

MAGYAR FRONT

Vol. XXIV, No. 2

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EVERY THEMED POSTAGE STAMP
PART II:
Medals on
the World's
Stamps



Plus:
Magyar Front
Spring 2020
Update
A Box for
Rudolf
Frommer's
Pistol

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A note from the Editor

Magyar Front readers are once again treated to philatelic splendour in Part II of our overview of military stamps with IHMHPS member and Hungarian Military History Museum Head of Department Gergely Sallay's "Medals on the World's Stamps" feature in this issue. I am very excited and grateful for the gathering of this rich information and visual documentation in this and our previous issue.

On page 14, IHMHPS member Jeff Tóth shares an update to his Frommer Model 1910 pistol article - an innovative way to enhance a prized piece in his collection.

A new endeavour I think we all can get excited about is something I have wanted to work on for some time:



THE IHMHPS RECOGNITION INITIATIVE

I believe that the IHMHPS does a good job when it comes to raising awareness of Hungarian military history to English speaking people, however, the opportunity to do better always interests me. For some time I have been thinking about current trends regarding the public's exposure to history in general, and the challenges even established bastions of historical preservation face in attracting interest.

When we think of history being re-written, or the subversion of historical fact, cruel regimes come to mind – but misguided historical revisionism can be equally misleading, especially when globally fueled through avenues such as social media. It's easy for people to mistakenly believe they have received legitimate insight despite the absence of objective and scientific historical information - the key ingredients necessary in the development of genuine understanding.

The IHMHPS can only hope to affect a very small part of the overall picture as we are specialists, composed of amateur and professional historians, collectors and history enthusiasts who are part of a tiny proportion of the world's population who are actively involved with the study of history. But if this small percentage didn't exist, who would support dedicated educators and institutions that struggle to present objective information and foster interest in our past? Schools and museums often face cutbacks, and the internet and social media (without a doubt excellent communication platforms) are susceptible to the perpetuation of misinformation, or the propagation of whatever happens to be *à la mode*. I have been thinking that we can do more to nurture interest in Hungarian military history by recognizing the work done by others, and thanking those individuals who often spend much of their spare time caring for something that, if lost, would have significantly negative consequences. People who educate, collect, document, and display, or who wish to share their passion for history are often overlooked and under appreciated. The International Hungarian Military History Preservation Society has awards already in place to thank such individuals.

In order to help nurture the work of these people, I would like to make a better effort to bring their contributions to light by offering them tokens of gratitude – our IHMHPS Badge of Honour, which can be awarded to non-members for the recognition of exemplary work; and their stories can be publicized in the *Magyar Front*. These awards would not be exclusive to people with long established records of service, but also to youth and newcomers to the field who show particularly keen interest.

Anyone may nominate individuals who demonstrate dedication to the preservation of Hungarian and Austro-Hungarian military history for this initiative. A committee will consider the merit of the nominee, endeavour to obtain whatever information the nominee wishes to share with the IHMHPS and the *Magyar Front*, and forward them the IHMHPS Badge of Honour, miniature, and certificate of appreciation. No fees will be charged. Anyone involved may organize their own local investitures with the support of the IHMHPS. More details will be in our next issue.

P.Cz.

*"For the pleasures of the many may be oft-times traced to one,
as the hand that plants an acorn shelters armies from the sun."*



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The New Front:
(International Hungarian Military
History Preservation Society)

*"To strive, to seek, to find,
and not to yield."*

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Membership in the
International Hungarian Military History
Preservation Society is \$40.00 annually,
and includes the *Magyar Front*.

The original *Magyar Front* was the
weekly newspaper of the Frontline
Fighter's Association, and was
published from the early 1930s until
the end of the Second World War.

Medals on the World's Stamps

by Gergely Pál Sallay

On the postage stamps of a country, one can come across a wide variety of topics. Whether a stamp commemorates a person or an event, or presents a particular subject, it is always a means for education – and propaganda, too, for stamps convey the messages of the issuing state. Postage stamps issued in various countries of the world often depict civilian and military awards, both to make them widely known and to promote the ideology they represent. Hence, it is no coincidence that authoritarian regimes and newly independent states favour the medals-on-stamps theme.

The aim of portraying medals on stamps differs from country to country, strongly depending on their constitutional form. Authoritarian regimes tend to use medals as symbols of state ideology. Orders and medals on the stamps of monarchies represent the might and the favour of the sovereign. In republics, the propaganda function is less significant - decorations are depicted on stamps on anniversaries, with the main purpose of education and commemoration. Irrespective of their constitutional form, newly established states proudly present their independent award systems on their stamps, aiming at emphasising national character and expressing a delight in their long-desired freedom.

Based on the character of the portrayal of medals, three main categories can be distinguished. The first is the presentation of insignia as a central motif on a stamp (including the issues commemorating recipients of certain awards). The second group comprise stamps portraying medals as decorative motifs, i.e. symbols. The third category is the depiction of insignia being worn, or as integral parts of coats-of-arms.

During the past 120 years, the idea and practice of portraying orders, decorations and medals have grown increasingly popular in philately, partly because of the symbolic significance of medals, and partly because of the growing interest in awards.

The first of all stamps to display a medal was issued in May 1900, by the British colony of Victoria, Australia, to raise funds for the Patriotic Fund for the Second Boer War (1899–1902). The one-penny stamp presented the Victoria Cross, the highest-ranking British decoration for bravery, instituted in 1856 to honour conspicuous bravery during the Crimean War, and first awarded to Australians in 1900 and 1901. During the Second Boer War, in which Australians fought alongside South African and British forces, five Australians were honoured with a Victoria Cross.

As for early examples for medal depictions, a Polish 30 groszy stamp (1) was issued in 1933, on the 15th anniversary of the country's independence, portraying the Cross of Independence. This medal, founded in 1930, was awarded to Polish and foreign military personnel and civilians who took part in the struggle for the country's independence. For battlefield merit, it was awarded with swords, and without swords for the support of the cause. Additionally, an Independence Medal was to reward less outstanding merits. The Cross of Independence was one of the most prestigious awards of the second Polish republic between 1918 and 1939.



Medals as a theme first served as the basis for a series of stamps in Italy in 1934, issued on the 100th anniversary of the Italian Medal of Military Merit but, interestingly, the image of the medal itself did not appear on any of the denominations (2). Instead, soldiers of various combat arms, different combat equipment, and memorial sites are portrayed on the stamps. The Medal of Military Merit was established by King Charles Albert of Sardinia on March 26th, 1833, for members of the army and navy in gold and silver, to reward outstanding deeds that were not sufficient to win the Military Order of Savoy.

In the same year in Bulgaria, the cross of the Order "For Bravery" appeared as a decorative element on a 1 leva stamp (3) issued as part of a set commemorating the inauguration of the monument of the Battles of Shipka Pass in 1877-1878. It is no wonder this insignia was shown on the stamp. It was the first order of merit of the country, established by Prince Alexander I in January 1880, after the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 ended successfully for Bulgaria. The same medal motif ornamented the stamps of a 1942 Bulgarian charity set issued to aid war invalids.

In Finland, a pair of charity stamps (4 and 5) issued in 1943 to support the National Aid Fund was decorated by the first order of merit of the independent country. It was instituted on March 4th, 1918 under the name of Cross of Liberty, renewed on December 8th, 1939 during the Winter War, and then reorganized on December 16th, 1940 as the Order of the Cross of Liberty. The Order, which still exists today, could only be awarded in wartime before and during the Second World War. It is worth

mentioning that the swastika, or more accurately the fylfot, in the arms of the cross of the Order was used in Finland (and the Baltic states) as a political, state and military symbol before it had been associated with German National Socialists.



Right: Medals for the “Capture of Vienna, Berlin, and Budapest” - a Russian set issued in 2015.

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The largest number of stamps portraying medals in the 20th century was issued by the Soviet post, serving propaganda purposes from the years of the Second World War up until the 1980s, and the tradition lives on in today’s Russia and several other successor states of the Soviet Union. During and after the Second World War, several sets of stamps promoting state awards were issued in the Soviet Union, to strengthen patriotic feelings in the midst of suffering and deprivation caused by the war, to represent socialist ideology and state order for which the Great Patriotic War was fought, and to show the medals that participants of the struggle received. The first set of Soviet stamps to propagate military insignia was published in 1943. The two stamps (6 and 7) show the Order of Merit of the Patriotic War and the Order of Suvorov respectively, both with ribbons, i.e. according to the regulations effective until June 1943. Subsequently, during the years until 1946, the Soviet Post issued seven sets of stamps promoting orders, decorations and medals, and others introducing notable recipients of the title Hero of the Soviet Union. Later on, various medals (or medal ribbons) representing the war were portrayed on a great number of Soviet stamps commemorating victory in 1945. In the 2010s, Soviet medals of the Second World War were thematically featured on sets of stamps issued by the Russian Post, which has also dedicated several sets to medals of present-day Russia.

Like the Soviet Union, other socialist countries also sought to promote their state honours through postage stamps. In the



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1950s, sets portraying awards also appeared in Albania, Bulgaria, Poland, Romania and Yugoslavia. In Hungary, the first stamps depicting medals was issued in 1966 (previous page, and below). The set designed by József Vertel portrayed civilian awards awarded by the Presidential Council of the Hungarian People's Republic, namely the title of Hero of Socialist Labour, the Order of Merit of the Hungarian People's Republic, the Order of the Red Banner, and grades of the Order of the Flag of the Hungarian People's Republic, and the Order of Labour. Both the names and designs of the above medals clearly reflect how closely the honours systems of most socialist countries followed the Soviet pattern.

Since the political changes in 1989-1990, the Hungarian Post issued three stamps that feature orders and medals. All three



are related to Hungarian military history, so it is no wonder the portrayed medals are preserved by the Military History Museum in Budapest. In 1999, a set of three was issued on the 150th anniversary of the Revolution and War of Independence of 1848-1849, each denomination portraying outstanding figures of this most important period of Hungarian history, along with relics related to them. The 32 forint stamp (below) shows General Józef Bem and the temporary 1st Class badge of the Hungarian Order of Military Merit. The Order was instituted on 2 March 1849 and, due to the wartime circumstances, only temporary badges were awarded, planned to be replaced with more ornate insignia after the war. After the defeat of the fight for freedom, however, this did not officially happen.

The first, and in fact only, recipient of the 1st Class was Józef Bem, the famous general of Polish origin. (Another recipient would have been General Artúr Görgei but for political reasons he refused to accept the medal.) The Hungarian parliament awarded this high recognition to Bem on March 21st, 1849, for leading a successful campaign in Transylvania. The image of the first independent Hungarian state award in history featured in the print is of the only known example today, preserved in the Military History Museum.

In 2014, the Hungarian Post issued a commemorative stamp to mark the hundredth anniversary of the outbreak of



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HUNGARIAN MILITARY HISTORY MUSEUM
PÉTER SZIKITS PHOTO

Above:
The only known specimen of the temporary 1st Class badge of the Hungarian Order of Military Merit from 1849.

Magyar Posta
E L S Ó N A P
 First day • Ersttag • Premier Jour



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the First World War. The central motif of the stamp is an Austro-Hungarian officer's medal group, with a detail of a period map in the background. On the first day cover envelope (above), the obverse and reverse of the Charles' Troops' Cross, the Wound Medal and the Hungarian First World War Commemorative Medal can be seen. Both the stamp and the FDC present medals that embody how the First World War, due to its widespread nature, made it necessary to change and extend the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy's system of honours. At the beginning of the war, the battlefield merits of soldiers fighting in the Austro-Hungarian army were recognised by medals instituted in earlier centuries, but as the war escalated, several new medals were introduced, others modified, to suit increasing demands. Some already existing Austro-Hungarian decorations were changed in their appearance to indicate awards in recognition of battlefield merit. Therefore soldiers deemed worthy of recognition for their "act of outstanding bravery in the face of the enemy" were awarded medals on the (red and white striped) "War Ribbon," decorated with laurel wreaths or twigs called "War Decoration" and, from the beginning of 1917, with the newly introduced "Swords" (a device forming two crossed swords). In the stamp, an Austro-Hungarian officer's medal group from the First World War is seen. The medals in the stamp, in order of precedence, are as follows: Imperial Austrian Order of Leopold, Knight's Cross with War Decoration and Swords; Imperial Order of the Iron Crown, 3rd Class with War Decoration and Swords; Military Merit Cross, 3rd Class with War Decoration and Swords; Silver Medal of Military Merit on War Ribbon with Swords; Bronze Medal of Military Merit on War Ribbon with Swords; Charles' Troops' Cross; Wound Medal with two central stripes on its ribbon indicating two wounds.

For the 90th Hungarian Stamp Day, on November 3rd, 2017, the Hungarian Post issued two stamps and a souvenir sheet (pictured on the following page). The two stamps commemorate the Royal Hungarian Defence Forces instituted in 1868, through the portrayal of artefacts preserved by the Hungarian Military History Museum. Following the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, Act XLI of 1868 provided for the establishment of the Royal Hungarian Defence Forces, which first comprised infantry and cavalry and then from 1913, artillery as well. Its first commander-in-chief was General of the Cavalry Archduke Joseph Karl of Austria, who was awarded the Military Merit Cross with War Decoration for his achievements in the 1866 Austro-Prussian War, and wore from 1898, i.e. the 50th anniversary of the reign of Austro-Hungarian monarch Francis Joseph I, a special version of the insignia with brilliants and rubies. The Military Merit Cross was established on October 22nd, 1849 to be awarded to officers for exceptional battlefield performance in wartime, or outstanding service in peacetime, and was originally established in only one class. From 1860, it could be awarded with War Decoration and then, soon after the outbreak

90.
 Bélyegnap



of the First World War, it was divided into three classes. The rare and valuable version of the medal and its wearer are depicted on the 120 forint stamp of the set. (Two characteristic artefacts linked with the Royal Hungarian Cavalry of the period, an M1904 cavalry officer's sabre and a hussar shako from 1890 are shown on the 155 forint stamp, whereas the souvenir sheet presents the building of Stefánia Palace, the cultural centre of today's Hungarian Defence Forces.)

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After a detailed description of the Hungarian stamps in the subject, a few further important international examples should at least be referred to. Medals-on-stamps has been a popular theme in the philately of the Commonwealth of Nations, too, the Victoria Cross being one of the most predominant decorations to be shown on postage stamps around the world. Its first portrayal in 1900 has already mentioned. The image of the VC also appeared in 1971 in one of the stamps (8) of a Jersey set commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Royal British Legion, a charity providing support to members and veterans of the British Armed Forces, their families and dependants. The stamp portrayed Jack Thomas Counter, who received the VC for an act of gallantry in 1918 in France, and the medal itself. Counter died in 1970, and his medal is on display at the Jersey Museum, Saint Helier. The VC was also depicted on a 20 pence stamp (9) of a 1990 Royal Mail set introducing British gallantry awards,

as well as several stamps and mini-sheets during the past decades, especially on the 150th anniversary on the institution of the medal in 2006, but it would require a separate article to continue the review.



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Another medal that is well worthy of mentioning in this article is the George Cross, the highest award bestowed by the British government for non-operational gallantry or gallantry not in the presence of an enemy. The GC, equal in stature to the Victoria Cross, was instituted in 1940 and its 409 awards so far include three collective awards. One was to the island of Malta in April 1942. A major Mediterranean naval base for the British, Malta was heavily bombed by the German Air Force in 1941-1942. The heroism and sacrifice of the inhabitants of the island in these attacks was recognised by the GC, which was also incorporated into the flag and coat-of-arms of Malta in 1943. Although the country, which had been under British rule from the Napoleonic Wars, gained independence in 1964, the GC remains on the flag and the coat-of-arms. As the medal as a symbol clearly is of great significance for Malta, it is no surprise several postage stamps portray the cross, either thematically or just as a national symbol (above). As another related feature, Maltese stamps also often depict the Maltese cross, sometimes together with the GC, as the island provided permanent quarters to the Knights Hospitaller, later called the Knights of Malta.

Right:
A 2007 USA
first day cover
with a stamp
portraying the
Purple Heart

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There is one more well-known medal to be mentioned in this article. Several postage stamps issued by the United States during the past twenty years have portrayed the Purple Heart, a United States military decoration awarded in the name of the President to those wounded or killed while serving with the US military. The award originally was founded by General George Washington on August 7th, 1782, and was revived in its present form on February 22nd, 1932. Although awarded for outstanding service between 1932 and 1943, the primary purpose of the medal has been to recognize those wounded or killed in military service, peacekeeping, or terrorist attacks. Until 1997, even civilians were eligible. The Purple Heart has been featured on several US stamp issues since 2003, which is a reflection of the significant number of casualties in the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars, to whom these stamps are a tribute. Until 2018, over 12,000 Purple Hearts were awarded for the Afghanistan War, and over 35,000 for the Iraq War.



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1983 and 2015 USA postage stamps depicting the three different variants of the Medal of Honor



Left: A Canadian stamp issued to honour three Canadian servicemen who lived on the same street in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and were awarded the Victoria Cross for bravery in combat during the First World War, 2021.

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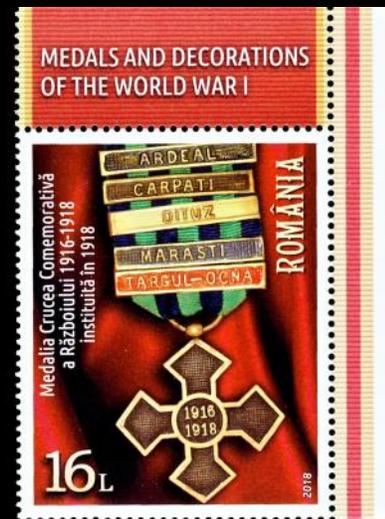


Above: The 1939-1945 Star, the Africa Star, the Italy Star and the France and Germany Star portrayed on a pair of stamps issued in the Isle of Man on the 50th anniversary of VE Day in 1995.

Below: Three of the last Anzacs and the 1914-1915 Star on an Australian minisheet issued in 2000.



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Above right: The Commemorative Cross of the 1916–1918 War with five clasps representing campaigns and theatres of operation of the First World War, on a postage stamp issued in 2018 as part of a four-stamps set introducing Romanian medals and decorations of the Great War.



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Left: Ukrainian stamp issued in 2020 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Order of the Iron Cross, which was awarded to participants of the First Winter Campaign between the army of the Ukrainian People's Republic and Bolshevik forces in Ukraine during the Ukrainian-Soviet War.



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Above: An Austrian special stamp issued by the Austrian Society for Phaleristics in 2016, on the 200th anniversary of the founding of the Order of the Iron Crown. The tab on the right shows the badge of the society.



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Above: Serbian stamp and first day cover issued on the 100th anniversary of the institution of the Albanian Commemorative Medal, 2021. Below: A souvenir sheet presenting the orders of Kazakhstan, 2016.



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Above: Two of three minisheets portraying high-ranking orders of the Baltic States, jointly issued by Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in 2008.



Above: One of the versions of the French-Polish joint issue souvenir sheet commemorating the centenary of the renewal of diplomatic relations between the two countries, 2019. They portray two well-known decorations of the two nations, the Polish military order “Virtuti Militari” and the French Legion d’Honneur.

How a Stamp is Designed

Once a topic is chosen to be part of the following year's annual stamp issue plan, the designing process of each individual stamp begins. Depending on the topic, experts from relevant fields are being consulted about the possible contents and elements of the future design. When those are discussed and finalized, artists are chosen to design the stamps. Finished stamp designs are shown to both the involved experts and a committee with members from the fields of art, design and philately. One of the designs is picked to be implemented.

In the case of the two 2017 Hungarian stamps commemorating the Royal Hungarian Defence Forces instituted in 1868, ideas and images of artefacts were provided by the Hungarian Military History Museum. For the 120 forint stamp, for instance, the Museum provided a scanned portrait of General of the Cavalry Archduke Joseph Karl of Austria, first Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Hungarian Defence Forces, and a photo taken of the Military Merit Cross with War Decoration in brilliants and rubies, which was awarded to the Archduke and has been preserved at the Museum. Together with the text to be featured on the stamp, some period graphics and prints to serve as the background design of the stamp were also provided.



HUNGARIAN MILITARY HISTORY MUSEUM

Right:
The Royal Hungarian Defence Forces' first commander-in-chief General of the Cavalry Archduke Joseph Karl of Austria.



HUNGARIAN MILITARY HISTORY MUSEUM
PÉTER SZIKITS PHOTO

Above: Military Merit Cross with War Decoration, special version of the insignia with brilliants and rubies.

Right:
the medal group used
for the 440 HUF stamp.

**Imperial Austrian
Order of Leopold,
Knight's Cross with War
Decoration and Swords;
Imperial Order of the
Iron Crown, 3rd Class
with War Decoration and
Swords; Military Merit
Cross, 3rd Class with
War Decoration and
Swords; Silver Medal of
Military Merit on War
Ribbon with Swords;
Bronze Medal of Military
Merit on War Ribbon
with Swords; Charles'
Troops' Cross; Wound
Medal with one central
stripe on its ribbon
indicating one wound.**



HUNGARIAN MILITARY
HISTORY MUSEUM
PÉTER SZIKITS PHOTO

Previous page: Design for the 120 HUF stamps created for the 90th Hungarian Stamp Day, on November 3rd, 2017. It is one of two stamps commemorating the Royal Hungarian Defence Forces' institution in 1868, through the portrayal of artefacts preserved by the Hungarian Military History Museum.

Below: In 2014, the Hungarian Post issued a 440 HUF commemorative stamp to mark the hundredth anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War. The finished design features the Austro-Hungarian officer's medal group pictured above as the central motif, with a detail of a period map in the background.



HUNGARIAN MILITARY HISTORY MUSEUM - PÉTER SZIKITS PHOTO

A Box for Rudolf Frommer's Pistol

by Jeff Tóth

PHOTO COURTESY OF D.C.



While preparing the article for the *Magyar Front* Spring 2020 issue (volume XXII, Number 2), it came to my attention that a fellow collector had observed a period cardboard box specifically designed to contain the Frommer Model 1910 pistol. He was kind enough to share his old photograph (shown at left) of this rare, 110 year-old piece of ephemera. It's unclear whether there were any other markings or additional labels, (containing such information as the distributing company name, address, date, price, or serial number) applied to the non-visible surfaces of the box. Nor can we be sure if the original pistol was shipped with protective wrapping, but it is clear from wear patterns inside the box that a pistol was stored in it for many years.

Although I had made a nice sturdy wood display/storage box for my Model 1910, I just had to have one of these cardboard boxes. My chances of finding an original would be nearly impossible, and if I succeeded I would probably not use it for fear of causing irreversible damage. The use of reproductions tends to be overlooked, and often even frowned upon by some collectors, however, I find their conservative use can enhance an otherwise original collection. (In fact, many of my collectible firearms are stored and used with replaceable cheaper reproduction plastic or wooden grips – this prevents damage to the original wooden ones during normal handling.)

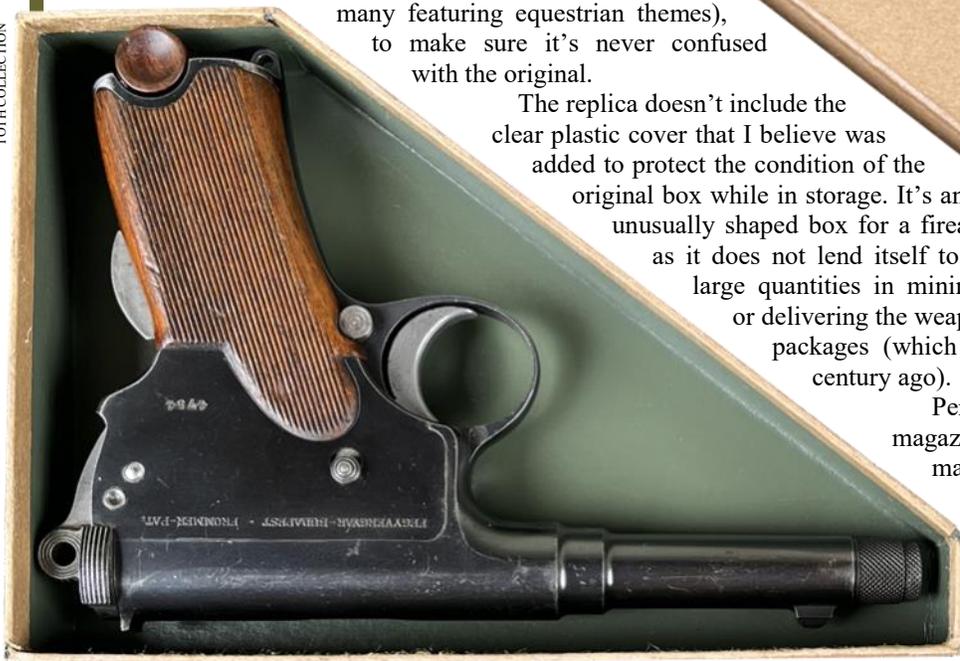
Armed with the dimensions of my Model 1910 pistol and the photograph of the original box, I approached an old friend and movie-business prop maker to help me create a sturdy facsimile that would nicely enhance my vintage firearm. We decided to make some minor changes to the paper label, originally designed by Angelo Jank (1868-1940 - Jank was a graphic designer most noted for several cover illustrations of *Jugend* magazine as well as other stand-alone works, many featuring equestrian themes), to make sure it's never confused with the original.

The replica doesn't include the clear plastic cover that I believe was added to protect the condition of the original box while in storage. It's an unusually shaped box for a firearm, as it does not lend itself to storing large quantities in minimal spaces, or delivering the weapons in discreet packages (which may have been less of an issue over a century ago).

Perhaps this pistol was shipped with a spare magazine - I can imagine a second, loose magazine wrapped in a corner in the same paper used to protect the gun as well as to prevent any movement during transport. There appears to be room enough for a magazine to be laid along the angled-side of the box, between it and the trigger guard.

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1914
ELSŐ VILÁGHÁBORÚS
CENTRUMI
EMLEKBIZOTTSÁG
1920

 HADTÖRTÉNETI
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