

French Stamp with the Effigy of Pierre de Coubertin

The Administration of the P.T.T. of France issued on November 24th of last year, a stamp bearing the effigy of Pierre de Coubertin, in order to commemorate the 60th Anniversary of the Games of the 1st Olympiad. We are very pleased to mention the initiative taken by the French Administration of the P.T.T. who thus wish to pay homage to the man who became the Renovator of the Olympic Games of the modern era.

*

November 24th 1956

The Pierre de Coubertin's Committee whose seat is in Paris entertained the hopes for a long time that the French Postal Authorities would issue a stamp bearing the effigy of Pierre de Coubertin. In 1939,

the Republic of Haiti launched on the philatelic market three designs illustrating the insert médaillon portrait of the Renovator of the Olympic Games together with the dates '1900-1940'. This issue was procured in order to raise funds for the building of the Municipal Stadium of Port-au-Prince. However, the native land of the life President of the International Olympic Committee was not yet prepared to give her support to such initiative.

After several indirect moves, the Committee lodged an official request with the ministry in 1955. The Baroness de Coubertin gave her consent to the scheme, and in the event of the project being realized, recommended a profile photograph which she particularly liked all this subject to the approval of Mr. Armand Massard the President of the French Olympic Committee.

The latter raised no objection to the scheme. In fact he approved and supported it.

But, the Minister of the P.T.T. felt obliged to make it known that *it was impossible for him to consider an issue of Pierre de Coubertin's stamp in 1956 in view of the fact that his department had had to wave many most commendable applications which were worthy of attention and had been made much earlier than the request made by the Committee.*

However, the request was taken into consideration, and the date of 1960 was adopted in principle for the issue of the new stamp. President Louis Bontemps did not lose confidence but returned to the fray and showed his unflinching insistence by approaching Mr. Pierre Ferri, a former Minister of the P.T.T. who is a most enthusiastic sportsman. The former pointed out that the Games of the XVIth Olympiad in the southern hemisphere would coincide with the sixtieth anniversary of the first celebration of the Games in Athens (1896).

In the course of the Summer of 1956 the administration of the P.T.T. took up the matter in earnest and consulted the Department of National Education, whose interest had already been aroused by the directors of the Youth and Sport Movement, headed by Mr. Gaston Roux. They could not help but give a favourable verdict.

Mr. Raoul Serres, the artist and engraver, was commissioned at the beginning of September to submit a sketch for approval. He produced two designs; the first one, which was the final choice, drew its inspiration from a well-known and much published photograph of the Renovator and included a sketch of an athlete taking the oath, for which the likeness of the late Geo André, the celebrated athlete who took the oath at the Paris Games, was taken as a model. The original illustration of this oath-taking ceremony is to be found in the official record of the 1936 Games.

Two dates of issue were proposed, November 3rd and November 24th. The later date was chosen since it fitted in better

with the programme of issues. From October 17th onwards, the French press advertised the event and published a reproduction of the new stamp, whose face value is thirty francs (the postal charge for foreign mail). The opening of the Melbourne Games coincided to within two days with the tribute paid to this great citizen honoured throughout the world.

Printed in the workshops of the Boulevard Brune, the stamp is a copperplate engraving of the original design by Raoul Serres. The anticipated sale took place on the 24th and 25th November at the temporary office of the Ministry of National Education (opened at the request of the Pierre de Coubertin Committee), 110, rue de Grenelles Paris VII. Special cards and official envelopes stamped 'First Day of Issue' were put on sale (see our illustrations in this issue) together with the biography of *Monsieur de Coubertin* by André Senay and Robert Hervet.

The stamp, artistic and refined in character, is executed in violet and grey. It commemorates a man who was characterized, as Minister of State René Billères said in his tribute to him at the official reception attended by the Misses Yvonne and Marie-Marcelle de Coubertin, "by his high ideals and humanitarian work." President P. Bontemps had previously proposed a vote of thanks to the Minister for his welcome and spoken of the greatness of the mission accomplished by this man whose memory was being officially commemorated at the very time when the Melbourne competitions were taking place.

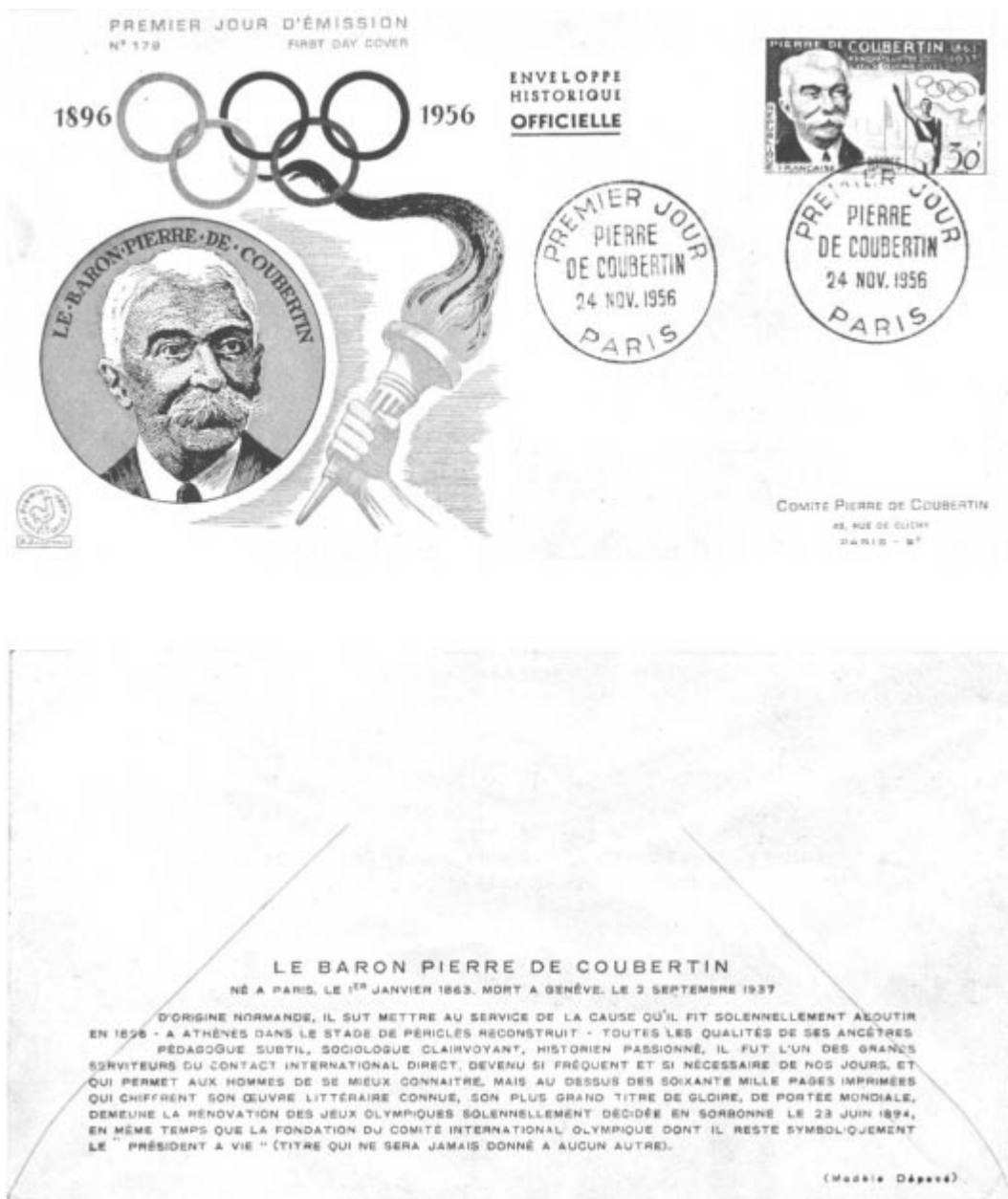
Among those present were the Australian Ambassador in France with the State Minister René Billères and the Secretary of State, Mr. Eugene Thomas (P.T.T.)

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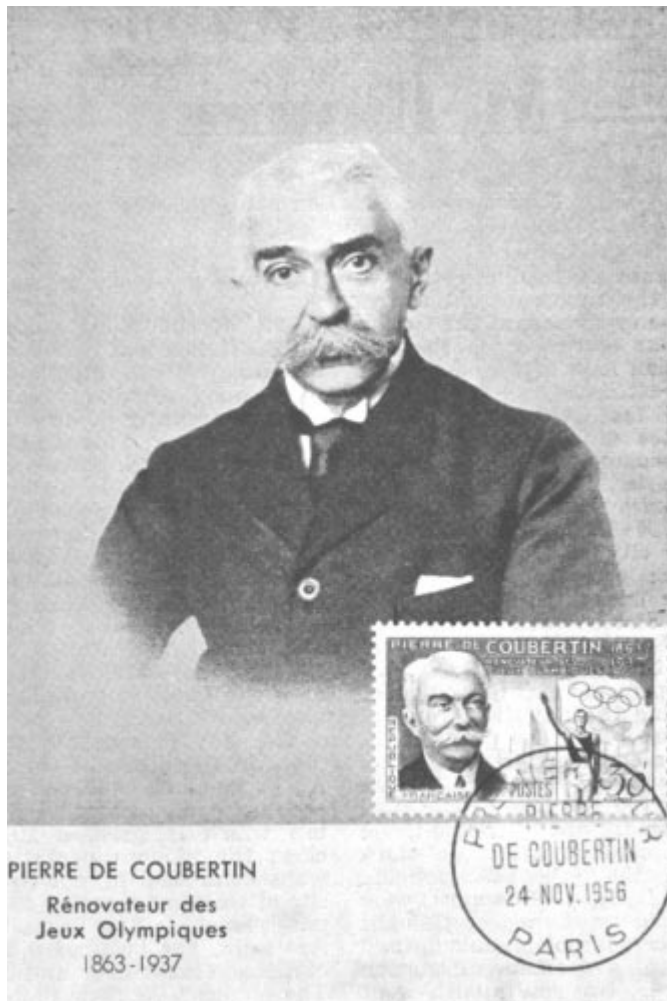
(Mr. Armand Massard, President of the French Olympic Committee was absent as he was attending the Melbourne Games at the time, Ed.)







Nov. 24th 1956. Official First Day Cover (recto & verso) of the issue of the "Pierre de Coubertin" postal stamp. (See also our text in the present edition.)



Postcards published on the occasion of the First Day issue of the 'Pierre de Coubertin' postal stamp in Paris.