

This Day in History... October 22, 1921

Birth of Czeslaw Slania

One of the world's most famous stamp engravers, Czeslaw Slania was born on October 22, 1921, in Czeladź near Katowice, Poland.

The son of a miner, Slania discovered a love and talent for art an early age. By the time he was a teenager, he drew fake banknotes to sell at craft fairs.

After Germany invaded Poland in 1939, Slania was forced to quit high school. He then joined the Polish underground resistance. Slania contributed to the resistance by producing forged documents. After the war ended, he went to the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow to study engraving. From there Slania went on to work in the Polish state printing office.



Engraved by Slania, this stamp commemorates the 200th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Amity and Commerce between Sweden and the United States.



Slania stamp honoring World War I veterans

During this time, Poland had a communist government that Slania didn't approve of. So while on a cruise that stopped in Stockholm in 1956, he asked for political asylum. For his first few years there, Slania had trouble finding a job. But then in 1959, the chief engraver for the Swedish postal authority fell ill. Slania filled in for him and finished the job quickly, which led to a full-time job offer.



This stamp image was based on 1950 photo of US troops retreating from Chosin Reservoir.



Slania engraved this joint-issue with Sweden.

Slania quickly became renowned for his stamp engravings and would eventually produce stamp designs for 28 other countries, including several for the US. In 1972, Slania was made the Royal Court Engraver of Sweden.

In 2000, Slania engraved his 1,000th stamp, a Swedish issue picturing a portion of the painting, "Great Deeds by Swedish Kings." That stamp was also the largest steel-engraved stamp ever issued, measuring 81 by 61 millimeters (about 3.2 inches by 2.4 inches). Speaking about that stamp, Slania said, "One of the pleasures is that the motifs are so varied. That makes it very interesting to work here as an engraver. I like particularly when there are many different details in a motif, such as horses, clouds, naked skin, a small brooch ... this makes things pleasantly complicated, exactly as on my 1,000th stamp!"



Slania stamp picturing the Surrender of Burgoyne



Slania stamp honoring Chief Justice Earl Warren

Slania's last stamp was a 2005 issue honoring the 60th session of the United Nations General Assembly. He died shortly after that stamp's issue, on March 17, 2005.

Mystic Stamp Company • Camden, NY 13316

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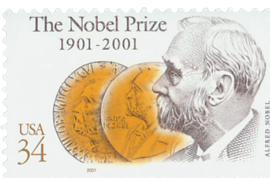


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