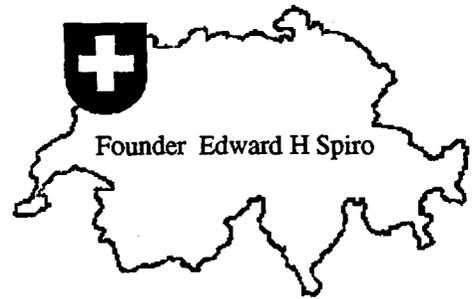


HELVETIA PHILATELIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Hon. President: Tony Hoyle

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No. 1 January 2002

plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose

from Bob Johnson

This shipping document is for a basket of laurel bushes going from Chiasso to Amsterdam in 1892. It weighed 9kg, was bulky and had 11.20SFr. to pay COD. In Cologne, Germany, the label at the top left was added. The word "Geldentkartung" is the reason for the interest in the item; it is not in most dictionaries so as Joe Leighton was going to Berlin he undertook to ask a postal historian there. It seems Geldentkartung is a technical term used in currency exchange. Since the label was added in Cologne it was suggested the 9.08 marks is the exchange value of the 11.20 francs shown on the form. But this was essentially a piece of bureaucratic nonsense as it was no business of theirs if the consignment was going on to Amsterdam, via Emmerich. Several very knowledgeable German philatelists were equally baffled by it. Does any member have a better explanation?

Vom Anlande über Geldentkartung.
Cöln (Rhein) Nr. 8336
Nachnahme 9.08

Zelldeklarationen
déclarations en douane
la dogana

Office expediteur
FRANCO

Bulletin d'expédition
1 Paris Lombard

Boite de transport
Grossenpost
Postpaket ungeeignet

zu pour per }
Werth Valeur } Fr. 11.20
Nachnahme Remboursement Kimborsa } Fr. 11.20

An A A } Sig. Auguste Rœtger
Ulrichstr. 40

kg. Amsterdam

CHIASSO
C. 314 P.

CHIASSO

Hier die Aufgabennummer
Ici on collera le numéro de c
Qui s'incollera il numero di

Emmerich 2

ancomarken aufgeben
ra les timbres poste
terano e francobolli

Baedeker's Switzerland of 1891 gives on page xvii Money: The Swiss monetary system was assimilated to that of France in 1851. 1 franc = 100c = 80 pfennigs (G) = 9 3/4d (GB). French gold is the most convenient coin and the English sovereign (25fr) and banknotes are received almost everywhere at full value. £10 notes are safer for carrying large sums. German gold and banknotes also realize their full value (20 m equals 24fr. 50-60c Swiss.) Who says we need the Euro?

MAIL FROM SWITZERLAND DURING WORLD WAR II (continued from p 82, Nov.2001) D Ripley

C. 1943 to 1945

The Franco-Swiss border was closed and it was late January before the Swiss PTT could announce that mail for America could again be accepted. The arrangement was that all airmail was to travel by way of Rome or Stuttgart. The service recommenced on the 1st of February and continued until late September 1944. A letter posted on the 4th of September in Thun arrived some 56 days later at Pekin, Illinois, USA.

The Swiss PTT made arrangements with the Spanish authorities for the re-opening of the Locarno to Barcelona air route; a few flights were made but I have been unable to find any details of this service.

Mail going via Rome was collected at Chiasso, then sent by rail to Genoa where a Swiss ship would collect it and take it to Lisbon. At Lisbon it would re-enter the existing route, either air or surface.

When the Allies entered Germany in late 1944 the DLH route K22 became subject to frequent interruptions, the final flight taking place during the second week in October. The DLH planes stayed in Spain and continued to fly the Barcelona-Madrid-Lisbon service in association with Iberian Airways until the end of the war.

From the 1st of October 1944 a Swiss PTT bus ran from Genève to Port Bou on the Franco-Spanish border until the 21st of October when it ceased as the Germans, who still controlled the Franco-Swiss border, had not agreed to it.

By late November Allied Forces were almost at the western Swiss frontier and out-going mail was sent via Munich; the only route then was via Sweden on the twice-weekly service from Berlin. Once the Franco-Swiss border was re-opened the PTT made arrangements with the Allied Control Commission for mail for the United States to travel across France to Cherbourg; from there it was either shipped direct to the United States, or shipped to England and then sent by air to the US.

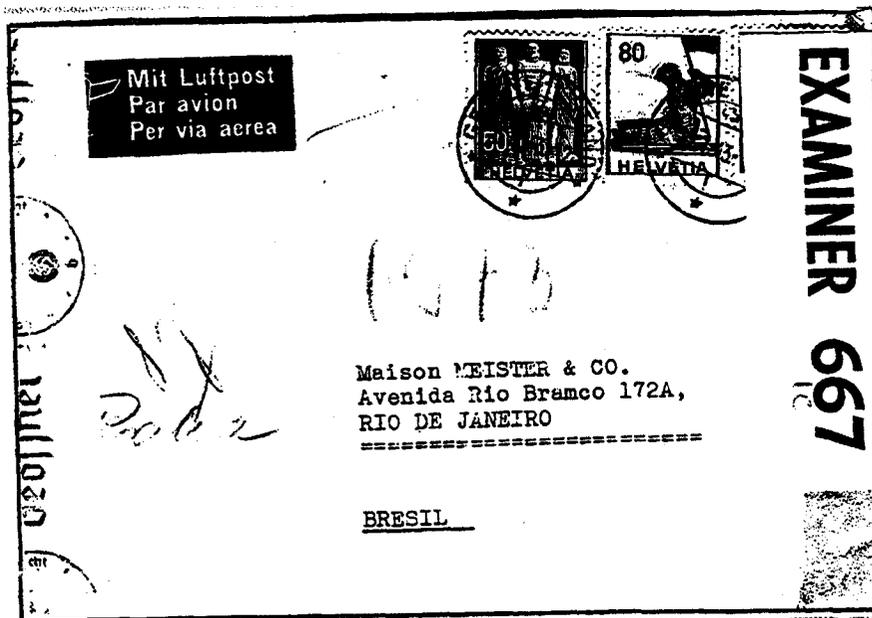


Figure C4 - Genève to Rio de Janeiro 23.1.43. Censored in Berlin & Bermuda. Probable route: Genève - Basel 2 - Zürich by air (Swissair route 12); Stuttgart - Berlin either rail or air; Berlin Stuttgart - Lyon - Barcelona - Madrid - Lisbon by air (DLH route K22); Lisbon - Bermuda - USA by Panam Clipper; USA - Brazil by Panam FAM-5 landplane.

Figure C5 - La Chaux-de-Fonds to Chicago 10.X.44. Franked 2fr 40c. Marked 15g & Uber-via Basel 2. This could have travelled on the PTT bus from Genève to Port Bou on the Franco-Spanish border.

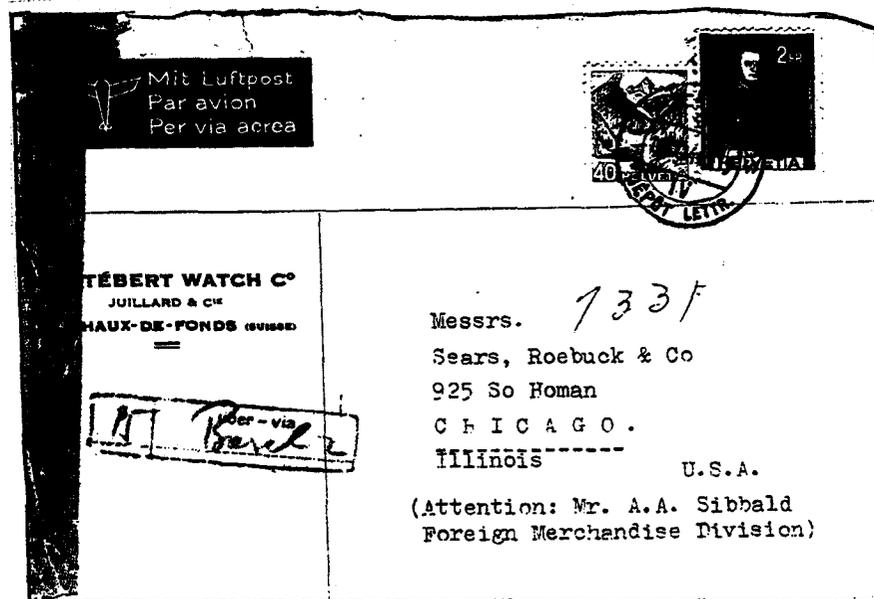


Figure C6 - Zürich to New York 30.XI.44. Franked 1fr. Marked (via Schweden). Censored by the Germans in Berlin on 7th December and returned to the postal authorities on the 13th. No Allied censor or transit.

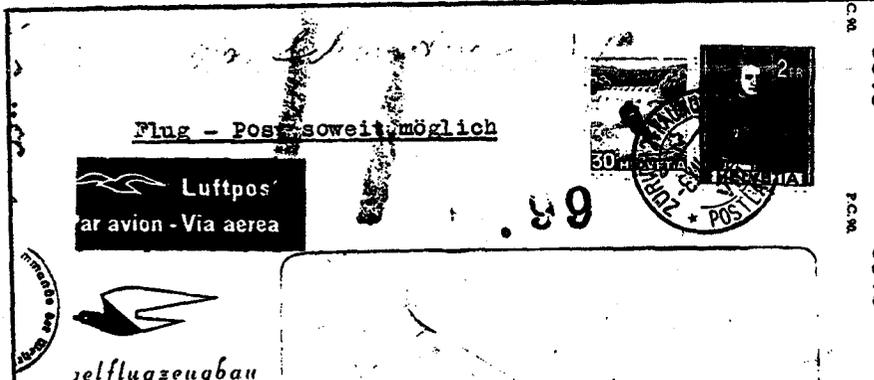
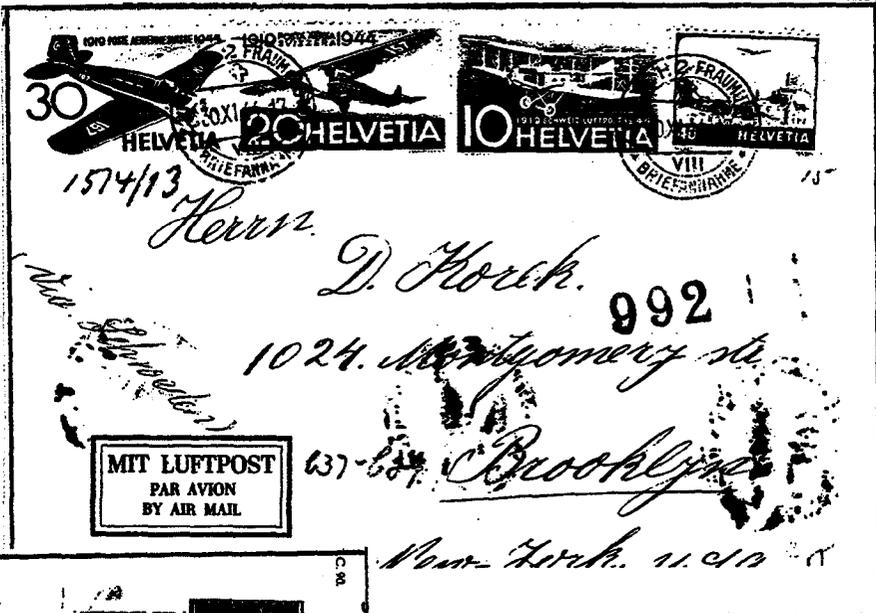
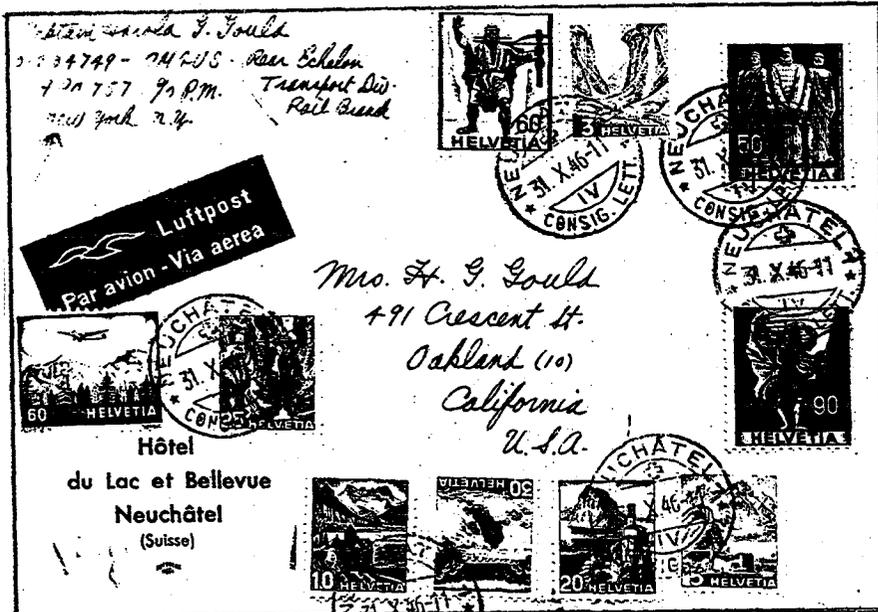
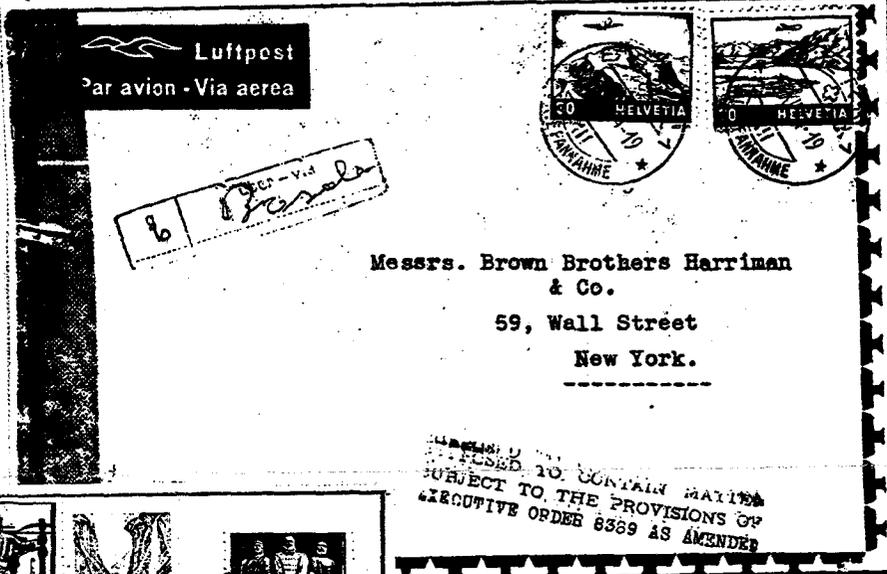


Figure C7 - From Zürich on 8.XII.44. Marked 'via Schweden' at top and 'Flug-Post soweit möglich (By air where possible)'. Examined by UK authorities in England.

Figure C8 - Letter Bern to New York 13.XII.44. Marked 6g & Basel 2. No German censor as Franco-Swiss border re-opened. Return address "P.O.B. 900 Transit" was a special box number used for Diplomatic mail. Purple cachet applied in US "Supposed to contain matter/ subject to provisions of/ executive order 8389 as amended".



PROHIBITED TO CONTAIN MATTER SUBJECT TO THE PROVISIONS OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 8389 AS AMENDED

Neuchâtel to Oakland, California 31.X.46. Franked 3fr 53c. Marked 15g. Captain Harold G Gould gave his return address as "APO 757, Rear Echelon, Transport Div., Rail Branch". Was he involved in repatriation of Polish internees, many of whom were shot/killed on their return?

(To be continued)

LARGE "S" IN MAUVE ON WW I MAIL - Page 3 in January and p 85 November 2001. A reply to this query has come from the Editor of the 'Civil Censorship Study Group' Bulletin, via Charles LaBlonde in the USA (courtesy of AA). "The S in circle is a British Military censorship. The Army Command in France did not trust the civil censors in Britain to examine the mail properly. In 1915 they therefore introduced a system whereby mail to Neutral countries was censored a second time in Base (usually Boulogne), rather than in London as in previous arrangements. You will see that this cover was signed and stamped by the censoring officer (lower left) before the letter was sealed. It then went through the Army Post Office (postmark 8 June 16? or 18?). Then to the Base Censor who opened it, checked the contents and closed it with a label, tied by censor stamp 5096 and deleted the original censor number. The item was then marked with the S so that, when the item reached London, the censorship there did not need to examine the item again. It appears that this cover received a perfectly normal treatment. Interestingly though, similar items for USA, which were routed through the Liverpool censors were frequently examined for a third time. They only reduced this third censorship during 1917, and I believe it was never fully dispensed with.

The addressee, Mrs Gow-Gregor, was involved in welfare work for POWs and Internees. There are a fair number of covers, addressed to her, in collectors hands."

(Reference: Mark G: *British Censorship* ... pp 161 and 162)

Mr Mark also answered the query about the two S-marked Red Cross cards on page 85. "My friend Keith Tranmer, who has written quite extensively on Austria in WW I tells me that the S markings in Austria were introduced in the second half of the war - he was not clear just when - to indicate "Serbe". There was a similar marking R for "Russe" and possibly others. This was simply an aid for sorting the mail by language, in a country bedevilled by a dozen or so in regular use. My 1895 atlas has an ethnographic map of Austria-Hungary - it shows 12 groupings and within some of the boundaries there are sub-groups - eg, within "Czechs & Slovaks" there are areas marked "Czechs", "Horaks", "Hannaks", "Slovaks" and "Walachs". (I did not dare ask Keith how the Post Office or Censors differentiated between S for Serbe and S for Slovak!)"

COMMEMORATIVE ENVELOPE 14 May 1928 - at the bottom of page 88 November 2001. G Stanley Weber's query has been answered by Ernest L Bergman of the AHPS.

"According to the Schweizerische Luftpost Handbuch, 2000 edition, on page 15 is mentioned: 30.5.1927 Lausanne- La Chaux-de Fonds/Le Locle-Basel, which was the extension of the NHORA flight to Lausanne. The Basel-La Chaux-de-Fonds/Le Locle leg was already flown on 17.5.1926 (page 11). On the occasion of this extension to Lausanne, the PTT permitted the printing and sale of special commemorative cards (sales price Fr.1.-) and envelopes (sales price Fr.1.-).

On 14.5.1928 the flight route was again extended from Lausanne to Geneva (page 18). On the occasion of this flight, postcards and envelopes issued for the 1927 flight were again sold by permission of the PTT and for the same price but imprinted with "1928 GENEVE". Of the cover shown, with the brown imprinted 35c airmail stamp and the 1928 Genève imprint, 4500 were issued according to the Handbuch (page 19)."

A POSTAL STATIONERY RARITY - On the front of the December Newsletter, p 89. Dennis Cairns wrote to say: "Some 15 years ago I disposed of a large collection for a non-philatelic Swiss friend, and among the mass of material were about 25 of these "Einzugsmandat" items. I kept two for myself, the remainder going through the HPS packets for about £1 each. Now I can mount and write up my two pieces!" So can the members who bought the other 23 items, that is if they can find them. Editor.

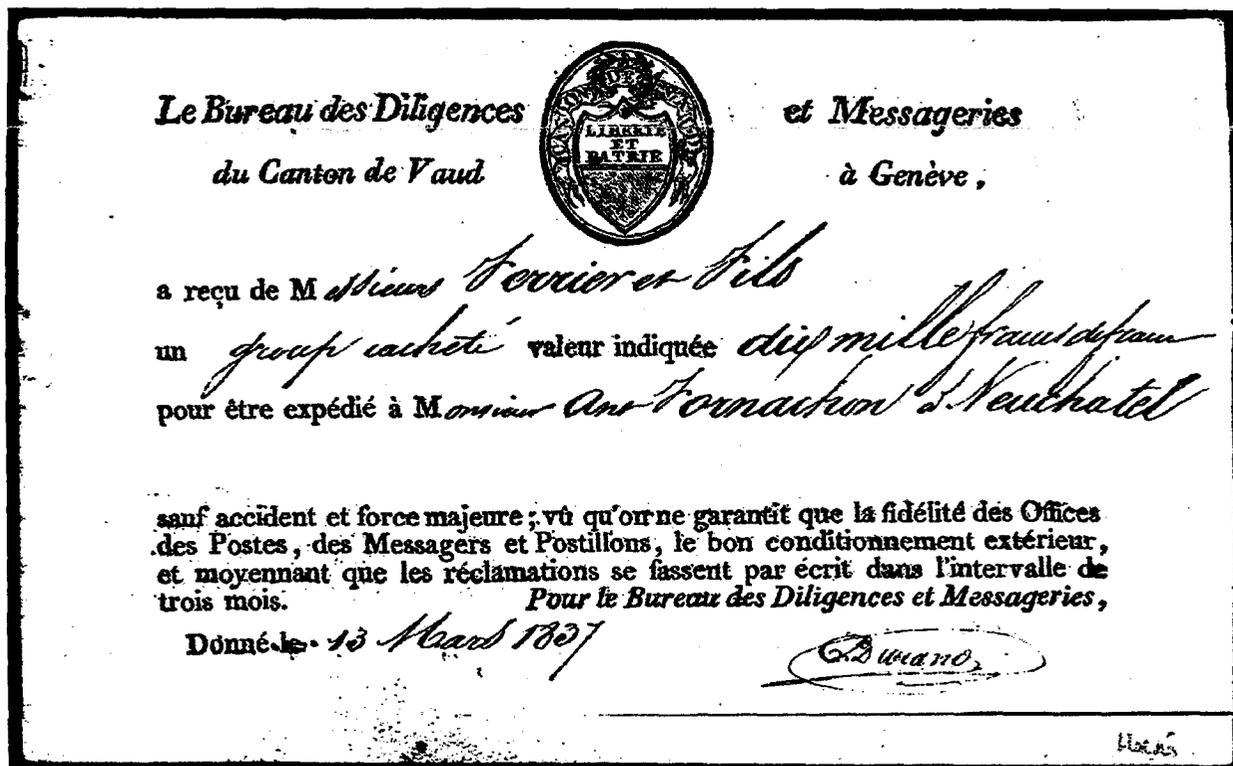
PHILATELIC GAMES? - Michael Rutherford replied to this on page 92 in December. Nice example of playing around, worthless, both philatelically and postally, but that is true collecting. Both cancels are valid, but meaningless, though at the time allowed for non-postal items, i.e., philatelic.

In 1969, as I remember it, this rule was changed, forbidding a second cancel on another stamp, from the same PO, of non-postal use. The reason for this was that one of the firms producing thousands of "unique" items approached the PTT to arrange for a double FDC for each of the five stamps about to appear in the first series of "Portraits" (18.9.69 and six more series were to come). This firm would print a special envelope for each person, put two separate stamps on it, then arrange for the PTT to have the one stamp cancelled in the person's place of birth, and the other where he, or she, had died. The PTT thought that, quite rightly, this would be robbing collectors

so they introduced the rule forbidding two different cancellations on the same cover.

Every postal administration has to become schizophrenic, i.e., where to draw the line between normal postal operations and the desire to make some profit from philatelists, and their peculiar wishes and fashions. To illustrate: some years ago a speculator here in Switzerland asked me the simplest, to him, request. Please buy during one of my business trips, over the counter in the UK, a full set of high-value stamps, in sheets, and ask for them to be nicely cancelled! It was almost impossible to persuade him that neither the UK, nor the USA, could do that, even though every continental country in Europe would be pleased to have the profit from such an easy sale.

So the cover in question could not be cancelled unaddressed, and handed back to the collector, and certainly not a second time, in those countries who put postal service first. They issue more and more useless, uninteresting stamps, to make a bit more money from collectors. There is no answer to this dilemma, I fear.



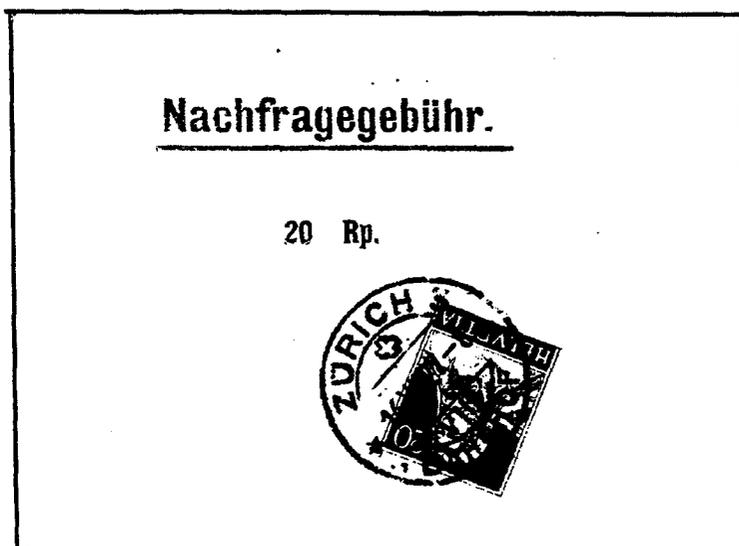
What can members tell us about the item above? Is it a receipt? Was it 'official'? What was the period of use? What was 'un group cacheté'? especially with a value of 10 000 French francs, but then what was the rate of exchange in 1837?

Is there anything else interesting about it or its use? Information to the Editor for publication in the Newsletter, please.

NEW MEMBER - The Society welcomes Mr D R Brinkley of Hartlepool.

PAYMENT FOR WHAT? - A 20c red Tell Head on a piece of buff paper and cancelled with the cds of Zürich 3 Bahnhof on 16.VII 27-8. It seems to be 'official' but in what way was it used to collect a set amount of 20c? Ideas to the Editor or John Cordingley.

CHOCOLAT KLAUS - p92 December 2001. Still no idea when they ceased to exist. Founded in 1856 they had factories in Le Locle in Switzerland and Morteau in France with depots as far away as New York & London. Many other chocolate companies have issued postcards: Kohler; Peter, Cima, Lindt + Sprungli, Ribet, Croisier, Cailler, and Tobler.



London Group Meeting 12th December - The subject was Switzerland 1960-69 and the eleven members present were treated to a very varied series of displays from six members using all the cunning and ingenuity for which the group was noted. A remark overheard was that the 60s was a very boring period for Swiss stamps and John Cordingly seemed to confirm this by showing 99 copies of the 1966 10c Finsteraarhorn! A closer look revealed more than 50 K-cancels and the rest from stations on the smaller railways. Bob Johnson followed with Ticino covers with interesting slogan cancellations, one advising of new postal rates from September 1967.

Next Derek Doling produced First Flight covers from the early 60s, a prolific period as the introduction of jet aircraft led to a large number of special covers and cancellations. He added Balloon cards also from these early days. Claude Mistely was delighted to discover that his aviation display had very little duplication. Special air mail stamps had been discontinued in 1948, except for the Pro Aero issues, but this did not lessen the interest in Aerophilately. He also covered balloon flights and Rocket Mail with special vignettes.

John Mitchell said he decided against the 'Evangelists' as he had displayed them recently so he chose the 'Expo Lausanne' stamps for the 1963 National Exhibition along with special exhibition books. Finally came Eric Lienhard with the definitive stamps of the period and, of course, including postcards illustrating the various designs. Fred Pickard gave a vote of thanks and said that, in his opinion the evening's displays were the best for a long time. D D

Northern Group Report. "I cannot recall a meeting when so few sheets have been displayed, nor one that has generated so much discussion!" This was the opening sentence in Tony Hoyle's vote of thanks to Ian Gilchrist following the Group's meeting at the beginning of December. And how true that was. "*Four Colours Mixed Franking*" was the title of Ian's presentation and he had brought along just twenty-four sheets with our Chairman, David Whitworth, contributing another seven. All the covers from both exhibitors were extremely attractive, meeting the criteria of the title. The franking, not always correct, ranged from the "Cross & Numeral" issues of the 1890s to the "Messengers & Architectural Monuments" of 1960. There was also an "Express" letter of December, 1917, where the postage was made up with complete PJ sets of that year plus one stamp from the current "Tell/Tell Boy" series. And what of the 1972 cover to the UK which, on the face of it was overfranked but nevertheless was underfranked? At that period the letter rate to countries within the CEPT was 40c. but this cover was franked to the value of 50c. However two of the stamps were the 10c. value from the 1936 "Landscape" issue which were invalid after 1955 but had gone through the system undetected. With covers such as these in front of us Ian asked the question "What is a Philatelic Cover?" and set the ball rolling with the following statement.

"I am of the opinion that when we use the term 'It's Philatelic' we use it in a divisory way, the suggestion being that the cover has been made up with stamps for collecting purposes rather than obtaining the stamps at the post office in the normal way and affixing those required for the correct postal tariff. A further implication is that the resulting cover is in some way inferior and therefore of less value or merit than if the stamps were obtained from the post office and used at the time of their availability."

He went on to ask who would be the main culprits in making up covers in this way and how do we determine if a cover is "philatelic" as opposed to "commercial"? He had then drawn up his own list of criteria for determining this question and had come to the conclusion that of his 24 sheets only 4 were truly commercial! This led to a prolonged and sometimes quite heated debate with one member disagreeing with most of what Ian had said. He contended that no matter what valid stamps were displayed on a cover or how they were arranged, providing that the franking was correct and that the material had passed through the normal postal service, that was all that mattered. He also strongly disliked the term "commercial" as the alternative to "philatelic". But as Ian stated, the difficult question arises, "Does it matter?" since one of the great strengths about philately is that we can collect what we like and how we like. If collectors want First Day Covers of complete sets, special events and the like, if it were not for postal authorities and commercial firms, in many cases it would be almost impossible to obtain them. On the other hand by producing these "products", many of which never go through the post, this is clearly using the stamps in a way opposed to the original intent of their production. **So what do you think?** D.C.

FOR SALE - "Artists create postage stamp pictures" PTT 1957, Hans E Gaudard. This really is a lovely book and should be added to a Swiss collection. It is written in English, German, French and Italian. It shows lots of trial designs and final stamps covering some issues between 1936 and 1957; e.g. 3fr Pax five trials, 1955 Vignerons Vevey seven trials, 1955 Automobile show seven trials, 1957 Security on the road twelve designs, Pro Juventute 1950 fourteen trials and many more. This is being offered because I bought it in error! (I have one and the Library has one.) The price is very reasonable at £9.50 including postage. This is on a first come basis. so please telephone Derrick Slate on: 01 992 42 17 84.

DID YOU KNOW?

M Rutherford

- that it is warming up nicely, now minus 12 C, from the -14.4 of yesterday morning! Coldest December since 1962, they say, when the Zürichsee froze over, and that will be worth a stamp, if this cold continues. This reminds me to wish you all an interesting philatelic 2002, and to thank you for your comments and help, and to excuse me for not answering your letters on time. Room for some more good resolutions in the New Year.

- that some weeks ago the Swiss press brought out the story that a letter from Zürich to Chile had turned up with unmistakable signs of anthrax contamination. Then that the sender's address was in the USA, then that it had been cancelled in the USA by the Swiss Post International (SPI) with their bulk mailing mark "8058 Zürich Flughafen, Switzerland", as part of their normal activities! "Naturally" the letter had never been in Switzerland at all. Could this bizarre system have been foreseen by Rowland Hill in his wildest dreams? Has any AHPS member seen any press note about this in the USA?

that Fritz Graf, AHPS member from Vancouver, paid a quick visit to Switzerland, and made a number of interesting discoveries, as usual. At the Philatelic Counter in Bern he found he could obtain any number of the new self-adhesive 70 and 90c coil stamps taken from a roll, as normally sold only in the little dispensers with 100 stamps. On top of this possibility, long forbidden by the Philatelic Services, he found a join in the backing paper of the Australian-printed 70c value. See figures 1 & 2. The 90c is shown in figure 3; note the distance between all stamps, it is quite different from the zero distance of the booklets. Otherwise they seem to be the same, regarding "teeth" layout.

- that he spent a good day at the "Archiv PTT" Victoriastrasse, in Bern, looking up the wealth of material readied for him in advance by Curator Fr. Dr Gudrun Kling and her assistant Ronny Trachsel, concerning the RL "Frontier Zone" rates.

- that the "Day of the Stamp" level 3 exhibition held this year in Basel, 7-9th December, was a great success, many dealers, and many collectors scrutinizing the exhibits. At the official entrance stand (free entry, catalogue CHF 3.-) one could obtain a most useful booklet for CHF 18.-, A5, 44 pages in German, but with an introduction also in French, on all the various official covers and cards issued for the "Day of the Stamp" since 1937. The cards and covers are not shown, but all the cancellations, together with all (priced) known details of the various items issued. It should prove to be an indispensable booklet for collectors of these most interesting, and often elusive, items. Two exhibits also showed how much depth there is in this field. Heinz Bauer, Flurhofstrasse 18, CH-9244 Niederuzwil, Switzerland.

- that for those who like to plan well in advance, note that from the 18 to the 22nd of June 2003 the next Trilaterale Exhibition will be held in Locarno; this time Switzerland, France and Italy, level 2, but international level. More information will follow.

- that Markus Seitz of Luzern, the ATM (Frama) expert, and catalogue publisher, has had to leave out all "fly speck" variations for the four new stamps issued on 20.9.01, as there are just too many, the poorest printing ever of Swiss stamps. The five-colour "Flexodruck" printing

was by Cartaroll AG of Bauma ZH, who have never printed stamps before! One could say these labels, printed, have no value on them, so are not stamps.

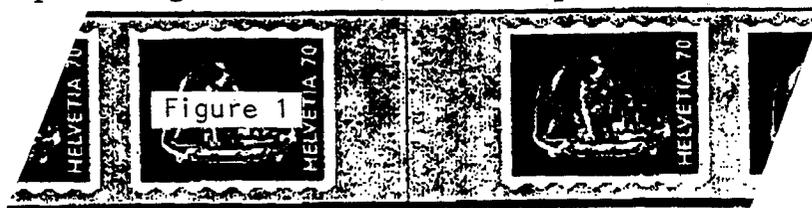
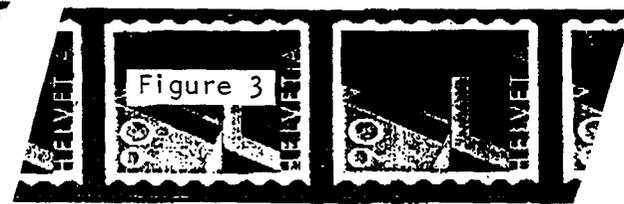


Figure 2

Sprintpak-SNP



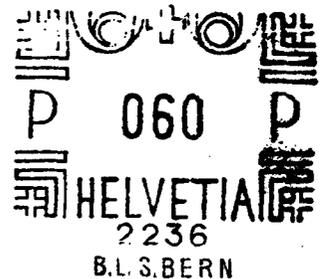
Figure 3



More Odd Items

John Cordingley

There was a time when I believed that I could have a complete Swiss collection from 1900 onwards with a copy of all the stamps. That was when I had graduated to an SG simplified catalogue and had made

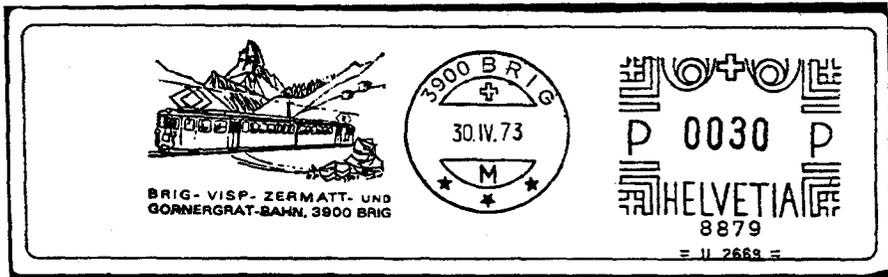


my own album pages using foolscap sized file paper in a two ring binder. Linen reinforcing rings strengthened the holes, but seemed to cost a fortune! How times change. Now its a case of restricting what one collects and I am gradually pruning my accumulation. Visiting stamps fairs I am now more careful over what I buy and ask myself a few questions before I do. Is the piece attractive? Is it in good enough condition to display? Does it fit what I am collecting? Is the price reasonable? And sometimes there has to be a compromise because a postal history item is so unusual!

Up in London for a Society meeting, I visited one of the Strand Stamp Fairs; an odd affair where dealers packed up and disappeared half way through the day. Asking at one stall for Swiss material a stock book was produced of a 'remnant' collection - mainly hinged definitives. But at the back was a collection of cancellation cut-outs of which those illustrated were two. Perhaps because I had never looked, I hadn't seen railway company meter marks with illustrations until one appeared in a recent WALO MINA auction catalogue. This, dated 1942 and from the BLS, was on a complete folded typewriter card and fetched 34 f.

So these two certainly attracted me and do add to my 'railway' material.

They could have been on complete envelopes but nevertheless are good enough to display. All basic conditions satisfied! Oh - the price? 50p each. What can you buy for that these days?



I.G.STAMPS SWITZERLAND

I am pleased to announce that I now have a Web Site.

<http://www.igstamps.com>

1000's of Offers of Swiss stamps and Postal history.

Each item has a brief description and picture.

You can search for your particular collecting interest.

As not all my stock will be listed. I welcome your wants list.

Those members who do not have a computer please contact me.

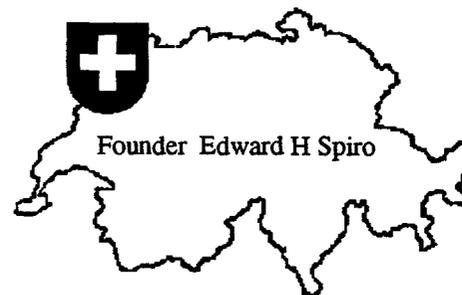
I will send you a printed copy of your collecting interests.

Ian Gilchrist, I.G.Stamps, Po Box 15, Harrogate HG1 1SL, England

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E Mail admin@igstamps.com

HELVETIA PHILATELIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



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No. 2 February 2002

A Not So Up-Front Swiss Folded Letter ~ by Harlan F. Stone

In the world of Swiss destination covers, one of the stars - shown below -- has been an 1863 folded letter to Canton, China, with a 360-centime mixed franking of imperforate and perforated Sitting Helvetia stamps.

To pay four times the 90 centime rate via France during July 1, 1862 to Sept. 30, 1865, the sender used the two highest value imperforate stamps (a pair of the grey 1-franc and three singles of the green 40c) and two of the perforated stamps (a single blue 10c and a single red 30c). The result is a spectacular four colour franking during the short 1 0-month period when the validity of the two issues overlapped.

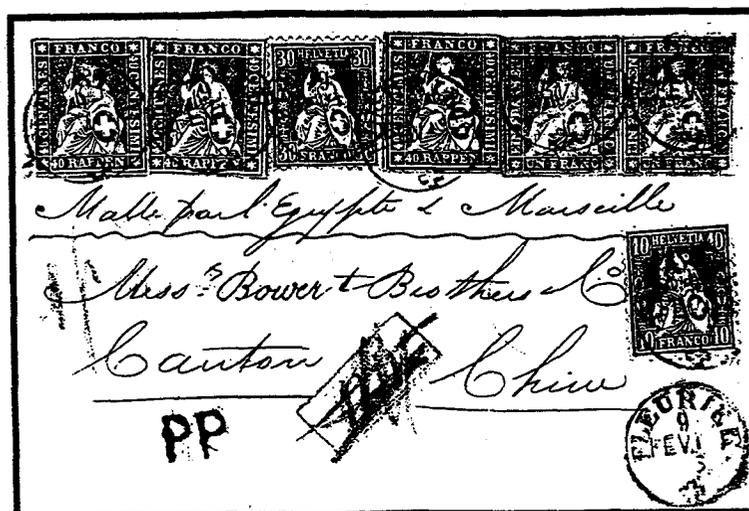
On September 30, 1989, a German firm auctioned this cover with a certificate from one of Switzerland's oldest and most experienced experts. It pictured the cover in a half page black and white photo, described it as a magnificent letter and included the standard symbol for a complete cover.

In September 1991 a prominent philatelic journal in Switzerland included a nearly halfpage black and white illustration of this cover when it published an important article on all recorded 1862-63 mixed frankings by a well known perforated Sitting Helvetia collector. (The author privately republished the article in 1998.)

The cover next held a prominent place in the postal history exhibit of another Swiss collector. His exhibit won the grand prix international at MOSCOW 86 and was a candidate for the prix d'honneur in the championship class at IBRA 99 in Nuremberg.

The cover also appeared as a colour illustration in the grand prix winner's 1995 book on Swiss letter mail to foreign destinations.

When this exhibitor's collection came up for sale at one of Switzerland's largest auction firms on November 30, 1999, a colour illustration of the cover appeared on the front of the catalogue. The catalogue said a certificate by the same Swiss expert accompanied the cover. The lot description included the standard symbol for a complete cover.



As a long-time specialist in the perforated Sitting Helvetia issue, I now had the opportunity to add this famous mixed franking to my collection. I instructed my auction agent, who has viewed lots on my behalf for eleven years, to handle my bid. Through his phone call after the auction, I learned that I was the successful bidder.

In January the cover arrived, sealed in a plastic pouch. Shock is an understatement for what I felt when I cut open the pouch, pulled out the cover, opened the folded sheet and found only a rebacked front. The famous front had been pasted onto another sheet, and the sheet had been folded down to the dimensions of the front to give it the appearance of a complete folded letter.

The expert's certificate, dated February 6, 1989, describes the cover as a "folded letter ... in good condition" and includes a photo of the front. The certificate says that the folded letter bears various origin, transit and arrival postmarks on the front and back. On the back are two smudged postmarks reading Marseilles and Canton, but in both cases the dates are illegible. Presumably this is the same certificate that accompanied the cover when the German firm auctioned it in 1989.

When I reported this fake cover to my agent, he told me he had not inspected it before the Swiss auction because it had a certificate from a highly respected expert and because it was sealed in the pouch.

Since my auction agent had expertised many of the other lots in this auction and written many of their descriptions for the catalogue, I returned the front to him with instructions to return it to the auction house for a refund. First, however, he said he followed a "procedure" for such cases and showed the cover to the expert who issued the certificate. The agent reported back to me that the expert replied he must have simply missed the rebacking in 1989.

At NABA 2000, the Swiss national exhibition during June 21-25, 2000, two people told me they had carefully inspected the cover before the auction, noting the new back and even questioning whether the postmarks on the front had been enhanced.

At this same exhibition, the grand prix winner said he had advised the auction firm that the cover was only a front.

At no point in its published or exhibited history have I been able to find an occasion when this front has been described as only a front. It seems that what is up front is the only thing that counts.

The auction firm has refunded my money and apologised for what it says was its "mistake." The cover was reportedly resold quickly to a Spanish collector.

A question remains: Is the expert's certificate as fake as the postmarks on the back of the cover?

We now wait to see in what guise this front turns up next. .

(Reprinted, with permission, from *Tell*, Volume XXVI, No. 6, November 2000.)

A SERIOUS PROBLEM - For about the last 25 years I have had an arrangement with a friend in Switzerland who has been sending me umm & used copies of each new Swiss stamp as they have been issued, in return for a used copy of every British stamp issued in that period. He asked for the stamps with a fine cds (but not a fdc) and, until recently this has been no problem. Now the PO tell me they are not allowed to do this. Has any other member had a similar problem, or can suggest a solution? A Moilliet.

JANUARY NEWSLETTER page 5 - The 'receipt' has produced many more examples from, among others, Edward Quinton, David Whitworth, Eric Lienhard and Fred Pickard; also a most interesting book on the subject which the Editor is now reading.

Fred Pickard says the receipts are indeed Official, being receipts for sacks of mail transferred from one office to another and would give the known value of the contents. The book covers the period 1790 - 1850 and shows examples in both German and French. At the time of publication it seems no examples in Italian were known, do you have one? Many have a revenue mark on the paper from the canton of issue and details of contents.

More to come - Ed.

HOW DID IT BEGIN?

Dennis Cairns

I don't know exactly how many Helvetia Philatelic Society members there are at the present time but I have often wondered how each individual became hooked on the philately of Switzerland. I do know that some members have family ties with the country and perhaps that gave those people a head start over the rest. But what prompted the vast majority of us to concentrate our philatelic efforts on that tiny, landlocked country?

My own association with Switzerland began in 1959 when my wife and I befriended Heinz, a young man from the Zürich area who had come for twelve months to the north of England to study textiles and textile machinery. Sufficient to say that in the years since then we have come to know, and visit, three generations of a very large Swiss family and now look upon Switzerland almost as a second home. Now none of these friends are philatelists but on our second visit in 1965 Heinz, knowing that I pursued such a hobby, produced a stock book which contained hundreds of "run of the mill" Swiss stamps and invited me to take what I wanted. This I did, more to please him than with any serious intention of collecting Swiss material. However, on returning home, the more I looked at what I had been given, the more I became fascinated with the quality of the design, the colouring and the theme of these stamps. Over the next two years I had disposed of quite a large collection of Commonwealth stamps of the King George VI period and from that moment on became a Swiss only collector! Shortly after this change of direction whilst attending a meeting of a local philatelic society, I recall the speaker saying, "If you are a specialist collector, there will be most likely a specialist society for that country. Join it!" So I did, otherwise I would never have been a contributor to this Newsletter.

Of course, specializing in a particular country is not the whole story and, as a collector of Swiss stamps in a very general way, I soon discovered through attending Northern Group meetings in Leeds that colleagues were also very knowledgeable about certain aspects of Swiss philately on which they concentrated; early postal history, particular definitive issues, TPOs, Pro-Juventute, etc.

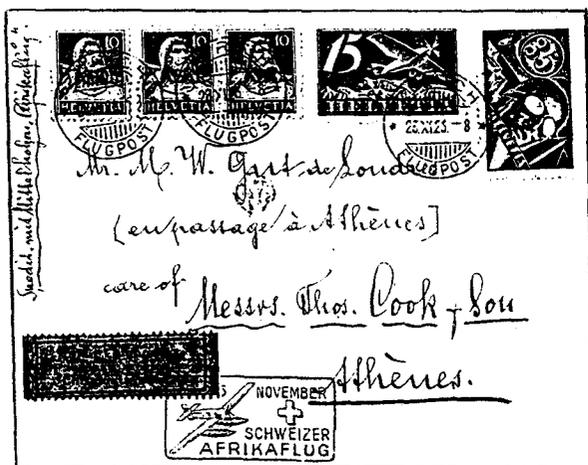


Figure 1

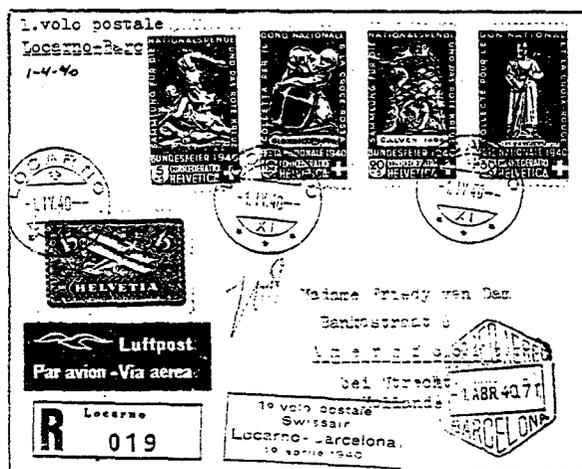


Figure 2

Now amongst my early Swiss acquisitions following the disposal of the Commonwealth stuff was a mixed bag of material, mainly commercial covers, from an auction house. However, one of these covers was, to my untutored mind, rather unusual. It was an airmail cover of 1926 addressed to a gentleman care of Messrs Thomas Cook & Son, Athens. It carried a cachet depicting a seaplane and was inscribed "1926 NOVEMBER, SCHWEIZER AFRIKAFLUG", whilst down one side in red ink had been written "Spedit. mit Mittelholzers Afrikaflug". (Fig.1). This meant nothing at all to me and for quite a long time the cover was tucked away in a box with other items. It must have been two years later whilst still collecting in a very general way that I bought a second interesting looking air cover, that of the first Swissair Locarno-Barcelona Flight on the 1st April, 1940. Again, I knew nothing about it but had purchased the cover as part of its franking was the full 1940 Bundesfeier set which had been issued only twelve days previously. (Fig.2). That cover also would have been stored away for further consideration had it not been for the fact that only three or four weeks later in June, 1974 I received a copy of the "Swissair Gazette" from my Swiss friend. There on the front cover and underneath a striking photograph of an early DH-3 biplane over the Simmental was the bold headline "Walter Mittelholzer, The Pioneer of Aerial Photography". (Fig.3). Inside was a short biography of this man alongwith another photograph showing him with his two colleagues shortly before take off on the second Africa Flight in 1929. Much to my amazement one of these two,