image)

The circular date stamp on the cover (Figure 4) has an inscription reading “Ardatov district zemstvo post of the Simbirsk province.” There is a small circle separating the beginning and end of that inscription. This cancel appears almost identical to a 1910 cancel found on a pair of stamps (Chuchin 30, Schmidt 34) that were printed at the same time as number 28/32 on the cover and look quite similar, except for the paper’s yellow color. The crucial difference in the cancels is that the province indicated on the latter cancel is Nizhni Novgorod (Figure 5).

It should be noted that finding cancelled copies of these Ardatov stamps is quite difficult. The stamps have all the hallmarks of being designed not for actual postal usage, but for the philatelic market: they were all printed tete-beche in small sheets of twelve (6x2) (Figure 6); full sheets are still quite plentiful for zemstvo stamps; and the stamps themselves are very similar in design, with some designs being identical but printed on papers of different colors. Even more telling is that the State Printing Office provided the NN Ardatov zemstvo post with more than 75,000 3-kopek stamps in the period 1902-1916,¹ so there was really no obvious need for new local stamps, other than perhaps to make a profit from sales to collectors.² As for finding any such stamps on covers, a thorough search through email correspondence did finally produce somewhat low-resolution scans of two rare covers provided by S. Braiman through A. Mramornov in Moscow (Figures 7 and 8). They too have the same type of cancellation, showing the stamps being used in the NN Ardatov.

To our knowledge, no similar Simbirsk Ardatov zemstvo cancel has yet surfaced, but that is not surprising, even if the date stamp happens to be genuine and not a clever esoteric forgery. The main reason for the lack of any other known similar cancels is that the Simbirsk Ardatov zemstvo did not issue stamps, nor charge for mail delivery, even though it had a robust zemstvo post and quite possibly used some stamping devices to track its mail deliveries.

It was clearly time to find out more about how mail was handled locally in Simbirsk’s Ardatov district.
Ardatov Zemstvo Post in Simbirsk Province

An introduction to the 1925 English-language version of the Catalog of Russian Rural Postage Stamps, edited by F.G. Chuchin, notes that far from all zemstvos that established local postal services had issued stamps: "In 1892, for instance, the Zemstvo Post is known to have been organized in 150 districts, but we have stamps of that period for only 89." In an awkwardly constructed sentence, Chuchin's English-language catalog actually uses the Simbirsk province (which it translates as "government") as an example of such non-stamp-issuing zemstvo posts: "How far from reliable it is to judge about the activity of the Zemstvo Post after the occurrence of stamps, the instance of the government of Simbirsk show: we have got stamps of the year 1867 only for Alatyr district, the post being free in five districts out of eight." One of those five free post districts was the Simbirsk Ardatov.

The story of how that local post was established can be found on the Russian Federation Post Office site. "After the zemstvo reforms of 1864, the zemstvo administrations in Simbirsk province began creating local postal organizations, the zemstvo post, for the purposes of mailing correspondence within each district, delivering arriving mail received by the government post office to addressees within the district, and bringing outbound mail to the state post office....At a special meeting held in Simbirsk on December 16, 1867, regulations were adopted stipulating that not only official mail, but also private correspondence, should be delivered free by local posts. In addition to adopting rules for those local posts, the provincial administration also issued rules for postal workers, approved books for recording mail handled at the district and sub-district levels, and adopted forms needed to record the district's incoming and outgoing mail. All these rules, forms, and instructions were sent by the provincial administration to the district administrations, with a special request to the Alatyr, Ardatov, Karsun, Kurmyshevsk and Sengiley districts to create their own local posts based on the new rules, as an experiment, because prior to this time these districts had no postal service at all. As for the Simbirsk, Syzran, and Buoy districts, the rules were offered as suggested guidelines only, since those districts had earlier experience with local postal service. Thus in 1868 local postal service was established in the five remaining districts: Alatyr on May 1, Kurmysh on June 2, Sengiley on August 1, Ardatov on August 1, and Karsun on August 19."6

The Chuchin catalog lists only two Simbirsk province zemstvo posts as ever having issued any stamps: Alatyr and Syzran, with the two stamps from Alatyr (1867) being extremely rare, and the only stamp from Syzran also commanding a very
appreciable sum. With such a dearth of collectible stamps from Simbirsk province, it is no surprise that one would be highly challenged to find any collectible items from that province's local posts.

We must remember that for approximately the first hundred years of philately, collectors focused almost exclusively on stamps. Postal history was ignored by a majority of collectors. Just think--most of the cancelled zemstvo stamps in our collections were once attached to covers. How much more valuable and interesting they would be, had our predecessors not removed them! But they did. At the time, beefing up a collection with stamps and stamp varieties was the name of the game. Since even envelopes franked with zemstvo stamps were passed over or destroyed, one can imagine the utter disdain for covers that perhaps only bore zemstvo postal markings, such as date cancels, from the many districts that offered free local postal service. Any such covers that still exist today are rare, even though for decades the post offices that handled them processed many thousands of pieces of mail every year.7

One of the zemstvos that did not issue stamps was the Simbirsk Ardatov local post. An excellent primary source of information about the workings of zemstvo posts are the yearly financial reports of the district governments. These reports were professionally printed, and many have survived in archives in Russia and countries that were formerly part of the Russian Empire. For the Simbirsk Ardatov district, we were able to obtain digital photocopies of six yearly reports, covering 1906 to 1911, located in the Main State Archive in Moscow. It is not an easy task to understand and interpret all the information contained in these reports, but it is amply clear that in the final years of the Russian monarchy, the local post was still quite active and played an important role in supporting timely communication within the district.

Taking a detailed look at the Simbirsk Ardatov district yearly reports, we find that information for 1906 and 1907 is very sparse--just one-line items. In 1906, "Maintaining the zemstvo post" cost the district budget 721.71 rubles, of which 7.20 rubles was money deposited into a pension account. A similar amount, 720 rubles, was allocated for the post's maintenance in 1907. This in itself was not a very large amount because, in comparison, it cost 500 rubles to maintain the agricultural warehouse office. But the 1908 report shows that the earlier amounts covered just a part of the actual zemstvo post expenses. In that report the expense of "Maintaining the zemstvo post" is divided into two sub-paragraphs: "Maintaining two postmen" (740 rubles) and "Payments for the delivery of zemstvo mail" (2245.19 rubles), a line item that must have been placed under a different heading in the earlier yearly reports. Thus in actuality the zemstvo post cost the Ardatov district government almost 3,000 rubles per year, which was a substantial sum for providing free mail delivery.

In the same 1908 report we also find an interesting detail about the two zemstvo postmen: they were armed. The district provided 1.50 rubles to pay for revenue stamps on a police permit issued to the zemstvo postmen to carry firearms, and another 1.50 rubles was spent on purchasing ammunition. One of the postman's revolvers needed repair at some point in 1908, and that job cost 70 kopeks. In addition, repairs to a leather pouch and mail chest created an additional expense of 1.50 rubles.

The salaries of the two postmen did not change in 1909--it was still 720 rubles for the year. The previous year's "Payment for delivery of zemstvo mail" was clarified with a new heading, "Payments to the managers of postal delivery stations." That amount increased slightly to 2,537.13 rubles. As in the previous year, detailed ledger information about additional expenses allow us a fascinating glimpse into the actual workings of the Simbirsk Ardatov zemstvo post.

Easter that year fell on April 11 in the Russian Orthodox Church. The two zemstvo postmen, S.G. Dikopol'tsev and A.V. Dikopol'tsev (possibly cousins) received a 30-ruble bonus for their good work. But later in the year, A.V. Dikopol'tsev somehow lost two pouches of mail. Unfortunately, some of that mail contained money. It was a big scandal, and as a result both postmen were immediately fired. While their replacements were being sought, district clerks I.S. Vasilyev and N.I. Myakinkov did the honors, delivering mail for 20 days. They were paid 20 rubles. In the meantime, restitution in the amount of 117.27 rubles had to be paid from the district budget to those who had lost their money in the zemstvo mail, and a claim had to be paid to the Moscow post office on an insured registered parcel that was among the items lost.

When the new replacement postmen were hired, two new revolvers were needed. It's a guess,
but quite possibly pistols owned by the previous mailmen were also lost in the event that got them fired. New pistols were purchased from N.A. Ivlev and M.M. Kosolapov for 30.50 rubles. One of the new zemstvo hires, Feodorov, had to obtain a permit from the police department to carry a firearm; the permit revenue stamps cost 75 kopeiks. Also, the new postmen were provided with two new sheepskin coats, which first required purchasing sixteen sheepskins from D.M. Batrakov for 33 rubles, and then paying a tailor 7 rubles to sew them. Two new leather postal pouches had to be made, for which a local gentleman, Ivan Alekseevich Seleznev, was paid 65 rubles; he received another ruble for fixing a hole in a tarpaulin. Quite possibly, it was the same tarpaulin that was bought by the zemstvo post from the zemstvo's agricultural warehouse for 12.30 rubles, but at least that was a transfer of funds from one office to another within the zemstvo budget. And finally, the two postmen needed a place to live, so 5 rubles was paid to homeowner Praskovia Mohovaya for an apartment. That year the zemstvo post office caused quite a headache and unforeseen expenses for the Simbirsk Ardatov district government!

The following year, 1910, was easier. The new postmen may have received a raise, because their total salary was 780 rubles, 60 rubles more than in previous years. The "Payments to the managers of postal delivery stations" was 2,416.46, a bit less than in 1909. Wear and tear on the new sheepskin coats and mail pouches necessitated repairs, for a total of 30 rubles. There is an interesting detail in the financial report about payments to occasional hires who also carried some of the zemstvo post. But that expense is rolled in with courier costs and expenses for various official travel, for a total of 91 rubles. It is impossible to determine what share of that amount was zemstvo post-related. But it does seem to indicate that the postmen had a lot of work and sometimes needed help.

In 1911, 780 rubles were paid to the postmen, and 2,514.74 rubles to the managers of postal delivery stations. Once again the zemstvo postmen had to renew their firearm permits, as did other members of the district government. The local budget covered the cost of permit revenue stamps. Perhaps because of the 1909 fiasco, bonuses were given to the postmen in time for Christmas, not Easter. It was a generous amount: 45.50 rubles.

An interesting debate took place at a Simbirsk Ardatov district council meeting in 1911, in response to an administrative report that had studied the advisability of raising the maximum amount of cash that could be carried by zemstvo postmen at any one time from 800 rubles to 2,000 rubles. The original sum was set at a special session of the district legislature in 1905. The report states:

"Currently [1911], because the number of organizations within the district that are managed by the zemstvo has increased and their business activities have expanded, the old sum has clearly become insufficient. Let us take public education as an example: prior to 1911 the zemstvo sent out money to schools only to pay the teachers' salaries, which were smaller then. Now the number of schools and teachers has increased, and that has raised costs significantly. Additionally, money is now being sent to maintain the school buildings. That includes hiring guards, purchasing firewood and lighting materials, repairing school buildings, and helping build new schools. Since 1905 other costs have also significantly increased, including veterinary medicine, agronomy, and other aspects of agriculture."

The report goes on to recommend increasing the maximum amount carried by zemstvo postmen to 2,000 rubles. It points out that in 1905 the lower figure was quite possibly dictated by the alarming situation at the time (the 1905 Revolution, which caused unrest and lawlessness in Russia for about two years). "That is not the case now," concludes the report.

When the report was presented for comments to the council, Chairman S.P. Gorstkin objected to its findings. He pointed out that the government postal facilities that already existed in the Ardatov district could handle the zemstvo's needs for transferring funds. He did note that using the government postal services would be an added expense, but that the expense was negligible compared to the risks associated with allowing zemstvo postmen to carry an increased sum of money. "We must not forget," said Gorstkin, "that a zemstvo postman's job is quite comparable to the hard work of a convict. The only people engaged in it are those of insufficient means. Suffering from impossible conditions of starvation, cold, etc., it is quite natural that they are occasionally forced to warm themselves with vodka. Just that fact alone is
enough not to guarantee that occasionally they wouldn't lose the money." Instead of raising the maximum amount, Chairman Gortskin suggested using the regular government post offices, which provided guarantees against losses. The chairman's logic (and perhaps the relatively recent events of 1909) convinced the other council members to concur with him and vote down the proposal.

From all the information in the Ardatov district documents presented here, it is evident that the Simbirsk Ardatov zemstvo post was very much a part of the local government structure and still going strong into the second decade of the twentieth century. So it is quite possible that the 1914 Land Bank letter described in the beginning of this article was at some point carried by the Simbirsk Ardatov zemstvo postman Feodorov or his colleague. What makes no obvious sense is why a stamp from another zemstvo, or any local stamp at all, would be used on an envelope in a district where local mail delivery was free. Perhaps some information could be gleaned from studying the zemstvo records from the Nizhniy Novgorod province's Ardatov district?

**Ardatov Zemstvo Post in Nizhniy Novgorod Province**

We were able to obtain digital photocopies of pages related to the operations of the Ardatov zemstvo post from the archive in Nizhniy Novgorod Central Museum. As with the Simbirsk Ardatov, they too come from the yearly financial reports of the Ardatov district administration (Figure 9). The information includes 1904, 1907, 1909, 1910, 1911, 1913, and 1914, and shows a different model for operating a local post in czarist Russia. Where the Simbirsk Ardatov hired two full-time postmen, the NN Ardatov zemstvo used contractors to deliver the mail and hired a full-time manager and his deputy to oversee the operation. The total zemstvo post expenses in NN Ardatov were somewhat lower than in the Simbirsk Ardatov. In 1904 its contract postmen were paid 1,074.63 rubles, the manager's salary was 396 rubles, and his deputy received 95.84 rubles. Another 15 rubles were paid to the clerk who kept the zemstvo post records, and 33 rubles were spent on printing zemstvo post forms and 25.15 rubles on printing stamps.

Considering that the only issue appearing in the catalogs under 1904 is the second reprint of the 3-kopek green stamp printed by the Government Printing Office, and that there were no other stamps issued in the next five years, 25 rubles must have been the price of the "workhorse" government-printed stamps that were actually used on mail by the zemstvo post. And there was plenty of mail for the contract postmen to deliver. In a 1907 report showing the volume of mail handled by the Zemstvo post, we see the following information:

- Official letters -- 58,800
- Private letters -- 8,132
- Money letters -- 2,686, for a sum of 49,338.375 rubles
- Official parcels -- 1,043
- Parcels without indicated value -- 34
- Valued parcels -- 21, for a total of 180.20 rubles
- Newspapers and magazines -- 42,030
- Registered mail -- 2,48
- Wrappers -- 1,939
- Telegrams -- 41

The cost of all these deliveries to the NN Ardatov district was a total of 1,892.91 rubles, which included salaries for the post manager and his deputy, payments to contract mail deliverers, clerk’s fees, and incidental expenses. Only 15 per
Figure 10. Pages from the 1909 NN Ardatov financial report. Arrows point to the line that lists the actual cost of printing zemstvo stamps.

cent of that expense, 293.73 rubles, was recouped through use of stamps and other paid services. The rest came out of the NN Ardatov district's yearly budget. So it bears noting that the difference between the cost of maintaining a zemstvo post with or without stamps was not that big. The absence of accounting headaches, and the possibility of stamp income-related machinations in zemstvos where the local postal delivery was free, perhaps made the potential loss of a few hundred rubles seem like a good tradeoff.

The 1909 records for the NN Ardatov district are especially significant because they prove that the 3-kopek stamps on various colored paper, of which one is attached to the bank envelope, were actually issued by the NN Ardatov, even if any indication of the province is missing in their design. Item 2 under the "Cost of Maintaining the Zemstvo Post" shows an expense of 50.40 rubles for printing zemstvo stamps (Figure 10). There was a similar expense, 56.90 rubles, for printing zemstvo postal forms. That year the zemstvo postmen were paid 1,279.34. (It is not clear from the wording whether the mail handlers became direct employees or remained contractors.) The zemstvo post manager received his salary of 465.60 rubles, of which 14.40 rubles was retained for his pension account. The clerk in Vikunsk was paid the same 30 rubles as in past years, and the Vikunsk office, now obviously a significant center for that zemstvo post, paid out 266.47 to its contract mailmen.

In all, maintenance of the NN Ardatov zemstvo post, including some incidentals, came to approximately 1,900 rubles. Sales of stamps and delivery of correspondence netted the post 331.37 rubles, according to the ledger. That included 149.55 rubles worth of stamps "mailed to various individuals." If we read the ledger correctly, that's almost 5,000 stamps valued at 3 kopeks each that were mailed out, presumably to stamp dealers and
collectors. Of course, the actual take may have been more if a "special service charge" was involved. Note, however, that only about 180 rubles, less than 10 per cent of the total zemstvo post maintenance expenses that year, were earned from using stamps to pay for zemstvo mail deliveries.

In the following year, 1910, because of decreased payments to the mail carriers, maintenance of the zemstvo post was less expensive than in previous years: 1647.32 rubles. The projected income from the sale of stamps, 285 rubles, was not met. Sales were a disappointing 121.13 rubles, of which 50.56 rubles worth of stamps were "mailed to various individuals." Considering that the cost of mailing those stamps was just 1.16 rubles, it must have been a very small number of individuals--most likely a couple of dealers or clubs buying in bulk. An interesting detail in the ledger was an 11-ruble fine paid to the zemstvo post by one of its postmen, Grishanin. Could it be that like his brethren in the other Ardatov, he too was forced to warm himself with a bit of vodka and lost something?

There is no record in the books that any new stamps were printed in 1910 or 1911. However, the main zemstvo catalogs are in agreement that additional NN Ardatov zemstvo stamps, somewhat similar in design concept to those of 1909, were issued both in 1910 and 1911. That would seem to indicate that all stamps issued from 1909-11 were part of the same 50-ruble printing order made in 1909 and that their official issuance was simply stretched over three years.

The NN Ardatov zemstvo post ledger information for 1911 shows that the yearly zemstvo post expenses continued to hover below 1,900 rubles. But a new, much more streamlined accounting system went into effect that year, continuing at least through 1914 (the last year for which we have obtained accounting information). The zemstvo post warrants just four lines of expense items under the new system, instead of the almost two pages of details in some previous years. The main conclusion that can be drawn for 1911-1914 is that the zemstvo post remained an active part of the zemstvo structure, despite the expanding services of the government's post office. This is supported by the fact that the general expense of maintaining the zemstvo post remained relatively stable, with a moderate upward trend from year to year. In 1911 its overall cost was 1,814 rubles, and by 1914 that figure had risen to 2,382 rubles.

Conclusions

Our comparison of financial records for the two different Ardatov districts shows that stamp sales did not generate much revenue for the stamp-issuing NN Ardatov. They covered only about 10 per cent of the total expense of maintaining that local postal service. We also found that the Simbirsk Ardatov post was very active in the early twentieth century and, financially, was a larger operation than the NN Ardatov zemstvo post. But records prove that it was the NN Ardatov post that printed zemstvo stamps, while the Simbirsk Ardatov zemstvo did not have any stamp issues.

Thus the zemstvo stamp tied to the Land Bank cover is a philatelic forgery. Could that envelope actually have been carried by the Simbirsk Ardatov zemstvo post? Without any valid and verifiable markings, it is impossible to tell. But it would be interesting to find some of the tens of thousands of letters that did pass through the Simbirsk Ardatov post and see whether any zemstvo postal markings were used on them.

One such envelope is shown in Figure 11. At least we think that it was handled by the Simbirsk Ardatov zemstvo post. It was mailed at the Prokazna post office in Penza province and cancelled there on June 25, 1909. The letter was addressed very clearly to "Talyzino, Simbirsk province, Ardatov district, hutor (hamlet) Ivanovskiy, to the Right Honorable Nadezhda Vladimirovna Gorstkina." (Remember that S.P. Gorstkin was the chairman of the Ardatov District Council who preferred to entrust public funds to the insured government post office rather than the occasionally hard-drinking zemstvo postmen. It's quite possible that Nadezda was his wife or another close family member.) There is no receiver cancel at the Talyzino post office, as there was on the bank letter. But once it arrived there, how did it get to Ivanovskiy hamlet, which was not on a government postal route? Probably by zemstvo post, but if so, there are no zemstvo postal markings there to prove it.

In order to determine whether there really were any date stamps or identifying marks left on mail by the zemstvo carriers, more covers like this one, addressed to rural locations, are needed. Please let us know if you have seen any.
Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank John Myke for inspiring us to write this article by providing the images of the Land Bank's envelope and letter and by alerting us to the existence of two Ardatovs. We also thank Phil Robinson for the old map images.

Endnotes
2. See "It Wasn’t So Different In the Old Days", p.62 in this issue of Rossica
3. Catalogue of the Russian Rural Postage Stamps, Edited by F.G. Chuchin, Moscow, 1925, p.11
4. Gurevich, Zemstvo Catalog, pp.11-12
5. It was a reform that provided local communities—zemstvos—self-government, including a measure of control over their budgets and various local activities such as education, medicine, agriculture, and communications. For details see T. Emmons and W. Vucinich, The Zemstvo in Russia. An Experiment in Self Government Cambridge U. Press, 1982
7. The late Rossica member George Werbitzky did exhibit a collection of just such covers at the Balpex 2012 show. His effort was a groundbreaking achievement.
8. Surprisingly, the clerk is listed as being located in the Vikunsk bailiwick (volost), some distance away from the district seat, Ardatov. This raises the question of where the main zemstvo post operations were actually centered.
9. Gurevich, Zemstvo Catalog, p.30

Sources
Catalogue of the Russian Rural Postage Stamps, Edited by F.G. Chuchin, Moscow, 1925
C. Schmidt, Sammelung Russicher Landschaftsmarken Im Reichsparkmuseum, Berlin 1934
Yu. Gurevich, O. Poltorak, I. Stebulayev, Stamps of the Zemstvo Post of Russia Catalog 1866-1919, Moscow, 2004
Денежные Отчеты Ардатовской Уездной Земской Управы Симбирской Губернии, (Monetary Report of the Ardatov District Zemstvo Administration in the Simbirsk Province), Ardatov, 1906, 1907, 1908, 1909, 1910, 1911
Отчет Ардатовской Уездной Земской Управы Нижегородской Губернии (Report of the Ardatov District Zemstvo Administration of the Nizhni Novgorod Province), Ardatov, 1904, 1907, 1909, 1910, 1911, 1913, 1914