

GEOHERMAL STAMPS OF ICELAND

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Iceland, a leader in the use of geothermal energy, is also a leader in issuing stamps depicting various geothermal manifestations such as geysers, volcanic eruptions and methods of utilizing the energy. Some of the earlier issues were described and shown in Vol. 5, No. 1 (Lund, 1980). In my recent visit to Iceland as the visiting lecturer for the UNU geothermal program, I was able to collect some of the more current issues. A review of the older issues and most of the new ones are described and shown below.

In historical times, since AD 850-900, more than 250 volcanic eruptions have occurred in Iceland--an average of one every four years! Four volcanic events have had a major impact on Iceland, and are thus, reflected in many of their stamps: (1) Hekla, has erupted 20 times since Iceland was settled. The 1947 eruption, lasting 13 months, produced almost 800 million m³ of lava and 210 million m³ of tephra and sent falling ash as far away as Finland. (2) The Laki eruptions (Skaftareldur episode) in 1783 produced lava flows of 800 m³ per second and resulted in 14 to 15 km³ of volume covering almost 600 km². The gas and acid rain and the resulting pollution killed 50% of the domestic animals and 20% of the population in Moduhardindi (Haze Famine). (3) Surtsey Island, of the southwest coast, was first formed in 1963 from an underwater eruption along the mid-Atlantic spreading ridge. By 1967, an island of 2.7 km² had been formed. It is used for biological and geological research. (4) Heimaey, another one of the Westmann Islands (Vestmannaeyjar), was partially engulfed by an eruption from Eldfell volcano in 1973. Nearly 200 houses were burned by lava; however, the lava flow was stopped from closing the harbor by spraying it with seawater to slow its advance.

Finally, another volcanic phenomena that is world famous is Geysir, the geyser that once erupted to heights over 60 meters. It has been dormant for the past 30 years; but, the nearby Strokkur (the Churn), erupts every few minutes to the delight of tourists.



An example of the series (8 stamps) from 1938-47 showing the world famous Geysir from which we get the word geyser.



An example of the series (7 stamps) from 1948 showing the 1947 eruption of Hekla, lasting 13 months.



The formation of the island Surtsey--erupting from the Atlantic Ocean starting in 1963 (3 stamps).



The eruption on Heimaey January 23, 1973 (2 stamps).



Hot spring utilization (honoring sports and health).



Geothermal steam and valve (3 stamps).



Bicentenary of the Skaftareldur (Laki) volcanic eruption (1783) causing extensive devastation.



Hot spring and mud pot at Hverarönd near Namaskard (between Myvatn and the Krafla power plant).



Eruption of the geyser Strokkur (the Churn) next to the now dormant Geysir.



Painting of women washing clothes in Thvottalanger hot springs at Laugardalur (Reykjavik).



Another version of women washing clothes in Thvottalanger (Washing Springs) at Laugardalur.



Based on Latin description of Irish monks (st. Brendon?) approaching Iceland in the 6th century seeing a volcano.

The following two stamps show recent tourist attractions associated with geothermal energy.

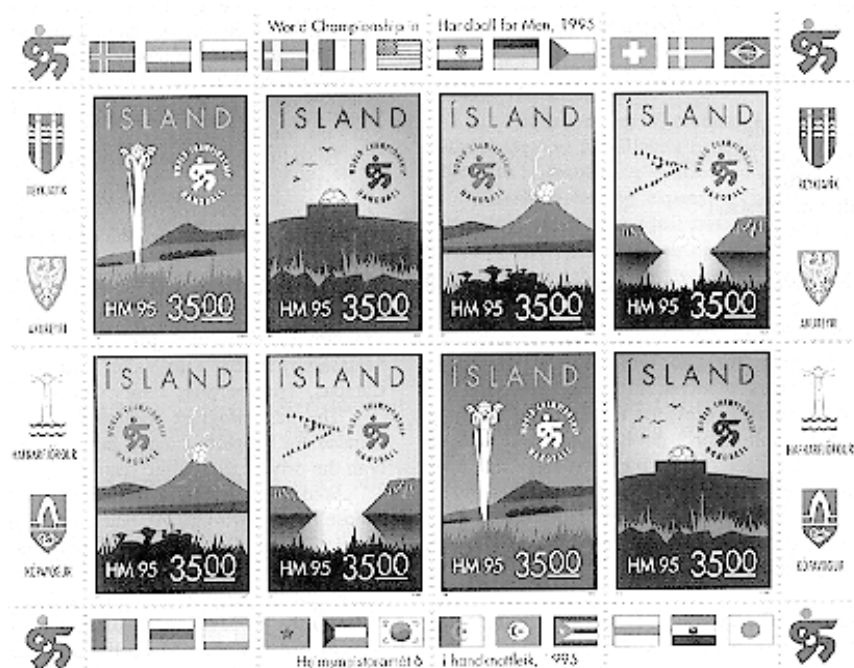


The Blue Lagoon, a swimming pond sealed with silica from the effluent of the Sudurnes heating facility.



The "Pearl" restaurant sitting on top of the four 1.2-million gal. hot water storage tanks used in the Reykjavik district heating system.

The next series were issued for the World Championship in Handball for men held in Iceland in 1995. Note the ball on top of the geyser, the "Pearl" and a volcano. The non-geothermal one shows the ball as the setting sun.



REFERENCE

Lund, J. W., 1980. *Geothermal Philately*, Geo-Heat Center Quarterly Bulletin, Vol. 5, No. 1 (March).