

THE EVOLUTION OF '*via Siberia*' MAIL... 1897-1945

SYNOPSIS

(March 2025)

Treatment & Philatelic Significance

This postal history exhibit, as defined on the title page, offers the viewer a chronological overview of the postal evolution of mail sent by way of the trans-Siberian rail network between 1897 until 1945 and is not an in-depth study of a dedicated railway portion or historical events. Included is only postal history having 'via Siberia' endorsed mail with various supplementary markings on mail in support of the chronological storyline.

The exhibitor knows of **NO** other similar exhibit in North America, Australia or Europe covering this subject in breath and depth as this one. There are, however, other exhibits which include small portions of the 'story' of 'via Siberia' integrated into them.

Philatelic & Related Knowledge & Personal Research

The exhibitor has conducted extensive personal research on the subject and gathered information from various published sources of directly & indirectly related historical publications.

Based on his research, the exhibitor has developed a 'storyline' reflecting the standard chronological evolution involving 'via Siberia' mail along with historical effects of wars, revolutions or hostilities affecting the route and related consequential mail, routes and markings, including the rise of airmail over or relating to the route.

Furthermore, since, by 2010, no single reference on the subject had been found by the exhibitor, he proceeded to write a three-part series of articles on the subject indicated below.

Condition & Difficulty of Acquisition

All postal history material has been the best found on the philatelic market during the last forty+ years and acquired by the exhibitor piecemeal.

Some cover examples are expertized; where certificates are involved, they are on the page reverse. 'Expertization' information will be indicated in small print below the example. However, all material is considered authentic by the exhibitor and not philatelically-inspired.

Although relatively common examples of 'via Siberia' may indeed be found in dealers' stocks, the examples shown are in most instances to be considered scarce or even rare collected over decades. Examples shown include early route trial mail, missionary & commercial mail, registered mail, value-letters, return-receipt mail, early & combination airmail, official postal service documents, parcel card, foreign-post-offices-in-China mail, military & sea-post mail, newspaper wrappers as well as mail to unusual destinations and routes.

This exhibit includes over 200+ postal history covers reflecting different rates, routes, markings from/to a wide variety of countries for the aforementioned mail classes including east & west-bound usages along with a variety of important Russian Post Office early route mail.

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Synopsis Page 2 of 2

Presentation

The exhibit uses colored text as follows:

Black: General historical, geographical & postal information
Light Blue: Chapter-Start-Page Heading & important annotative information.
Blue-matted examples indicate particular importance & scarcity.
Maroon: Postal rate information.

Thus, the viewer, or philatelic judge, can quickly survey the exhibit by following the colored text which is of most interest to him/her. Important annotative information, where indicated, is in blue text color, and could be "passed" if not of interest, for example. General historical or geographical information will be "boxed" and usually found at the top of the applicable pages.

Text (Century Gothic/Arial) font sizes are: heading/title (14), sub-heading (12) or boxed text (10), cover/postcard/document descriptive text (9 or 10) depending upon available page space layout.

Bibliography:

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Durban, William, *From Moscow to Vladivostok*, Outlook Magazine, November 4, 1899 Issue, pp 587-595.

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Schmidt/Werner, *Geschichte der deutschen Post in den Kolonien und im Ausland*, Konkordia Verlag Reichold Rudolph, Leipzig, 1939.

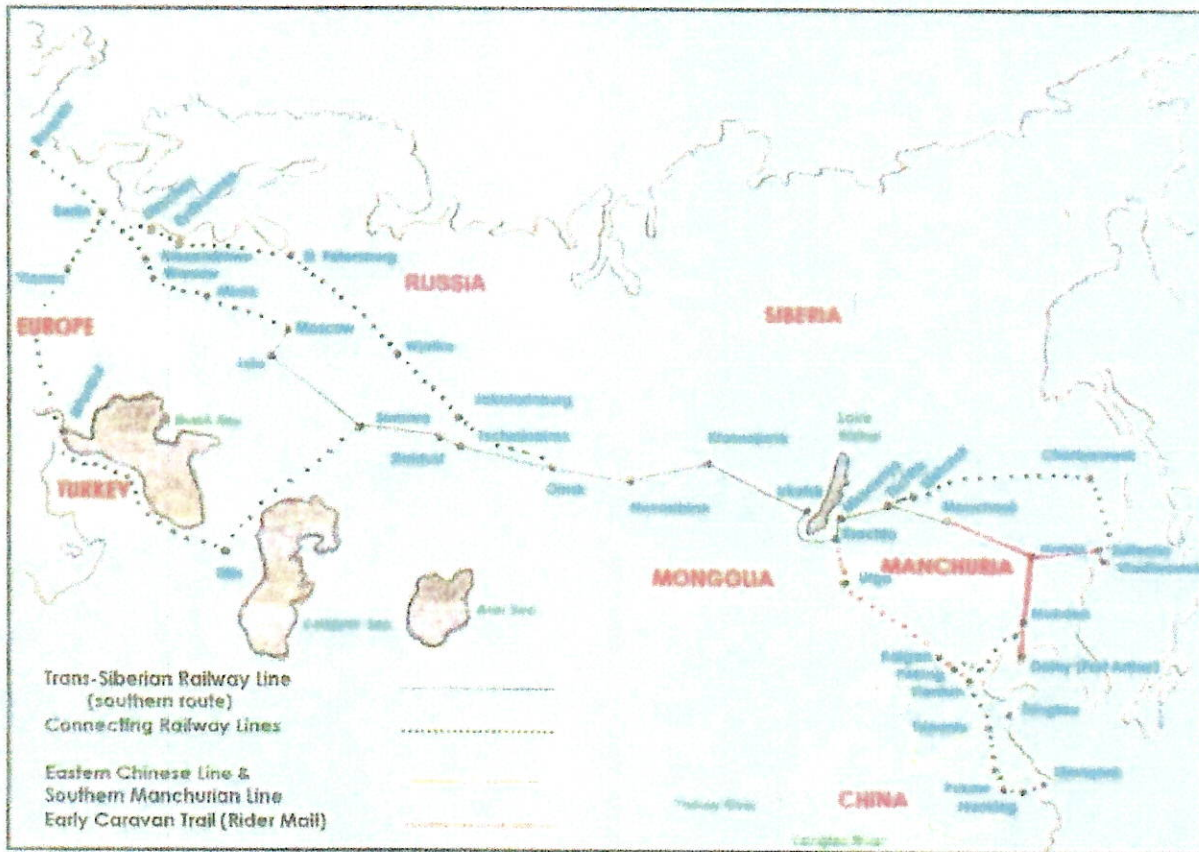
Tupper, Harmon, *To the Great Ocean .. Siberia and the Trans-Siberian Railway*, Little, Brown & Company, Boston, 1965.

Wolmar, Christian, *To The Edge of the World, The Story of the Trans-Siberian Express, the World's Greatest Railroad*, Public Affairs, Perseus Book Group, Philadelphia, ISBN 978-1-61039-452-9, 2013.

www.transsib.ru: Trans-Siberian Railway

www.wikipedia.org: Trans-Siberian Railway

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BACKGROUND

In an effort to connect Eastern & Western Russia, develop the vast territory of Siberia, improve and shorten the transmission time for mail and commerce as well as eventually connect with China, Russian Czar Alexander III authorized the building of a **'Trans-Siberian'** railway on 17 March 1891.

Construction started at both the European and Asiatic ends and was completed in several phases over the period 1891-1916, completing a track length of approx. 9,259 km (5,723 miles) spanning seven time zones!

A major benefit of the completed railway network was the possibility of moving mail from China and the Far East to Europe about twenty days faster than using standard sea routes and improved mail movement to the United States, Africa as well as Latin America.

During the period of 1897-1945, **'via Siberia'** mail routes were influenced by historic events including uprisings, revolutions, wars, epidemics and expansion of Pacific sea routes. With the rise of airmail, long-distance mail movement by train **'via Siberia'** commenced its decline, albeit such continued to be of importance well into the 1940s.

EXHIBIT PURPOSE

This postal history exhibit shows the evolution of mail endorsed or routed *'via Siberia'* from trial & early mail, through periods of war & revolution as well as expansion of mail services upon connection of the Trans-Siberian Railway network with the Southern Manchurian & Eastern Chinese Railways, thereby enabling movement of Far East, German Pacific Colony and other mail to/from Europe as well as mail to Africa, North & South America.

EXHIBIT OVERVIEW

- I. Map & Background,
Exhibit Overview
- II. 1897-1903
Trial & Early Mail
- III. 1904-1905, 1906
Russo-Japanese War & Resumption of Mail Services
- IV. 1907-1913
Expansion of Mail Services
- V. 1914-1918
World War I & Effects
- VI. 1917-1920
Russian Revolution & Civil War Period
- VII. 1921-1922, 1923-1931
Resumption & Expansion of Mail Services
- VIII. 1931-1939
Hostilities & War in Manchuria & China
- IX. 1939-1945
World War II & Effects
- X. Epilogue

TEXT COLOR-CODING

BLACK: General historical, geographical & postal rate/route/markings information.

BLUE: Chapter-Start-Page Heading & Important annotative information.

Blue-matted examples indicate particular importance & scarcity.

MAROON: Postal Rate Information