

# POLAR BEARS OF GREENLAND

## Parcels and Savings Stamps



Greenland is easily the world's **largest island** (over 2 million sq.km), and one of our **least populated** nations (fewer than 60,000). Communications between its scattered communities were infrequent and difficult until steel-hulled freighters and helicopters finally helped overcome environmental challenges.

### Introducing the Exhibit

Postal services were first introduced in 1938. Prior to that, a **parcel service** operated, as weather and opportunity permitted, helping to supply scattered communities with such necessities as medicine, small manufactured goods, and an occasional trinket.

Payment for transport of parcels was managed with special **Pakke-Post** stamps, depicting Greenland's national emblem, the **Polar Bear**. Widely admired, these classic parcel stamps are fondly termed **Greenland's Polar Bears**.

The various denominations and printings of the Polar Bears, and the cancellations from different offices, are the main subject of this one-frame exhibit. Examples on part or entire parcel card are prized. Beside parcel post, the Polar Bears were coopted for another role. Absent a formal banking system, in the mid-1920s a special **savings scheme** was introduced to assist outlying communities. Savings booklets could be gradually filled with Polar Bears, and later redeemed at face value. In 1938, postage stamps superseded Pakke-Post stamps, so new style savings stamps were introduced: examples of each denomination are shown. Honouring the Pakke-Post, in 1983-85 Greenland issued special Polar Bears sheetlets, printed from the original plates.



5 øre  
Oval cancel  
*Styrelsen af  
Kolonierne i Grønland*  
T2: Thiele II [P6]



20 øre on savings book piece  
Red oval cancel (uncommon)  
*Udstedet Sangdessaok (?)*  
S: Schultz [P14]



70 øre  
Steel datestamp  
*GRØNLANDS  
STYRELSE  
9 Oct 1936*  
T2: Thiele II [P10]



# PARCEL POST ♦ Greenland 1905–37

♦ Intended use of Greenland's Polar Bear Pakke-Post stamps: payment of parcel post on parcel address card.

## Adressekort til Grønland

*Address Card (Parcel Card) for Greenland*

Following European practice, Danish and Greenlandic parcels were assigned a recorded number, and accompanied by a Parcel Card (more accurately known in Danish as an **adressekort** — *address card*).

The address card bore the parcel number, the address of the recipient, the weight and number of parcels in the consignment, and the Pakke-Post Polar Bear stamps paying for the carriage of the parcel. The sender's name and address were noted on the back of the card. The card went first to the recipient, who presented it to collect the parcel.

During 1905–37, **Kongelige Grønlandske Handel** — the *Royal Greenland Trading Department*, issued the Pakke-Post stamps and address cards, and provided the carriage service. Its state monopoly was abolished in 1950. After Greenland gained home rule in 1979, the company was subsumed under home rule in 1986.

1207

PAKKE-PORTO  
GRØNLANDS  
STYRELSE  
1 KRONER

PAKKE-PORTO  
70 ØRE 70

PAKKE-PORTO  
20 ØRE 20

Angiven Værdi:

Herved

1 Pakke.

mærket Adressen.

(Vægtnotering)

Form. A 4 ii

Adressekort til Grønland.

Til *Fru Carstenlund O. N. B. Hansen*

*Godhavn*

550

## Adressekort til Grønland

Imprint: Form. A 4 h. Back: ►

Franked Kr 1.90 for 5kg parcel to Godhavn.

Stamps from Thiele II printing (1915–33):

Kr 1 [P11], 70ø [P10], 20ø [P9].

3x crowned oval GRØNLANDS STYRELSE.

Afsender:

*E. Wanning Raskstrøgen 13 København*



## PARCEL POST ♦ Greenland, 1905–37

♦ Greenland's first and only stamps for 32 years were its parcel stamps

### Parcel stamps — the “Polar Bears”

*Pakke-Porto*

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, **Greenland** was a Danish colony. Its tiny population was spread around the rugged coast of this huge, isolated island. Greenland did not issue postage stamps until Dec 1938, but issued **parcel post** (*pakke-porto*) stamps from July 1905 onwards. These served the primary role of paying postage on parcels between Copenhagen and ports in Greenland.

Highly prized by philatelists, and known affectionately as “**Polar Bears**”, their elegant design is based on Greenland's coat of arms (a white polar bear rampant on a blue field). Several printings complicate the study of these stamps: organizing by face value clarifies their study.

**1 øre**  
olive-green



T2 [Facit P4], perf 11½  
Expertised



#### Printers

T1 — Thiele I, 1905  
T2 — Thiele II, 1915–33  
S — Schultz, 1937  
AL — Andreasen & Lachmann, 1937



Copenhagen cancel, 1912–25  
Crowned oval, *Styrelsen af Kolonierne i Grønland*  
(Board of Settlements in Greenland), three lines



Copenhagen cancel, 1925–38  
Crowned oval, *Grønlands Styrelsen* (Board of Greenland Settlements), two lines

**2 øre**  
yellow

T2 [Facit P5], perf 11½



Of the world's 242 countries, Greenland's 57,000 current population is the sparsest (one person per 38 sq.km.)

Copenhagen cancel, 1912–25  
Crowned oval, *Styrelsen af Kolonierne i Grønland*  
(Board of Settlements in Greenland), three lines

## PARCEL POST ♦ Greenland, 1905–37

♦ Greenland's "Polar Bears" parcel stamps: the three other values below 20 øre

### Parcel stamps — the "Polar Bears"

*Pakke-Porto*

Several printings complicate the study of these stamps: organizing by face value clarifies their study. The third, fourth and fifth values.

**5 øre**  
red-brown

T2 [Facit P6], perf 11½



Copenhagen cancel, 1925–38  
Crowned oval, *Grønlands Styrelse* (Board of Greenland Settlements), two lines

**10 øre**  
blue

T2 [Facit P7], perf 11½



#### Printers

T1 — Thiele I, 1905  
T2 — Thiele II, 1915–33  
S — Schultz, 1937  
AL — Andreassen & Lachmann, 1937



Copenhagen cancel, 1925–38  
Crowned oval, two line  
*Grønlands Styrelse*



Copenhagen cancel, 1925–38  
Crowned single line, purple  
*Grønlands Styrelse*



Copenhagen cancel, 1925–38  
*Grønlands Styrelse*, cds  
31 May 1938

**15 øre**  
violet

T2 [Facit P8], perf 11½



Red-violet



Copenhagen cancel, 1925–38  
Crowned oval, two line  
*Grønlands Styrelse*

#### Cancellations

Those originating in Greenland are very scarce and of higher value



## PARCEL POST ♦ Greenland, 1905–37

### Parcel stamps — the “Polar Bears”

*Pakke-Porto*

Several printings complicate the study of these stamps: organizing by face value clarifies their study. The seventh, eighth and ninth values.

♦ Greenland's “Polar Bears” parcel stamps: the three high values, above 20 øre

**70 øre**  
violet

S [Facit P15]  
perf 10% ►



AL [Facit P17]  
perf 10% ▼

Red-violet

Part cds, Grønlands Postkontor,  
København K



**1 krone**  
ochre-yellow

T2 [Facit P11]  
perf 11½ ▼  
AL [Facit P18]  
perf 10% ▽



Copenhagen cancel  
Crowned oval (part)

Copenhagen cancel, 1925–38  
Crowned oval,  
Grønlands Styrelse

**3 kroner**  
brown

T2 [Facit P8], perf 11½ ▼



Two-line *Handelstedet Kutdlingsat*  
[Greenland W coast, 70° 05' N]



Part cds, Grønlands  
Postkontor,



Copenhagen cancel, 1925–38  
Crowned oval, two line  
Grønlands Styrelse

### Printers

T1 — Thiele I, 1905 ; T2 — Thiele II, 1915–33  
S — Schultz, 1937; AL — Andreasen &  
Lachmann, 1937



## PARCEL POST ♦ Greenland, 1905–37

♦ Greenland's "Polar Bears" parcel stamps:  
the 20 øre was most  
widely used

### Parcel stamps — the "Polar Bears"

*Pakke-Porto*

Several printings complicate the study of these stamps: organizing by face value clarifies their study. The 20 øre was the most used value, and was produced in greatest numbers (345,000).

20 øre  
red

T2 [Facit P9], perf 11½



Brighter shade of red



Copenhagen cancel, 1925–38  
Crowned single line, purple  
*Grønlands Styrelse*



Copenhagen cancel, 1925–38  
Crowned oval, two line  
*Grønlands Styrelse*



Oval, two line  
*Kolonien Godthaab*



## PARCEL POST ♦ Greenland, 1905–37

### Parcel stamps — the “Polar Bears”

*Pakke-Porto*

Further usage and cancellation examples

♦ Greenland’s “Polar Bears” parcel stamps: examples of usage, and small settlement cancels

Imperf at base  
(edge of sheet)  
— a collectable  
variety ►



Copenhagen crowned three line cancel (1912–25), *Styrelsen af Kolonierne i Grønland*, on perf 11½ 2 øre [T2 Facit P5]



Parcel card piece: Two Copenhagen crowned oval cancels (1925–38), *Grønlands Styrelse*, on perf 11½ 70 øre and 1 krone [T2 Facit P10, P11]

20 øre perf 11½ [T2 Facit P9] examples with cancels from settlements in Qaasiutsup (NW Greenland).

(2010 population sizes shown in brackets)



*Udstedet Igdlorsuit*  
[Illorsuit (91)]



Crowned oval, two line *Kolonien Christianshaab*  
[Qasigiannnguit (1253)]



*Udstedet Niakornat*  
[Niaqornat (58)]



*Udstedet Nugatsiak*  
[Nuugaatsiaq (84)]



*Udstedet Satut*  
[Saattut (212)]



## PARCEL POST ♦ Greenland, 1905–37

♦ Greenland's "Polar Bears" parcel stamps:  
Greenland cancels on  
the 20 øre

### Parcel stamps — the "Polar Bears" *Pakke-Porto*

20 øre

T2 [Facit P9], perf 11½

The 20 øre was the most used value, and was  
produced in greatest numbers (345,000).

Udstedet  
Prøven  
[Kangersuatsiaq]



Udstedet  
Kaerssut  
[Qaarsut]



Anlæget Prøven  
[Kangersuatsiaq]



Kolonien Umanak  
[Omenak = Ummannaq]



Kolonien Jacobshavn  
[Ilulissat]

### Avane (Northern Greenland) cancels – used on stamps in savings books in 38 settlements



7. Akungnak



9. Akugdit



13. Rodebay



24. Niakornat



30. Igdiorsuit



31. Nugatsiak



33. Prøven  
(x2) on savings book cutout



5. Egedesminde  
on 1 kr [P11]



## PARCEL POST ♦ Greenland, 1927

### Parcel stamps — the "Polar Bears" Usage as Savings Stamps

♦ Greenland's "Polar Bears" parcel stamps played an important role as savings stamps in small settlements

### Savings Stamp Books

Parcel stamps (almost always 20 øre stamps) could be accumulated in a special savings book (*Maerkinik nipitsuiivfigssat* = *Sparemærkebog*), a frugal practice common in small communities in northern Greenland (*Avane*). The saver signed and dated the declaration at the top of the cover when cashing in the book at the authorised office. The officer counted and recorded the total value of stamps in the book, cancelled the stamps with the office number handstamp, wrote the receipt at the foot of the cover, and paid the cash to the saver, who signed the receipt. The redeemed books were retained by the officer and submitted annually to document the accounting records of the office.

No. 10

**Maerkinik nipitsuiivfigssat**  
(Sparemærkebog)

Uvanga Jeg *Hans Hendriksen*

nipitsuiivfignik ukuninga pigingnigtunga matumuna  
som ejer denne Bog meddeler herved at jeg ønsker at hæve hele  
nalunaerpunga imai tamaisa tigujumavdlugit  
Beløbet til

22<sup>de</sup> December 1927

**pisiniartitsissumut**  
Til Handelsbestyreren.

pisiniartitsissup aningaussat nipitsuiivfignitut  
tuniutisagangamigit tauva kiserkartsavai aningaussa-  
nut kanok amerdlatigissunut Mærkit nipitsornekar-  
simassut, magpersigarssuaminutdlo agdlasaok inup tau-  
ssuma aningaussat tauko nautsorssugkat tigugai, taimai-  
lererunilo tauva Mærkit (nipitsimassut) tamardluinaisa  
kaisigut nakigtasavai pisiniarfekarfiup nakitsissanik nor-  
mulersumik. pisiniartitsissup nipitsuiivfit torkordluá-  
savai nautsorssuinigssane utarkivdlugo, taimanikutdlo  
nipitsuiivfit nautsorssutiminut ilangutdlugit nagsiú-  
kumárpai.

Naar en Handelsbestyrer skal udbetale Penge for en Bog,  
tæller han selv op, for hvormange Penge, der er Mærker i den, og  
skriver i sin Hovedbog, at det Menneske har faaet udbetalt det ud-  
regnede Beløb, hvorefter han overstempler alle Mærkerne med  
Handelsstedets almindelige Nummerstempel. Handelsbestyreren gem-  
mer Bogen omhyggeligt indtil Regnskabsaarets Slutning og ind-  
sender da Bogen som Bilag til Handelsstedets Regnskab.

**tigunerinut nalunaerut.**  
(Kvittering)

uvanga nipitsuiivfignik taukuninga pigingni-  
tunga matumuna nalunaerpunga *Satut*

me pisiniartitsissumut tigorérdlugit aningaussat ta-  
maisa 3 Kr. 40 Øre.

*Satut* den 22<sup>de</sup> Decbr 1927

*Hans Hendriksen*  
pigingnigtup atsiornera.

◀ Front cover (80%)

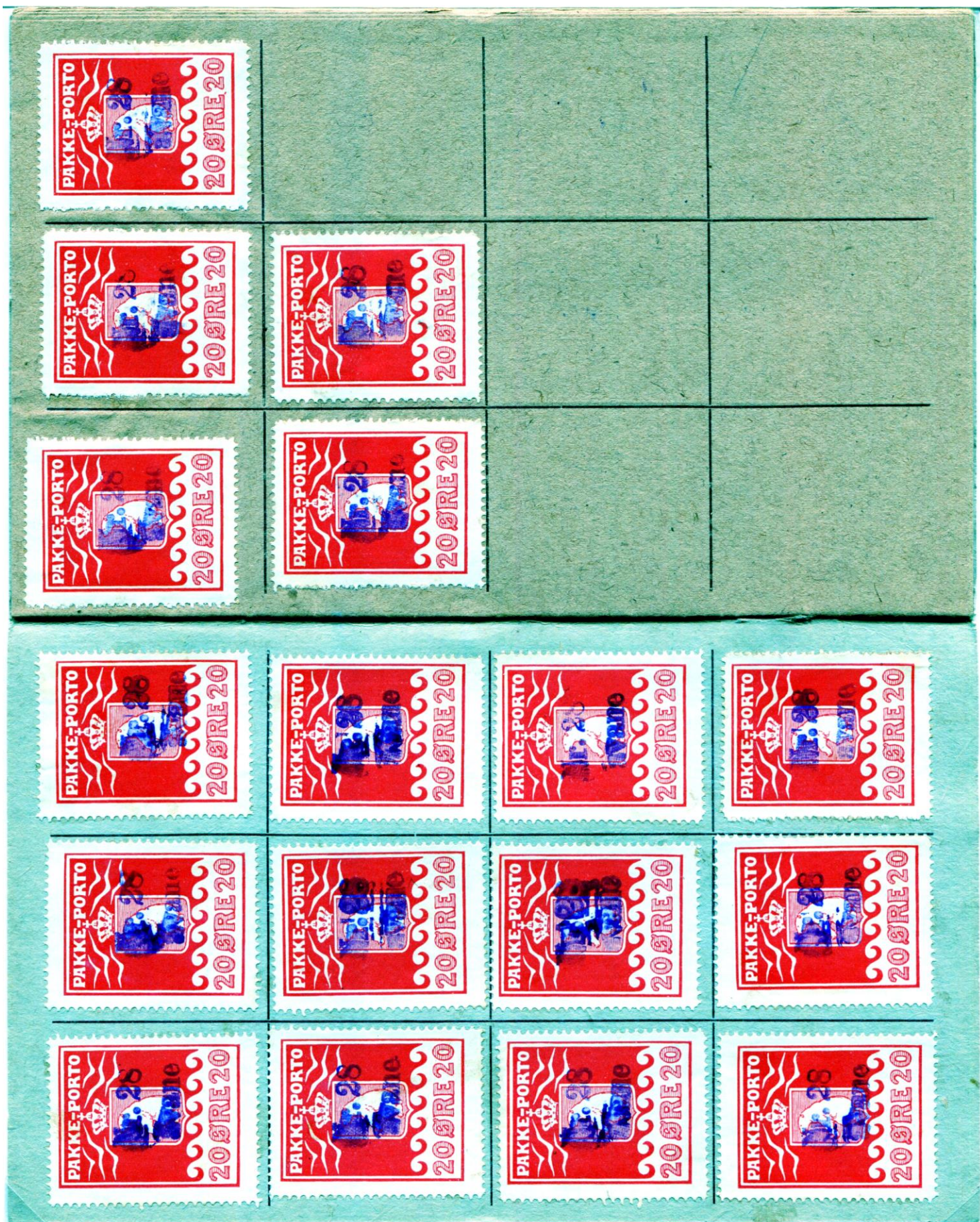
Savings Stamp Book  
holding 17 stamps  
(3kr 40 øre) redeemed  
in Satut (*Avane* 28) on  
22 Dec 1927 by Hans  
Hendriksen

(See next two pages)

▼ Satut hs (120%)  
Nr 28 avane









## PARCEL POST ♦ Greenland, 1937

### Parcel stamps — the "Polar Bears" Usage as Savings Stamps

♦ Greenland's "Polar Bears" parcel stamps played an important role as savings stamps in small settlements

### Savings Stamp Book, 1937

Another example of a fully intact special savings book (*Maerkinik nipitsuivfingssat* = *Sparemaerkebog*). Because the use of these books was a frugal practice common in small communities in northern Greenland (*Avane*), the dominant language used for the instructional text on the front (and back) cover is in *Greenlandic*, an Eskimo-

Aleut language spoken by Greenland's more than 50,000 Inuit people. The dominant form is *Kalaallisut*, the West Greenlandic dialect.

At the time the savings books were in use, the colonial language Danish was also in use (especially in official contexts), but in more recent times its use has begun to diminish in favour of *Kalaallisut*.

No. 4

**Mærkinik nipitsuivfingssat**  
(Sparemaerkebog)

Uvanga *Sofie Nathanielsen*  
Jeg

*nipitsuivfingnik ukuninga pigingnigtunga matumûr*  
som ejer denne Bog meddeler herved, at jeg ønsker at hæve de  
*nalunaerpunga imai tamaisa tigujumavdlugit*  
Beløbet til

*13 December 1935*

**pisiniartitsissumut**  
Til Handelsbestyreren

pisiniartitsissup aningaussat nipitsuivfingnit  
tûniutisagângamigit tauva kiserkârtâsavai aningaussat  
nut kanok amerdlatigissunut Mærkit nipitsorneka  
simassut, magpersigarssuaminutdlo agdlâsaok inûp tât  
ssuma aningaussat tauko nautsorssugkat tigugai, taima  
lerêrunilo tauva Mærkit (nipitsimassut) tamardluinais  
kaisigut nakitâsavai pisiniarfekarfiup nakitsissânik no  
mulersûmik. pisiniartitsissup nipitsuivfît torkordluâ  
savai nautsorsuinigssane utarkivdlugo, taimanikutdl  
nipitsuivfît nautsorssûtiminut ilângutdlugit nagsit  
kumârpai.

Naar en Handelsbestyrer skal udbetale Penge for en Bog,  
tæller han selv op, for hvormange Penge, der er Mærker i den, og  
skriver i sin Hovedbog, at det Menneske har faaet udbetalt det ud  
regnede Beløb, hvorefter han overstempler alle Mærkerne med  
Handelsstedets almindelige Nummerstempel. Handelsbestyreren gem  
mer Bogen omhyggeligt indtil Regnskabsaarets Slutning og ind  
sender da Bogen som Bilag til Handelsstedets Regnskab.

**tigunerinut nalunaerut.**  
(Kvittering)

uvanga nipitsuivfingnik tûkuninga pigingnig  
tunga matumûna nalunaerpunga *Ujarasugssuk*  
me pisiniartitsissûsumit tigorêrdlugit aningaussat ta  
maisâ *11* Kr. 00 Ore.

den *13 December* 19 *35*

*Sofie Nathanielsen*  
pigingnigtup atslornera.

202

◀ Front cover (90%)

Savings Stamp Book  
holding 55 stamps  
(11kr) redeemed in  
*Ujarasugssuk* [= Riten  
benk] (*Avane* 8) on  
13 Dec 1937 by Sofie  
Nathanielsen

(See next two pages)

▼ Crowned Kolonien  
Ritenbenk and Nr 18  
*avane* handstamps  
(115%)









## PARCEL POST ♦ Greenland, 1927–37

### Parcel stamps — the “Polar Bears” Varieties Exhibited in Savings Books

♦ The large number of 20ø “Polar Bears” parcel stamps in the Savings Books shown here naturally include some constant plate varieties

#### Constant Plate Varieties

The two Savings Books shown here (*Satut* 1927, *Ritenbenk* 1937) contain a total of 72 examples of the 20ø parcel stamp, so represent a large and rather natural sample of these stamps. Close examination reveals four constant plate varieties, none of which is described in the *Facit Special* catalogue (though the “Dot by Seagull Wing” is in the same place as the “Square by Seagull Wing”, *Facit* variety V<sup>5</sup> for the 1kr stamps).

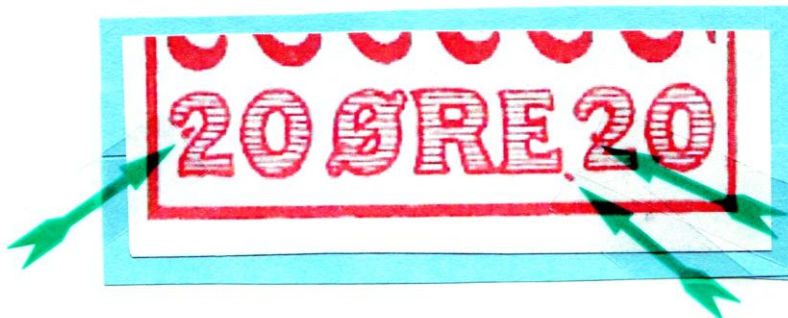


▲ Dot by Seagull Wing



▲ Stray Feather

▼ Money Spiders



▲ Packman O;  
Foam Flecks on Waves



◀ Stamps on Page 2  
of *Satut* (1927) Savings  
Book

[1,2] Stray Feather  
(also [2,2] on Page 1)

[1,3] Money Spiders



# PARCEL POST ♦ Greenland, 1937

## Parcel stamps — the “Polar Bears” Varieties Exhibited in Savings Books

♦ Constant plate  
varieties on 20ø “Polar  
Bears” parcel stamps in  
1937 Savings Book

### Constant Plate Varieties

Constant plate varieties among the 55 parcel stamps in the Ritenbenk = Ujarasugssuk Savings Book of Sofie Nathanielsen, redeemed on 13 Dec 1937. The varieties occur on pp. 2–5. (None of these varieties is described in the *Facit Special* catalogue.)



Page 2

[1,3] Packman O; Foam  
Flecks on Waves;  
[2,2] Stray Feather;  
[4,2] Money Spiders



Page 5

[1,2] Packman O; Foam  
Flecks on Waves;  
[3,1] Dot by Seagull Wing



Page 3

[3,1] Packman O; Foam  
Flecks on Waves



Page 4

[1,2] Money Spiders



## SAVINGS STAMPS ♦ Greenland, 1938–67

From 1927 a **savings program** was implemented by placing *Pakke-Post* “Polar Bear” stamps in special savings books. Books could be redeemed for the value of the stamps, which were then cancelled.

When *Pakke-Post* stamps were discontinued in 1938, special savings stamps (25ø and 1kr) were issued so the program could continue. Stamps of a new design, in the same denominations, were issued in 1962. The general program ended in 1967.

1938–39. Savings stamps, Daka 1 (25ø), 2 (1kr)

Purple linear  
cancel  
*Kolonien*  
*Upernavik*



Cancelled stamp from  
redeemed savings book

*Sitdlimat* (Greenlandic),  
*Sparemærke* (Danish),  
— Savings stamp

### ♦ Savings stamps

Two values: first issued in  
1938–39; new design, 1962.

Reference: Daka —  
*Cinderella 1999, Grønland (GF7),*  
Daka Forlag 1998.



1962. Savings stamps, Daka 3 (25ø), 4 (1kr)





## PARCEL POST ♦ Greenland: official reprints, 1983–85

### Celebrating the *Pakke-Porto* "Polar Bears"

Ministry for Greenland (*Ministeriet for Grønland*) official reprints  
— compound sheetlet of 10 øre, 20 øre, 70 øre and 1 krone (*nytryk* 1985)

♦ *Pakke-Porto*  
official reprints  
from the original  
plates, with  
specialist notes.



**10 øre, 20 øre, 70 øre and 1 krone, line perf 10%.**

Last issue of the pakke-post stamps, 1937.

Letterpress printing by J.H. Schulz in Copenhagen.

One printing of 25,000 of each value.

*The original 10 øre blocks had been mislaid, so Schulz produced new blocks: consequently, new varieties exist in the 10 øre stamps from this printing.*