

Rialtas Sealadac na hEireann THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT OF IRELAND DECEMBER 1921 TO DECEMBER 1922

The Exhibit shows the Social and Political History of Southern Ireland during the first year of Irish Independence from Great Britain on December 6 1921 to the beginning of the Saorstát Eireann (Irish Free State) on December 6 1922. The exhibit illustrates several key events including the evolution of the Irish Government, the transfer of the Post Office from British to Irish control, the start of the Irish Civil War and the impact on mail services; and the change from English to the Gaelic Language in the Post Office as well as in the names of several Cities and Towns.

The resurgence of Irish nationalism in the early 1900s led to the introduction in August 1912 of a Home Rule Bill in The British House of Commons for all 32 Counties of Ireland. The Unionist party in 6 of the Counties of Ulster (Northern Ireland) strongly opposed a Union with the 26 counties of Southern Ireland for Religious and Political reasons. This delayed the final reading of the bill until May 1914 and its implementation was overshadowed by the World War. The Irish Easter Rebellion of April 1916 further complicated relations between Southern Ireland and Great Britain (and Northern Ireland). A bitter armed conflict started in January 1919 between the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the British police and Military which lasted until July 1921. Negotiations for Irish Independence began in the in the Summer and culminated with the signing of the **Anglo Irish Treaty on December 6 1921**. The Treaty Created the **Southern Parliament** for the 26 counties to be administered by the **Provisional Government** for one year when the **Irish Free State** would come into existence on December 6 1922. The Southern Parliament merged with **Dail Eireann** (Irish Parliament) in September 1922.

A **Northern Parliament** was to govern the 6 Counties of **Ulster** which had the option to remain part of Great Britain at the end of 1922.

The Exhibit pages are read from left to right and the Exhibit is organized as follows:

- o The March to Independence, Ulster Says No to Home Rule and "A Terrible Beauty is Born".
- o A Change from Great Britain and Ireland to the Provisional Government of Southern Ireland.
- o The Change from British to Irish Post Office Administration in the 26 Counties of Southern Ireland.
- o The Provisional Government of Ireland and the Inland (Domestic) Postage Rates during 1922.
- o The Provisional Government of Ireland and the Irish Civil War.
- o IRA Raids on Post Offices and the Censorship of Mail by both the IRA and Provisional Government.
- o The Provisional Government of Ireland and the Change from English to Gaelic.
- o Epilogue: The Provisional Government of Ireland Becomes the Irish Free State.

This is exhibit has a narrow focus on the social, political and historical events of **Southern Ireland** and is not a study of the history of Ulster during 1922 or of the stamps issued during 1922 except as related historically. **Each page shows its own time line.**

Several Scarce and Interesting Items are shown in the Exhibit with a Green Background. Important Philatelic information is shown in Green

The March to Independence



Cover from Limerick to Thomas J. Clarke in Dublin Postmarked MB 17 07 (St. Patrick's Day). Thomas Clarke was one of the leaders of the 1916 Easter Rebellion and the first name on **The Proclamation of Irish Independence**. He was executed with the other Leaders in May 1916. The cover shows the Political Label "Hibernia with Harp".

Ulster says No to Home Rule



Cover with a Northern Ireland Unionist Label postmarked 20 IV 1914. The Label says "Partners Maintain the Union". The British Government attempted an Irish Home Rule Act in May 1914. Opposition from Ulster and the World War derailed the effort.



The cover pays the 2d letter rate and shows a 1/2d stamp overprinted by **Dollard Printing House (Dublin)** and a 1 1/2d overprinted by **Alexander Thom and Co. Ltd (Dublin)**. In the absence of Irish designed stamps, the **Provisional Government** had the stamps of Great Britain overprinted **Rialtas Sealadac na hEireann** using two Dublin printing firms. Dollard lost the contract in June and Thom reprinted several values during 1922.

First Day Cover (Philatelic) of the first Irish Stamps. Postmarked BALLSBRIDGE 17 Feb 22.

"A Terrible Beauty is Born" From the Poem "Easter 1916" by WB Yeats



After the Insurrection - Interior General Post Office, Dublin.

The Postcard shows the Destruction of the General Post Office after the Rebellion. Postcard from Dublin to Co. Cork postmarked 12 May 1916 by one of the emergency cards used after the destruction of the GPO during the Easter Rebellion. The Execution of the Rebellion leaders by the British Military inspired a Great Passion for Independence in Ireland in the following years.

The Provisional Government of Ireland December 1921 to December 1922

Robert Benninghoff

This exhibit shows the Social and Political History of Southern Ireland during the first year of Independence from Great Britain. Several multi frame exhibits have explored the Transition from British to Irish Governments from 1917 to 1925. This exhibit has a narrow focus and explores the social and political history of the first 12 months of Irish Independence from December 6 1921 when the Treaty of Independence was signed between Ireland and Great Britain, to December 6 1922 when the Southern 26 counties of Ireland became the Irish Free State. This exhibit is not a study of the stamps issued during 1922 except as they relate to historical events or the movement of mail during this period This exhibit is not a history of the 6 counties of Ulster.

Importance: Had the Provisional Government failed, the British would have been forced to use the Army to restore order, causing a blood bath in Ireland and disastrous consequences for a war-ravaged Europe and relations with the USA.

The exhibit is laid out on 8 double side pages with each page having its own time line

I lived in Ireland during the 1960s and very little was taught in Irish schools about the Provisional Government of Ireland or the Irish Civil War. It was not until the 1990s that detailed histories of 1922 were published and even today people in their 90s have very bitter memories from the period known as "The Troubles". This exhibit is based upon my extensive research of the period using several historical sources some of which are listed at the end of this synopsis. This exhibit is also based upon interviews with people in their 80s and 90s whose parents and grandparents participated in several of the historical events shown in this exhibit. Most Notably is the Philatelic Scholar Pdraig O' Maithuna living in Dun Quin, Dingle who has reviewed this exhibit for historical accuracy.

The terms of the Treaty partitioned Ireland into the 6 counties of Northern Ireland under the Northern Parliament and the 26 counties of Southern Ireland under the Southern Parliament. The 26 counties were to be Governed by the Provisional Government of Ireland for 12 months. While the Treaty established the Southern Parliament, the Irish recognized their own Parliament known as *Dail Eireann*. Therefore, Ireland had three *Governing Bodies* until September when the Southern Parliament and the *Dail* were merged.

The Treaty also granted Great Britain three naval Bases in Southern Ireland as well as the responsibility for Coastal defense. The Two Parliaments were to decide if they wanted a United Ireland or to allow Northern Ireland to remain part of the United Kingdom. History shows that Ireland remained partitioned. The Treaty was ratified by the British Government on December 16 1921, by the Dail on January 7, 1922 and the Southern Parliament on January 14, 1922. Michael Collins was elected Chairman of the new Government. The competing governments in Southern Ireland lead to the Irish Civil War between the Pro Treaty (Nationalist) lead by Michael Collins and the United Ireland Irish Republican Army (IRA), led by Eamon de Valera. The war lasted from June 1922 until May 1923 and Michael Collins was assassinated in August 1922. The Provisional Government began executing captured IRA members beginning in November 1922 which continued until May 1923. Eamon de Valera was jailed for a time by The Irish Government in 1923 and he did not regain political power until 1932 when he became President of the Executive Council of the Irish Free State. The social and political impacts of the Irish Civil War lasted well into the 1970s

The Exhibit begins with several covers before Independence which show the Political divides that were felt in Ireland from 1900 to 1921 between Northern and Southern Ireland. The first cover is addressed to Thomas J Clark, in 1907 with an Irish Political label tied to the cover with a Limerick postmark. Tomas J Clark was the first name to appear on the 1916 *Irish Proclamation of Independence* and he was executed with the other rebellion leaders in May 1916. The page ends with a postcard showing the destruction of the General Post Office of in Dublin during the 1916 Easter Rebellion

The second page shows the transition from British to Irish Government control in Southern Ireland beginning with a rare British Military cover Post Marked December 6 1921, the Date that the Treaty was signed. The first Independent Irish General Election was held on June 16 1922 for the Southern Parliament and election mail was sent free of Postage. This page shows a rare election cover postmarked June 14 1922.

The Third page shows the Inland (Domestic) Postage Rates established during 1922 by the Provisional Government including a commercially used First Day cancel of the Thom 1 1/2d stamp paying the postcard rate. A commercial cover with a 2d stamp with overprint inverted, used in Dublin during November 1922 demonstrates the 2d letter rate

The Fourth Page shows the Transition from British to Irish Post Office Administration. The Irish Government did not take control of the Post Office administration until April 1 1922 (The fiscal year ended for the British Post Office on March 31 and they wanted to keep control for better record keeping). British stamps were valid for use in Ireland until March 31, 1922 and Irish over printed stamps were valid in Great Britain until March 31 1922. The exhibit shows a cover with British stamps used in Ireland on Feb 18, 1922, the second day of the Transition Period of British to Irish Stamps. The exhibit also shows a rare cover with an Irish Stamp used in London in March 1922. New overprinted stamps were issued on April 1, 1922 and a **First Day cover** is shown. The exhibit also shows a **rare First Day cover** of stamps overprinted for use by *coil dispensing machines*. The coil stamps were overprinted and manufactured by Harrison and Sons Ltd in London because no Irish company had the experience. However, the first overprinted coils were not issued until June 19, 1922 over two and a half months after British coils stamps were invalidated for postage on March 31 1922

The fifth and sixth pages show the The Provisional Government of Ireland and the Irish Civil War. The exhibit shows several covers and postcards including IRA Censored Mail and Mail Censored by the National Army, Southern Command; **a postcard from a Tourist visiting Ireland in August 1922 writing that he saw Michael Collins Lying In State on the day of Collins Funeral** and a cover salvaged from the Rotunda Post Office Fire in Dublin started by the IRA on November 5 1922. Many of these covers are rare or unique.

The Seventh Page shows the Provisional Government Post office and the Change from English to Gaelic. To promote Irish Culture and Language, The Post Office began changing the Postmarks used on Mail from the English names in the cities and towns to their Gaelic names. For example, Dublin was changed to Baile Atha Claithe. Several examples are shown illustrating town and city name changes to Gaelic. The two high values of 5 shillings and 10 shillings were overprinted on British Seahorse stamps and were principally used to pay customs or telegraph fees. **The exhibit shows an example of these values postally used on an official Post Office Envelope printed in Gaelic.** The exhibit concludes in December 1922, with several covers from the Irish Free State **including first day usages of the first Irish definitive stamp (2d) issued on December 6 1922 to commemorate the new Irish Free State Government.**

References: These are now available from the American Philatelic Research Library (since November 2015)

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