

WOLDENBERG OFFICERS CAMP POST (IIC) 1942-1945

Poczta Obozu Oficerskiego (Officer's camp) II C post.

Oflag II-C Woldenburg was a German World War II prisoner-of-war camp located about 1 kilometre from the town of Woldenberg, Brandenburg (now Dobiegniew, western Poland). The camp housed Polish officers and orderlies and had an area of 25 hectares (62 acres) with 25 brick huts for prisoners and another six for kitchens, classrooms, theatre, and administration. The camp was established in October 1939, with the number of inmates reaching a peak of 5,944 officers and 796 orderlies. On 28th January 1945 the POWs were assembled and marched westward, but after two days they were liberated by the Soviet Red Army.

The internal camp postal service at Offizierlager (Oflag) IIC operated from 5th April, 1942 and until January, 1945. It is a unique event in postal history, where prisoners of war, overcame the restrictions imposed on them by their captors and fences of barbed wire. The internal postal service, which carried out all the duties of any such service elsewhere helped make life more bearable.

There has been some debate in philatelic circles as to whether the stamps produced at the camp are postage stamps or merely labels. The same arguments could be applied to the local posts anywhere. While not accepted as tender outside the boundaries of the camp, the postal service performed as any such service. Officers who had served as postmasters in civilian life ensured that all standard protocols were observed; postage was paid, an item was sent and delivered with utmost efficiency. Extraordinarily, the service functioned with full approval of the German authorities, who though retained final right of approval of topic and design.

Images, text therewith and list of references appear in the most stunning philatelic exhibit: : ROMAN SOBUS - POLISH PRISONER OF WAR CAMP POST : WOLDENBERG PRISONER OF WAR STAMP ISSUES, POSTAL HISTORY AND GRAPHICS EXHIBIT :

http://www.polonus.org/home.php?author=27&topic=28&page=exhibits_intro

1. The Polish Prisoner of War Camp Posts by "Autolycus" Caldra House Limited Press, 1994 (English)
2. Katalog der Lagerpost um 1945, Manfred G. Heber, 1983 (German)
3. Katalog Specjalizowany Znakow Ziem Polskich, Ruch-Warsaw 1985, vol.2 (Polish)
4. Poczty Polskie w Niemieckich Obozach Jencow, Jozef Machowski, Ruch, 1963, vol.2 (Polish)
5. Katalog Znaczkow Poczty Obozowej w Dobiegniwie (Woldenberg IIC) Pionier- Krakow, 1945 (Polish)
6. Polish Post - Seven Years War, HM Smith, USA, 1945 (English)

Proofs in Violet, Olive, and Brown. Marked "proba" on reverse



The 80th anniversary of the Geneva Convention, and the formation of the International Red Cross is commemorated with the issue of a seated girl, in Polish National costume, holding in her hands, a banner reading "Convention de Geneve" and the dates 1864 and 1944, on the 28th of September 1944. For the benefit of the "Circle of Physicians" at the camp, and to honor the International Red Cross, without whose help, life in the camp would have been most unbearable.

The 100f stamp was designed and the die was carved by Janusz Lonicki, whose initials appear in the right lower corner. The stamp required two impressions, one in dark olive for the overall field, and a second in red for the cross. Number 43 was printed on smooth white paper of Swedish origin and ink manufactured in Torun. A total 13080 were printed between September 28, 1944 and January 25, 1945. It remained in circulation until postal function ceased at the camp.

Below: Final design as issued showing color variations.



Light olive

Dark olive

Invalidated die



"Unofficial" issue of ten blackprint impressions using the defaced die of no. 43. Perforations, which were not used at IIC, were also added.



Cachet for the anniversary by Lt. Lonicki. Lower example lacks second impression in red.



This special embossed souvenir sheet created for the 80th Anniversary commemoration of the founding of the Geneva Convention, bears the camp issue (no. 43) released for the occasion and bears a first day of issue cancel: 28-XI-44.