

Gems of Polish Philately

Second Lublin Issue Multiples on Cover

Dr. James Mazepa, RDP

When Poland became independent on November 11, 1918, the two largest postal administrations were Lublin and Warszawa. Immediately after independence, both continued to use the stamps and postal devices of the former occupiers. In the Lublin Administration three Austrian field post stamps were overprinted into Polish stamps on December 5, 1918 (Sc.# 27-29, F#17-19). These stamps corresponded to the then postal rates of 10 heller for post cards; 25 heller for letters, and 45 heller for letters plus registration. These are called the First Lublin issue.

A problem arose because different currencies were used in Lublin, kronen and heller, and in Warszawa, German marks and fenigs. At this time 1 mark equaled 1.75 kronen. In an attempt to equalize the postal rates, on December 16, 1918, the Lublin Administration temporarily increased the postal rates until January 7, 1919. The revised rates were 25 heller for a post card, 45 heller for a letter and 45 additional heller for registration. To meet the new rates, ten Austrian field post stamps were overprinted into Polish stamps with different values. These are called the Second Lublin issue (Sc.#30-40, F.#20-29).

During this transition period, many businesses, especially banks, had remainder stamps from the former occupier, namely, stamps of Austria and Bosnia-Herzegovina. These, along with the First and Second Lublin issues, were used simultaneously well into 1919 until stocks were exhausted. It is usual to find combinations of these four issues, and even combinations with the first government issue of January 27, 1919.

The most difficult to find are letters franked with only the Second Lublin issue. Any franking larger than two single stamps or a pair is exceptional.

The largest franking seen (Figure 1) shows 340 heller, the money letter fee for sending

800 marks from Szydłowiec to Sosnowiec on January 21, 1919. Note, on January 19, 1919, the two currencies were set on par. On the back are seven 45 heller stamps and a 25 heller (Puchala collection).



Figure 1. Largest multiple franking, Szydłowiec money letter, January 21, 1919.



Figure 2. (Left & above) Money letter, Chęciny to Kraków, December 29, 1918.

Figure 2 is a money letter for 33 kronen sent December 29, 1918, from Chęciny to Kraków during the temporary higher rate period. The minimum fee for a money letter was 1.75 kronen. The four 45 heller stamps overpaid the rate by five heller. This is probably due to the lack of lower value stamps. Letters slightly over or under paid are not unusual.

Figure 3 is a letter sent at the now uniform reduced post- January 7 rate of 25 heller for a letter less than 25 grams. This letter was sent January 25, 1919, from Skarzysko to a bank in Radom. The letter is franked with a strip of three of the 10 heller, five heller over franked, from positions 1-3 of the sheet. Note the ink smear residue from the overprinting plate at the bottom of position 1 and which extends along the left side of the sheet.

Scans of other multiples of the Second Lublin issue would be welcomed.

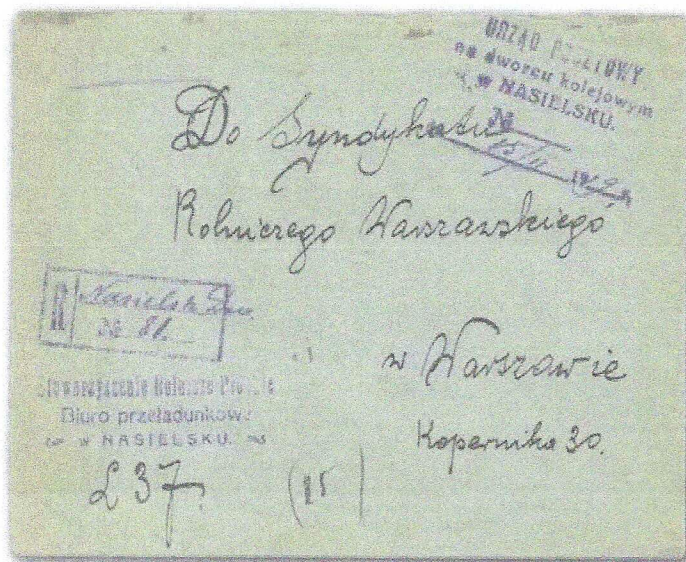


Figure 3. (Right) Skarzysko to Radom, January 25, 1919.

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First Warsaw Issue of 1918: New Discoveries

Dr. James Mazepa, RDP



Figures 1 & 2. Front and back of a cover postmarked with the rare Railroad Station in Nasielsk cancellation.

Several important First Warsaw Issue covers have recently appeared on the auction block.

Nasielsk Railroad Station Postmark

Nasielsk is located about 50 kilometers north of Warsaw on the Warsaw-Gdansk railroad line. As noted at the bottom



Figure 3. Registered value letter that was supposed to have been sent free of postal fees as Official Business. Figure 4 shows the reverse.

left of the letter, Nasielsk has a branch office of a business located in Płock. On February 15, 1919, a registered letter was sent from this branch office to the Agricultural Office in Warsaw (Figure 1).

The correct 50 fenig fee (25 letter fee and 25 fenig for registration) is paid with a block and single of the 10 fenig First Warsaw issue (Figure 2). The stamps are canceled "URZĄD POCZTOWY/na dworcu kolejowym/w NASIELSKU" ("Post Office at the Railroad Station in Nasielsk") with a line for the date, "15/II 1919".

Only one other example of this postmark has been seen, and then only on a piece. The letter arrived in Warsaw the next day.

Radzyń Registered Letter, Provisional Cancellation, Confusion of Rates

At this time in Poland money could be sent by the post in three ways. First, by registered mail. This was the least common method. Second, by postal money order, called a skart. Money would be deposited at the originating post office, and redeemed by the recipient at the destination post office. Third, by a "Value Letter" (Wartość). For a one-mark



Figure 4 (reverse of Figure 3). The postman ignored the free of postal charges notation and mistakenly assessed a fee of 2.05 marks

fee, funds up to 100 marks could be sent. Additional fees applied for higher amounts. Some special rules had to be followed: the weight of the letter had to be noted on the letter along with a letter number.

To understand this letter, note that on December 29, 1918, the Post Office issued a directive that official mail could be sent free of postal charges.

This letter with 574.45 marks enclosed was sent by the tax inspector in Radzyń to Noworadomsk. The sender intended to send this as a registered letter and applied the above-mentioned directive, "SPRAWA URZĘDOWA/ wolna od opłata pocztowej (Official Business, Free of Postal Fees)" as seen at the upper right (Figure 3). The stamps are cancelled with the provisional boxed postal cancellation "POCZTA POLSKA" and provisional boxed registration "RADZYŃ/No. ___".

In calculating the rate for this letter, the postman created some confusion. The letter should have been sent free of charge, as noted at the upper right, but the postman ignored this directive and treated the letter as an ordinary letter. As such, he charged a 25 fenig letter rate plus 20 fenig for the first 100 marks plus 20 fenig for each of the next 100 marks. Then he charged an additional 55 fenig for the weight of the letter as if this were a value (Wartość) letter. Value letters had to have the weight noted on the letter, which this one did not, but an additional fee was added anyway. Registered letters are not required to have the weight noted on the letter. All these mis-calculations added up to the 2.05 marks postage, as paid on the letter (Figure 4).

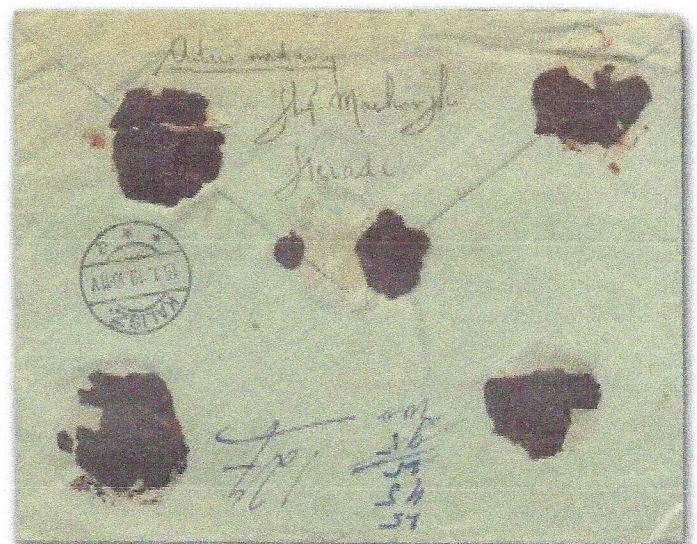
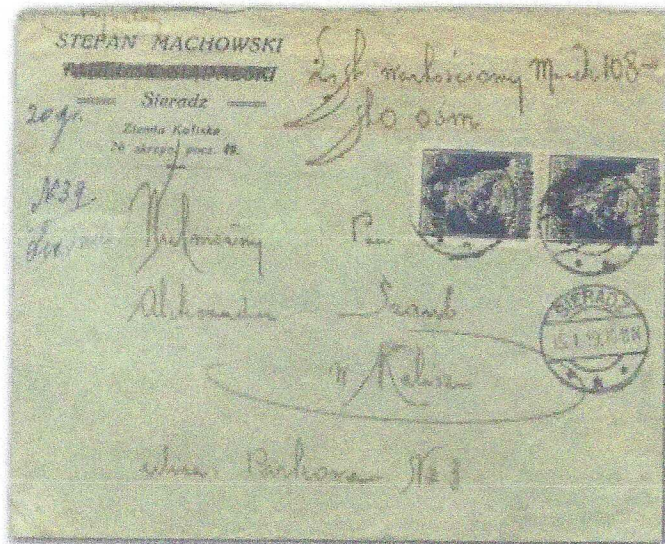
The letter was received in Noworadomsk April 12, 1919.

50 Fenig Value Letter

The 50 fenig value of the First Warsaw Issue is the most difficult value to find on a letter. Perhaps only 20-25 50 fenig letters still exist. And of these, the most difficult to find is the 50 fenig stamp on a value (Wartość) letter. This is only the third 50 fenig value letter recorded paid with two 50 fenig stamps (Figure 5).

The basic postal rate for a value letter was one mark, the weight had to be noted on the letter and the amount enclosed noted. Here the one-mark fee is paid by two 50 fenig stamps. The amount enclosed is 108 marks, the weight is 20 grams, and this is value letter #39 from Sieradz. The letter was sent January 15, 1919, to Kalisz. The back of the letter is sealed with the required wax seals (Figure 6).

It has been over 100 years since this issue appeared and new examples still find their way on the market.



Figures 5 & 6. A value letter from Sieradz to Kalisz on January 15, 1919, franked with two 50 fenig stamps from the First Warsaw Issue. This is only the third known 50 fenig value letters so franked.

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Introduction of Postmarks in Poland and the First Postmarks of Warsaw: 1778 – 1793

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Figure 1. Type 1 postmark, recorded 1778-1787.

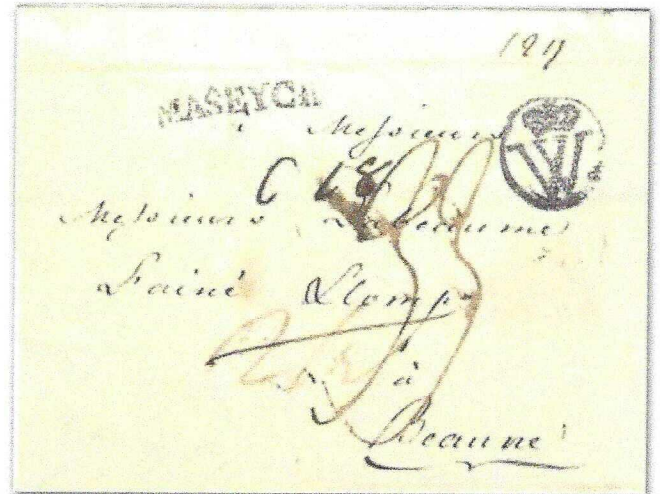


Figure 2. Type 2 postmark, recorded 1783-1787.

Historians consider the beginnings of the “modern” postal system in Poland with the accession to the throne of King Stanisław August in 1764. A rudimentary postal system had existed in Poland for many years, but Stanisław August introduced a number of innovations and a fundamental restructuring of the postal system based on what he observed in the postal systems in England and France. He codified these changes with the publication in 1764 of “Instrukcje dla Ichmość Panów Pocztmistrzów” (“Instructions for Their Majesties Postmasters”).

The “Instructions” were the first to require official postmarks on mail. At first, these marks were wax seals which were impressed with the name of the post office and applied on the back of the letter. These wax seals proved to be somewhat impractical because they would break apart in transit. Eventually, they were replaced with inked postmarks in a style similar to the wax seal.

The oldest recorded inked postmark is in red from Zamość. Two examples are known from 1768 and 1772. Twenty-three different ink postmarks have been recorded in Poland between 1768 and 1795. These postmarks ended with the Third Partition of Poland in 1795. [1]

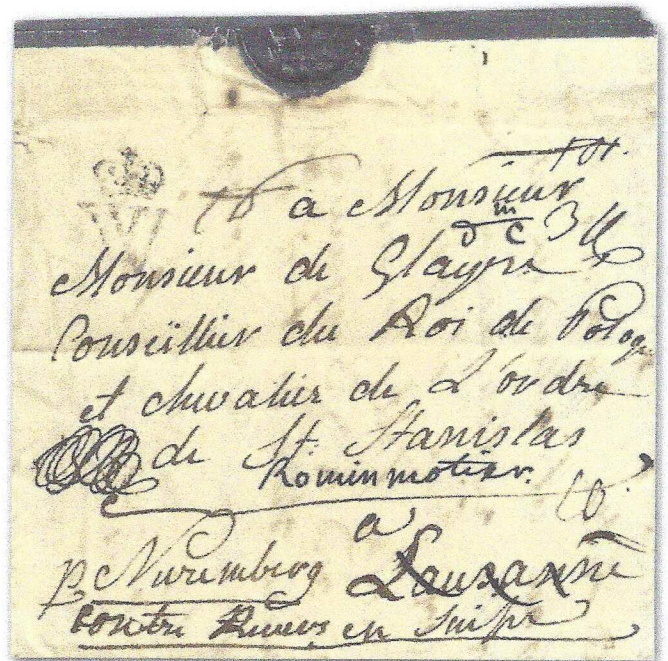


Figure 3. Type 3 postmark recorded used between 1787-1795, on mourning lettersheet.

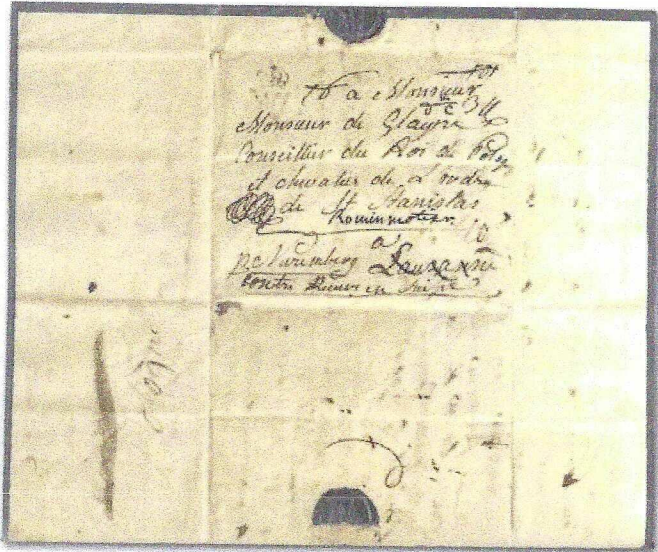


Figure 4. Type 3 postmark (Figure 3 lettersheet unfolded to reveal black "mourning" border.

Three ink postmarks were used in the city of Warsaw. This was the only city that had three postmarks which suggests a larger volume of mail transited the capital city. Each of these consist of a large "W" surmounted by the royal

crown. Type 1 (Figure 1) is in a 17mm circle and is recorded between 1778 and 1787. Type 2 (Figure 2) is in a 19mm circle and recorded used between 1783 and 1787. Type 3 (Figure 3) maintains the "W" and crown but without the circle. It was recorded used between 1787 to 1795.

These postmarks are available on the philatelic market from time to time, but many examples are poorly struck, especially Type 3. An archive with Type 3 had been discovered but all in poor condition because of inadequate storage.

The Type 3 letter here is especially interesting. Black-bordered envelopes and letter-sheets called "mourning letters" were used to announce the death of an individual. This practice continued into the twentieth century. The letter-sheet here is an example of one of the earliest known "mourning" covers (letter-sheets) and is opened 50% to show the black border (Figure 4).

Endnote:

1. For a more complete study of this pre-stamp period, see *Postal Markings in Poland During the 18th Century (1762-1800)* by Stanisław Mikstejn, 152 pages, in English, available from the Polonus Store.



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Alexota Border Post Office 1823

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In the early 19th century the Neman (Niemán) river was the boundary between Imperial Russia and the Napoleonic Duchy of Warsaw which Napoleon created in 1807. In June and July of 1812 Napoleon's Grande Armée crossed the Neman river and started the Russian Campaign. The Russian Campaign ended in a disaster for the Grande Armée and forced Napoleon back to France. The Battle of Waterloo in June 1815 ended with the defeat of the French army and the end of Napoleon's reign. The ensuing Council of Vienna in 1815 divided the Duchy of Warsaw between Prussia, Austria and Russia. Kraków was established as a Free City. The area annexed by Russia became a Russian province and called the Congress Kingdom of Poland. The Neman river became the northern boundary between the Kingdom of Poland and Imperial Russia.

On the right bank of the Neman was the town of Kowno (Lithuanian Kaunas) in Russian occupied Lithuania. On the left bank in the Kingdom of Poland was the small town of Alexota (Figure 1). Mieczysław Czernik in his book (op.cit., p.585) describes Alexota as a border post office operating between 1819 and 1824. Beginning in 1816 up to 1819 the nearby town of Preny operated as the border post office. The change to Alexota was made when the Russian post office changed the postal route from St. Petersburg to Warsaw to transit via Kowno rather than Wilno and Białystok. At Kowno the mail crossed the border to Alexota to join the postal road via Maryampol and onward to Warsaw. Czernik notes that in 1824 some abuses related to the proximity to the border occurred in Alexota and the border post office was moved further inland to Wejwery.

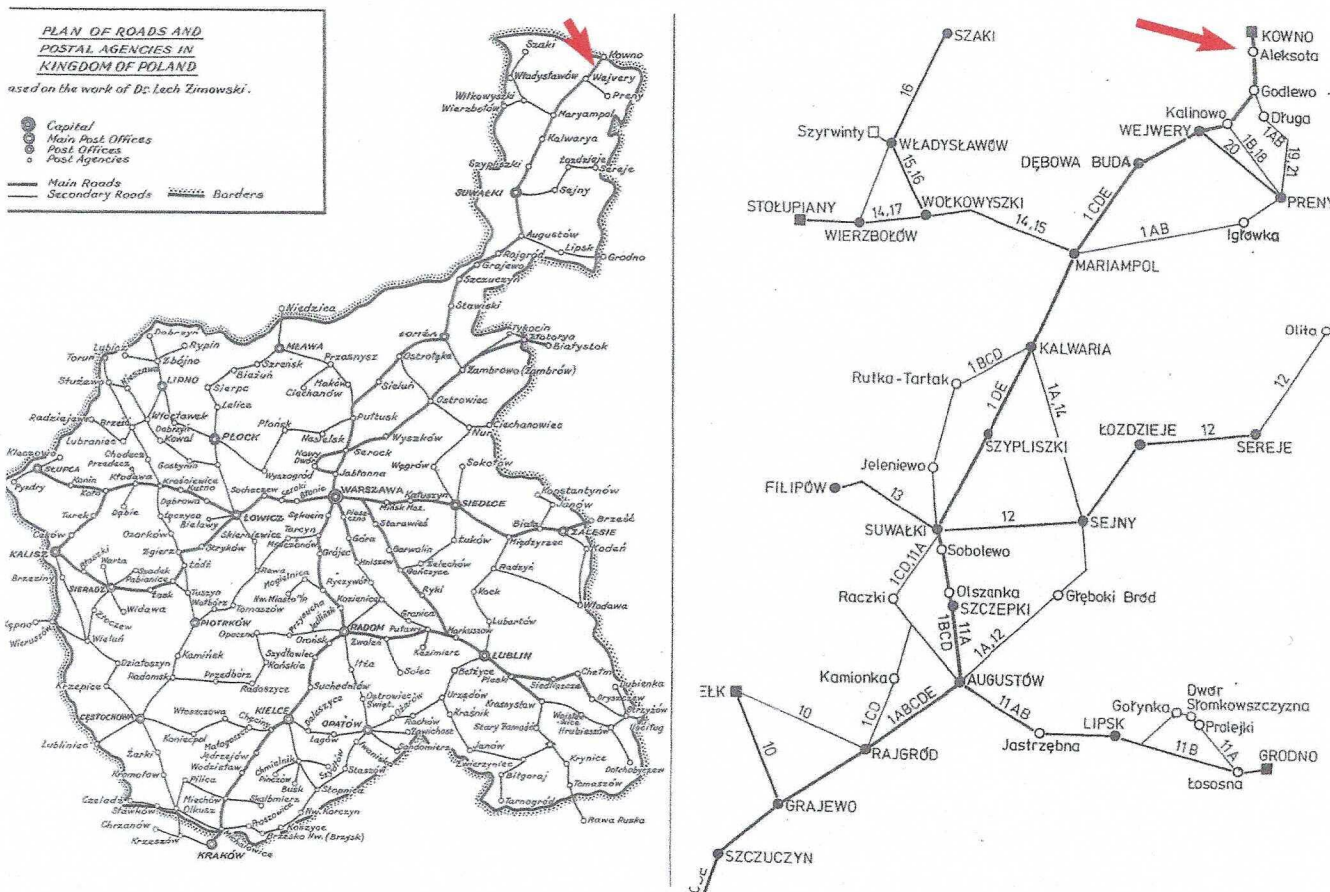


Figure 1. Map of Kingdom of Poland (left) and postal routes in the northeast portion of the kingdom (right). The town of Alexota is shown on both maps by the red arrow. The location on the map at left is approximate. (Map on the left, Bojanowicz, The Kingdom of Poland; map on the right, Czernik, op.cit, book enclosure)

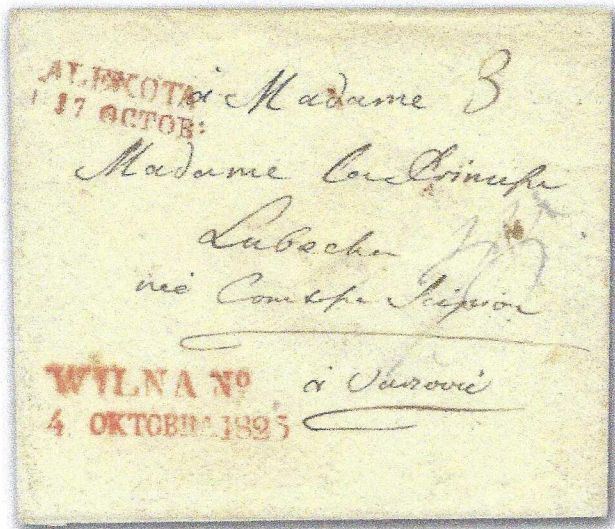


Figure 2 & 3. (Left) 1823 envelope from Wilno (Imperial Russia) with a receiving mark at the post office in Alexota. (Right) Northbound cover from Warsaw to Wilno received a postmark at Alexota. These are the only two uses of the Alexota postmark known to the author.

Only one post mark is known from Alexota, Ruch Type 1. This type is the first postmark used in the Kingdom of Poland and is characterized by having a Latin date beneath the town name. The Alexota postmark was in use for only a very short time. I have seen only two such postmarks although others may exist.

Figure 2 is an envelope sent from Wilno, at this time in Imperial Russia, on October 4, 1823. It crossed the Neman at Kowno where it was received at Alexota with the red postmark "ALEXOTA 17 OCTOB:" was applied. The number "3" indicates this is the third letter of this correspondence, and the blue "45" (groszy) is the fee for a letter according to the postal tariff of 1818 for a single weight letter within the Kingdom of Poland. No postage is noted from Wilno to Kowno.

A second letter (Figure 3, Kostka collection) traveled north from Warsaw, postmarked "WARSZAWA 27 JULII", to Wilno. It crossed the border at Alexota where it received the postmark "ALEXOTA 30 JULII". Again, the letter received "45" (groszy) fee, this time in red.

The use of a blue and red fee designation may indicate prepaid or collect. This is for further investigation.

The Alexota post office closed in 1824.

Kindly advise the author if you have other examples, jmazepa@comcast.net

End Notes

- Czernik, Mieczysław, *Pocztą Królestwa Polskiego W Latach 1815-1851*, Museum Poczty i Telekomunikacji, Wrocław 1987.
 Bojanowicz, M.A., *The Kingdom of Poland*, 1979, P.105



A current-day view of Alexotas (once Alexota) situated on the banks of the Neman (Nemunas) River. Alexotas is considered a suburb of Kaunas, the second largest city in Lithuania.