

# HELVETIA PHILATELIC SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN

Founded 1946

NEWSLETTER – APRIL 2020

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## COMPULSORILY 'VALEUR DÉCLARÉE' INLAND LETTER

DAVID HUCKETT



I was aware that such a thing as compulsory registration exists (i.e. posted out of course and found in box\*) but had not seen a Swiss item before. Examples of the service "Valeur Déclarée" do not turn up on my radar at all frequently so a postage due item was doubly welcome.

Local letter rate 1<sup>st</sup> January 1921 to 30<sup>th</sup> October 1967 – 10c

Rate for Inland 'Valeur Déclarée' letter up to 200fr from 1<sup>st</sup> July 1925 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 1962 – 20c

The letter was posted in Bern on 6<sup>th</sup> December 1934 and arrived Muri 7<sup>th</sup> December 1934. It is marked "Brief mit Geld" (Letter with money) so was compulsorily declared as a 'Valeur Déclarée' letter. As the charge for this service was 20c and as it had not been prepaid this deficit was doubled and 40c postage due was charged.



Reverse of the cover with a rubbing of the enclosed coin

I presume that the 5 Fr mark on the reverse is a rubbing of the enclosed coin produced officially as a proof.

\* 'Posted out of course' is used in the UK on registered items that had been put into a post box rather than a Post Office. These are items that have the blue crayon cross on them. It is similar to the French 'trouvé à la boîte' - found in box. These are redirected mail, mail marked "Charge", etc. that have been put into a post box rather than a post office. In other words mail that required special treatment but was not handed into a post office.

Bob Medland comments as follows: "I recall seeing a similar cover where the post office had detected that it contained a coin so sent it by the 'Value' service, but David's cover is particularly interesting in having postage dues against which the fee was paid by the addressee. Messrs Rölli sold a superb, large collection of these items a few years ago which comprised a detailed study: as ever, it is a pity that it was not recorded and made available for public knowledge in some format. There is a note in the June 2003 edition of the HPS Newsletter (p.47) by Michael Rutherford advising that the PTT stopped offering this service in 2001/02 apparently because its insurance was too expensive."

THE EARLY SWISS ISSUES 1843-184MARC BURGESS

*This article was originally published in Gibbons Stamp Monthly in February 2020. The Society is grateful to Stanley Gibbons for giving the Society some useful publicity through its publication. n.b. Illustrations are not to scale.*

**THE ZÜRICH CANTONAL ISSUES**

Over the centuries, the city of Zürich grew into an important commercial centre. An official messenger service dates back to the 15th century and in the early 17th century a regular post office was established in the city.

With the growing importance of the city, the citizens of Zürich noted the advantages of the adhesive postage stamps that had been introduced in Great Britain in 1840.

On the 13th August 1842, the Postal Department presented to the Council of State a report showing how the postal organisation could be simplified. Using the recently introduced British pre-payment system as the example, they proposed the Finance Department should initiate the production of postage stamps.

It was further proposed that postal charges be based on two separate rates:

- 4 Rappen for letters circulating within the city – the ‘Local Rayon’
- 6 Rappen for letters addressed in the Canton of Zürich – the ‘Cantonal Rayon’.

On the beginning of March 1843, Zürich gained the distinction of being the second affixed postage stamp issuing authority in the world.



The 4r. and 6r. Zürich cantonal issues

The speed of production, which allowed no time for consideration of competitive designs, is probably the reason why the design bears such a striking resemblance to the British ‘Penny Black’. While the large figures ‘4’ and ‘6’ replace the Queen’s head, the engine-turned background was not precisely copied.

Designed by the lithographer Esslinger, the contract for the printing was awarded to the firm of Orell Füssli & Co., founded in 1519 and the oldest printing establishment in Switzerland. Each design was hand drawn five times, giving five distinct types for each value. The impressions were repeated on the ‘printing stone’ in ten double rows of five stamps, making 100 stamps per sheet.

The paper used was white or greyish-white. Before printing with black ink, the paper was covered with faint red lines, either vertical or horizontal.

The total number of Zürich 4 Rappen and 6 Rappen stamps printed was 35,800 and 180,000, respectively. The postmark designed for use on these stamps consisted of the Swiss Cross within an ornamental quatrefoil frame, known as the ‘Zürich Rosette’. As there were the two rates of 4 Rappen and 6 Rappen, it was decided that the rosette postmark should be in two colours: black for letters within the city of Zürich and red for areas outside the city, but within the canton. However, there were a few exceptions from the rule with the occasional use of blue, or greenish-blue, ink.

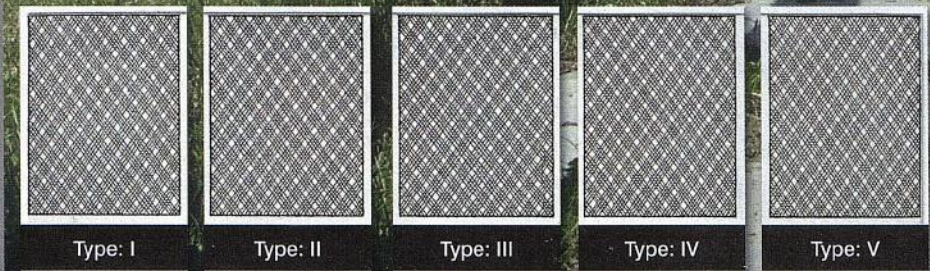
### The Zurich 4 Rp

The five types are differentiated as follows:

- Type I: point behind the 'e'
- Type II: 'e' near the frame
- Type III: shading of the cross bar above the '4' is indented
- Type IV: the shade of the long bar of the '4' has smaller extension
- Type V: the short vertical shading of the '4' is tilted up

The types also vary according to the number of diagonal lines running in the background of the four corners:

Type	Top Left	Top Right	Bottom Left	Bottom Right
I	1	4	4	3
II	4	4	4	4
III	4	3	2	4
IV	3	2	3	1
V	2	2	3	2



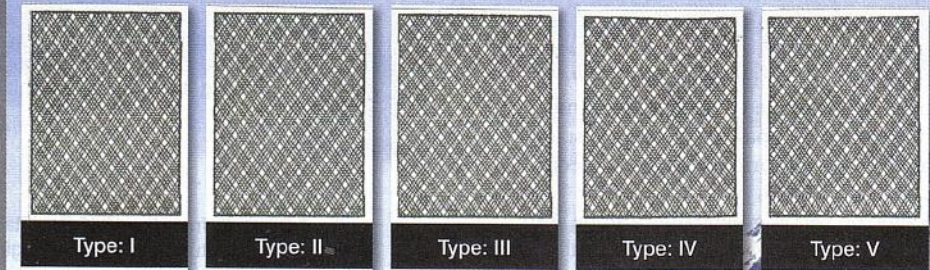
### The Zürich 6 Rp.

The five types are differentiated as follows:

- Type I: 'H' near the frame
- Type II: point behind the 'H'
- Type III: 'H' wide from the frame
- Type IV: 'H' wide from the frame and the head of the '6' is egg shaped
- Type V: 'H' wide from the frame and 'ZÜRICH' is in smaller high-standing script

Again, the types vary according to the number of diagonal lines running in the background of the four corners:

Type	Top Left	Top Right	Bottom Left	Bottom Right
I	2	4	1	2
II	1	3	1	3
III	4	2	3	3
IV	4	1	3	4
V	2	1	4	1



### THE GENEVA CANTONAL ISSUES

The first stamp to be issued by the Geneva Post (Switzerland's second stamp issue and only the fourth stamp in the world to be issued) resulted from a speech before the Grand Council of Geneva on Monday, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1843, by Alphose de Candolle, Professor of Botany and Council member.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> September 1843, Professor de Candolle's proposal was approved. However, a proposal for lower postal rates was rejected, leaving the local rate at 5 Centimes and the cantonal rate at 10 Centimes. The unique design of the initial Double Geneva stamp provided for both rates.

### The 1843 Double Geneva



The 1843 Double Geneva could be used in its entirety for mail from one city to another, or halved for local postage within the city.

The stamp's designer is believed to be Guillaume Pasteur, Director of the Geneva Post at the time. The stamp was printed with black ink on yellow-green paper by the lithographer Charles Alphonse Schmid in sheets of 50 doubles.

Total printing was 1,200 sheets or 60,000 doubles, of which only 6,000 were ever used with only about 600 of these preserved.

The inscription over each double stamp indicates "Cantonal Postage of 10 Centimes", i.e. the rate from one city to another. Each half stamp bears the inscription "Port Local" (local postage) with a value of 5 Centimes.

The first day of issue was the 30<sup>th</sup> September 1843, but the public were slow to accept the stamps and very few franked letters are known from late 1843. In an attempt to encourage prepayment of mail, the post office decided on the 6<sup>th</sup> February 1844 to sell the 10 Centimes double stamp at 8 Centimes and the single stamp at 4 Centimes. This resulted in an improvement in the sale of stamps during the rest of that year.

Throughout 1844 postal rates were subject to continuing discussion. On the 11<sup>th</sup> January 1845 M. A. Barde, President of the Finance Department proposed that the rate for cantonal letters be reduced from 10 to 5 Centimes, expecting an increased volume of mail to more than compensate for revenue lost by lowering the rate. The Council adopted this proposal and established uniform letter rates for the canton taking into consideration the weight of a letter.

Effective from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 1845 the rates became:

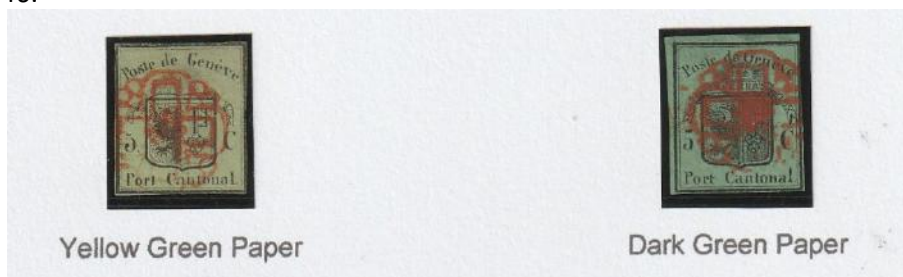
- 5 Centimes for a letter up to one ounce
- 10 Centimes for a letter weighing between 1 and 3 ounces
- for letters over 3 ounces, 10 Centimes for the first 3 ounces and 15 Centimes per ounce for the excess.

This resulted in the abolition of the Cantonal Post, and the 'Double Geneva' became surplus to requirement. However, it was not declared obsolete at this time and, although it was no longer sold by the post office, private stocks were used, either as halves for the new 5 Centime rate, or as doubles for heavier letters until 1853.

### The 1845 Small Eagle

A new stamp was proposed by Postmaster General Pasteur, to be similar in design to half of the double stamp, but slightly larger and bearing the inscription "Port Cantonal". The lithographer, Charles Schmid, printed the new design in black on yellow-green paper. The stamps, called the "Small Eagle", as the eagle's wings do not reach the edge of the shield, were laid out very close to each other on the plate, and sometimes touching the next stamp. Because of this, copies of the 'Small Eagle' with four full frame lines are very difficult to find.

A total of 1,200 sheets of 100 stamps, or 120,000 stamps in total were printed, being in use from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 1845 until the end of 1846.



The 1845 Small Eagle

The 1846 Large Eagle

### The 1846 Large Eagle

Towards the end of 1846, before the supply of 'Small Eagles' was exhausted, the lithographer made a new plate with a slightly different design. In this new design the eagle's wings are touching the frame of the shield, resulting in the stamp being called the "Large Eagle". It has been estimated that the first printing on yellow-green paper was 100,000 stamps and the second printing on dark green paper was 50,000. A full sheet of the 'Large Eagle' on yellow-green paper can be seen at the Philatelic Museum in Bern, this being the only complete sheet of cantonal stamps known to exist. The first known use of the yellow-green 'Large Eagle' is the 6<sup>th</sup> January 1847 and the lithographer's records indicate that the dark green 'Large Eagle' stamps were delivered to the post office on the 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1848, all being valid until 30<sup>th</sup> September 1854.

**1846 Pre-Stamped Envelopes** On 27<sup>th</sup> February 1846 pre-stamped envelopes were introduced, each carrying an imprinted 5 Centime light green 'Large Eagle' on yellowish paper. There were a total of 40,000 of these envelopes printed in three sizes: 140mm x 55mm; 140mm x 75mm and 88mm x 50 mm.

### 1849 Imprinted Stamp Cut-Outs



From 1<sup>st</sup> June 1849 it was officially permitted to cut the imprinted stamps from the 1846 pre-stamped envelopes featuring the 'Large Eagle' design for general use (see above).

### THE BASEL CANTONAL ISSUE

Basel was the third and last of the Swiss cantons to issue its own stamps.

In 1843, Johannes Bernoulli, the city's Postmaster General, put before the State Council a recommendation that the six letterboxes be increased to sixteen, and further proposed that the opportunity should be taken to issue a stamp for the city of Basel. Although the Council gave approval to Bernoulli's proposal in January 1844, it was not until the 1<sup>st</sup> July 1845 that the stamp was issued.

At the time, the monetary unit for the canton of Basel was the Batzen, one Batzen being equal to 10 Rappen. However, the Basel Rappen should not be confused with the Zürich Rappen, which was based on the Heller and Schilling.

A local rate of 2½ Rappen was introduced for letters weighing up to 1 lot (15½ grammes) and carried within the city of Basel, whilst a cantonal rate of 5 Rappen was applied to mail posted outside of the city limits.

The stamp, designed by the architect Melchior Berri, features a white dove embossed on a field of red and carrying a letter in its beak. As Basel was once the seat of a bishopric, a bishop's crosier (depicting the Basel coat of arms) is shown top centre. Engraved and printed by H. B. Krebs of Frankfurt on thick yellowish-white wove paper in sheets of 40 (5 rows of 8 stamps), the stamps were sold to the public in half-sheets of 20 for 5 Batzen (50 Rappen).



**The 1845 2½r. Basel Dove, the world's first multi-coloured stamp.**

The 'Basel Dove', as it became known, was printed in black, crimson and blue, became the world's first multi-coloured stamp and is considered to be one of the most beautiful stamps ever produced.

As with the other cantonal stamps, the 'Basel Dove' failed to catch the imagination of the public and was withdrawn from use in December 1848.

### FEDERAL STAMPS

When the Federal Postal Administration came into operation in June 1849, the cantons of Zürich and Geneva continued to print their own stamps for a short period (the Transitional Issues) until the first Federal stamps appeared in May 1850. Basel, however, did not follow suit.

It is estimated that the total number of the 'Basel Dove' stamps printed was 41,480. Remainders were used up during the period December 1848 to April 1850, and there are examples of late use into 1850. It has also been found on covers in combination with the light-blue 'Rayon I', issued in March 1851.

## FORGERIES & REFERENCES

The limited numbers of stamps issued by each of the Zürich, Geneva and Basel cantonal authorities has created a level of scarcity that many forgers have subsequently sought to exploit over the years to the detriment of many an unsuspecting collector. The abundance of forgeries is such that discerning collectors always rely on expert written certification accompanying their new acquisitions, as well as reference to notable publications on Swiss cantonal forgeries.

Such works include:

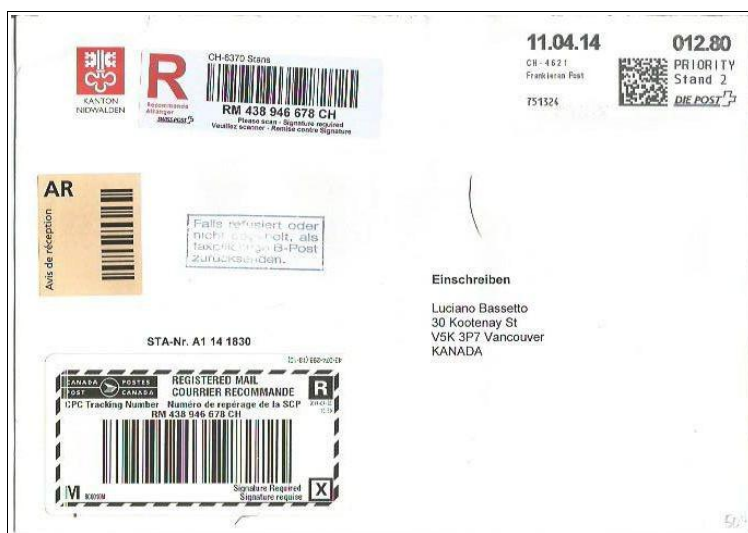
- "The Forgeries of the Cantonal Stamps of Switzerland" (1907) by Alex de Reuterskiöld;
- "Autumn Leaves-How to Detect Forged Stamps" (1882) by Rev. Robert Brisco Earée;
- Cedric Dry's Helvetia Philatelic Society paper (2011) on the later forgeries.

Other references:

- "Stamps of Switzerland" (1899) by Reuterskiöld and Mirabeau;
- "Zumstein Spezialkatalog Schweiz" (2000).

## NEW INFORMATION ON POSTAL RATES

FRITZ GRAF



I found this interesting cover at a bourse recently and figured that for 50 cents I could not go wrong ! At home, when I tried to analyze the tariff it just would not fit; somewhere there was 3 Franks missing. I ended up consulting a friend of mine in Switzerland and he came up with the solution:

International Letter 2	CHF3.80
Register Fee	6.-
Avis de Reception AR	3.- ( 6.-)
Total CHF	12.80

The sender is the Office of the Public Prosecutor of the canton of Nidwalden. As such, they would have a fair amount of mail and must therefore have a business account with Swiss Post. My friend was able to show me that the "AR" rate in 2014 was CHF3.- for business customers. For private customers like you and me, the rate was CHF 6.- (see my list)

It shows that the statement in the "explanations" of my 'List of Swiss Postal Rates': "the list is not complete" is correct and I should have added that commercial rates can be different!

n.b. Fritz Graf's major work on Postal Rates, the result of many years of diligent researching and refining, can be found on the Helvetia P. S.'s Website for those members wishing to learn more.

POSTAL HISTORY OF SWITZERLAND: LOUIS PHILIPPE de LUZEMIKE SHARP

During my postal history researches, I discovered two letters in my collection, acquired several years apart, addressed to Louis Philippe de Luze, Consul. This prompted me to explore the internet further as I had remembered having sight of other covers when browsing some of my accumulated reference material.

Louis Philippe de Luze (1793-1877) was originally from Neuchâtel and was the grandson of Baron Jean-Jacque III de Luze (1728 – 1777). He married a New Yorker, Sarah Ogden in 1821 and in 1846 he replaced Henri Casimir de Rham as Swiss Consul, so becoming the second holder of this appointment. He also took on the responsibility of distributing funds on behalf of the Swiss Benevolent Society of New York which had been founded in 1832 by his predecessor. He held the post until 1873.

I have easily identified a further six postal items sent from Switzerland to him, making a total of 8 items known to me (the details are shown in the spreadsheet on the next page). With the exception of an 1866 cover, the others are from the Strubel period between 1857 and 1862. As the Swiss Consul, the receipt of such mail is not unexpected and cumulatively also gives an insight into the transatlantic mails during this period.

I would welcome information about any other postal items known to other philatelists which have been sent to this addressee, particularly those following the introduction of the perforated Sitting Helvetia in 1862 as well as any early correspondence noting that his appointment began in 1846. A quantity of unstamped mail may still exist if not lost or destroyed.

My contact details are [mike.sharp@icloud.com](mailto:mike.sharp@icloud.com)

NEWS FROM THE ABPS

Several Swiss-related displays were mentioned in the Spring 2020 edition of the Associations journal: Chelmsford P.S.'s 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year celebrations included displays of Swiss stamps on postcards, Swiss publicity tourist labels and covers relating to Swiss Aviation Events. Ray Houghton from Eltham & Woolwich P.S. showed 'Swiss Soldier Stamps' to Croydon P.S. Kingston and District P.S. enjoyed Michael Warwick's 'Cinderella Stamps', including poster stamps and Swiss soldier stamps. Luton and District P.S. were entertained by one of their members with 'Early Swiss Mail and Postal Stationery'. South Midlands P.S.'s 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary displays included 'Swiss Kindergarten' themes and 'Zeppelins'. Our member Richard Akers showed 'Switzerland and France Postal History' (previously postponed due to flooding) to Watford P. S. and finally, Richard Wheatley FRPSL made a presentation to the Royal P.S. London on the story of hotel posts in Egypt in the 1890s – apparently similar to the systems pioneered in Switzerland some 40 years earlier.

**Schedule of other covers in my collection addressed to Louis Philippe de Luze sent from Switzerland**

Date	Town of origin	Destination	Stamps	Postal rate	Tariff	Route	Source of data
Sept 15 1857	Bern	New York	26Cd (2), 24F	4th Rate Period	Fr 0.95	via Liverpool	Rolli Auction 2015
July 21 1857	Zofingen	New York	27C (2), 23E, 25F	4th Rate Period double weight	Fr 2.30	St Louis + ?	Feldman 2018
May 19 1858	Bern	New York	27C, 24D	4th Rate Period	Fr 1.15	via Liverpool	Feldman 2014
Dec 11 1862	Aarhus	New York	27C, 23G	5th Rate Period	Fr 1.10	via Liverpool	Feldman 2013
May 5 1858	St Gallen	New York	27D, 24D	4th Rate Period	Fr 1.15	via Liverpool	H Brach P.243
August 21 1857	Basel	New York	26C, 25B, 22D	4th Rate Period (Fr 1.10) underpaid	Fr 0.65	American Service via Le Havre	H Brach P.244
May 29 1860	Burgdorf	New York	27D (2), 24D (2)	4th Rate Period double weight	Fr 2.30	St Louis +	MS collection
Feb 15 1866	Interlaken	New York	34, 35 (3)	French treaty, double weight	Fr 2.20	via Le Havre	MS collection

+ Shipping company not always discernible from the cover or postal tariff applied.

### **A SPECIAL MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN**

Dear Fellow-Members of the HPS, also Members of our reciprocal society in America.

It hardly needs me to say that we are currently going through very difficult times. The situation seems almost surreal: just a few months ago we had no inkling of what this year had in store for us. So, what does it all mean for our society? First and foremost, in line with advice from HM Government your committee has made the inevitable decision to **cancel this year's National Meeting and AGM, also the Salisbury meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> June**. The next Salisbury meeting is set for 10<sup>th</sup> October and, hopefully, this will be able to go ahead. We will discuss to see if it will be appropriate or possible to hold the AGM as part of that meeting or, alternatively, rearrange the AGM and National Meeting for later in the year. The management of the George Hotel in Huntingdon has been very understanding about our cancellation and it would be a nice gesture if we can reciprocate this at some time in the future.

Hopefully Richard and Rosalind will be able to continue the fine work they do for us as Newsletter Editor and Distributor. The absolute need for us to minimise or avoid any social contact will be trying but, looking on the bright side, it will give us more time to work on our collections and displays. And how about some more articles for the Newsletter? In the meantime I take the opportunity to wish everyone well: stay safe and I look forward to seeing you or being in touch again before too long.

#### MEMBERSHIP NEWS

EDITOR

We have recently been informed that our member William Brackenborough has died. The Society has passed on its condolences to his family.

#### LONDON 2020

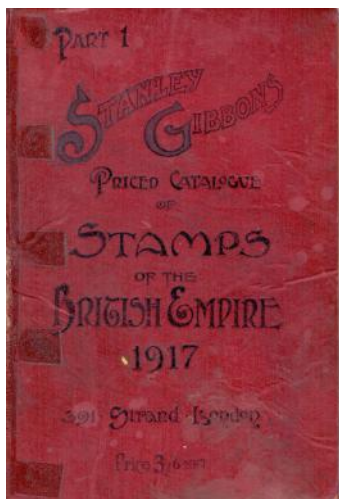
The organisers of this international stamp exhibition have concluded that: "In line with UK Government guidelines, it is now impossible for the exhibition to happen in May 2020. Although we have not fully defined all the details, the exhibition will go ahead at the same venue on the earliest feasible dates available: 19<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> February 2022."

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GIBBONS AND COURVOISIER - WARTIME STAMP ISSUESBOB BROWN

Collectors of Swiss stamps would not normally turn immediately to Stanley Gibbons Part 1 catalogue for references to their particular interest. However it was not always so; someone recently passed me a copy of SG Part 1 for 1917, and at the back of the volume a section was added entitled "A List Of Stamps Issues (other than those for the British Empire) Occasioned by the War". This included stamps issued by the Allied Powers and their colonies, and also neutral countries, including Switzerland, but not those of the enemy.

Swiss stamps so listed were the three overprints issued on January 26<sup>th</sup> 1915 and numbered SG 287-89 (*now 298-300*). Interestingly in two cases the numbers printed were also given: 1c/2c bistre (250,000), 13c/12c yellow-brown Helvetia (1,300,000) and 13c/12c brown on buff Tell. The numbers in brackets are the numbers that were printed. A fourth overprinted stamp the 80c/70c orange-yellow and chocolate SG 290 (*now 301*) was released in October 1915, as opposed to January 26<sup>th</sup> for the rest. The note underneath clarifies that the stamp was issued for a different purpose than the lower values. The note stated: "These surcharges were made on account of the increase in postage, imposed to help defray the expenses of mobilisation. The 80c was for the increased registration charges imposed on account of the lowering of exchange of French silver currency."

Two further stamp issues, one on October 21<sup>st</sup> 1915, a 13c olive on buff of the Tell design (SG 291, *now 284*), and an 80c slate and buff in 1916 of the Sitting Helvetias (SG 292, *now 244*) are also noted, without comments as to the reasons for their issue.

Current SG catalogue values suggest that the stamp now numbered SG 299 had limited postal use, maybe bought up by dealers at the time, or subsequently remaindered. SG 301 is scarce both mint and used.

I wonder if I might also ask HPS members for any information regarding a Courvoisier stamp issue which was made in 1936 to raise funds for the Red Cross in Ethiopia during the Second Italian-Ethiopian War? This consisted of 5 stamps valued from 5c to 1 franc, and frequently turns up in mint condition in pre-WWII schoolboy collectors' albums. One set I acquired recently has a note alongside: "This set of stamps was never issued. The Red Cross issue was sent to Abyssinia and arrived at Djibouti (*the port in French Somalia linked by rail to Addis Ababa*) only 3 days from Addis Ababa when that town fell to the Italians." Wikipedia states this happened on May 5<sup>th</sup> 1936.

What happened to these stamps subsequently? Were they returned to Courvoisier and subsequently put on the philatelic market? The stamps were eventually issued - and are listed in Gibbons as SG 344-48 - in 1945 overprinted with a "V" both in European and Amharic script standing for "Victory"; but were these the original supplies or a reprint? The overprint looks like it was applied in Switzerland rather than locally.

NEWS FROM GIBBONS STAMP MONTHLYEDITOR

SG's Catalogue Supplement published in the February 2020 edition of the GSM recorded that in 2010 Peru issued a stamp commemorating the centenary of Jorge Chavez's famous flight – the first person to fly across the Alps. It shows black and white photographs of the pilot and his Blériot XI monoplane. A supplement to Switzerland's commemorative CHF1.30 stamp (Z1340) in the issue 'Centenary of Swiss Aviation' – a 4-stamp set issued in 2010.

I also note that there was an article in the September 2019 of the GSM – 'The Strubel Stamps of Switzerland 1854-1862' It is by Alan Wishart FRPSL and was republished in Stanley Gibbons' new Stamp Catalogue of Switzerland (incl. Liechtenstein and UN Office (Geneva)). Apologies to members that I did not inform you at the time. I must read the GSM more often!

SWISS POST's APPEDITOR

The Swiss National Library is celebrating its 125th anniversary. Swiss Post issued a new postage stamp in March this year specially designed for the event by Rina Jost. It depicts, in cartoon format, "the balancing act between analogue and digital media at the National Library" and features a "distinctive augmented reality effect". Swiss Post encourages you to scan the stamp with its Post-App scanner and bring it to life! More information on their website: [poste.ch/timbres-poste](http://poste.ch/timbres-poste). Details of new Swiss postal cancellations can be found every month on the section of the website: [poste.ch/philanews](http://poste.ch/philanews).

THE ANATOMY OF A COVERCHARLES J. LaBLONDE CphH FRPSL

Front



Reverse

This single cover is one of the best I have ever seen in terms of presenting so many different postal history aspects of Swiss WW II mail. It enables me to provide the readers with a detailed guide of how to “read” a censored letter and how much it can tell you about its journey from Switzerland.

On the neighbourhood cocktail circuit, when the conversation reaches a low point, the subject of hobbies might arise to fill the void. Someone will ask me what I do for fun and I am forced to admit to being a stamp collector. This response always elicits a comment and a question. The comment generally goes like this: “My grandfather had a stamp collection that is still in the attic; I would like to know if it is very valuable.” The question will be: “Do you have many stamps and where are they from?”. When I say that I actually have no stamps, only envelopes, eyebrows rise and one final question follows: “Why?”.

That is a fair question that may be worth some discussion. I like covers because for a long time I have been learning to read them. Each one tells a story; sometimes detective work may even be required. Together let's “read” a very interesting WW II Swiss cover.

A letter starts out somewhere, ours in the small town of Mendrisio Borgo, Canton of Ticino, on 20<sup>th</sup> October 1944. The destination of the letter is Cordoba, Republic of Argentina, South America. The sender (or his post office) has attached 1.80 Swiss Francs postage to the letter. A dedicated collector will want to ensure that this franking is correct. Each letter departing Switzerland needed 30 centimes basic postage. Air mail service required a surcharge, at the time 150 centimes per 50 grams for Argentina. So our letter is correctly paid.

The next chapter of the story is to determine how the letter left Switzerland? The Swiss designated certain locations where all outbound mail was collected, processed and bagged for travel. In late 1944 this location was the Basel 2 post office.

But wait! What of the black ink markings on the upper left front of the letter? These markings indicate a very well-informed mailer who knew that the letter weighed about 5 grams and wrote “5 gr” in black ink. The sender also knew that under normal conditions the letter would have gone via Spain/Portugal to meet the transatlantic Pan Am flights to the Americas. But in late October 1944 normal conditions no longer prevailed and the only way the letter could be routed was through Sweden and Great Britain. Only upon special request of the sender could a letter be sent via this route; our informed sender wrote on the letter “Via Sverige”.

To confirm that a piece of mail was correctly franked, processed and routed, Switzerland used throughout the war a two-part rubber stamp that we see twice on our letter. One impression of the transit marking was applied upside down by the postal clerk, thus he/she marked the letter again. We see from the rubber stamp that the letter officially weighed only 4 grams and was indeed processed by the Basel 2 office.

Note the two purple lines under the black “Via Sverige”. These lines were added by the processor at Basel 2 to confirm that the Sweden routing designated by the sender was indeed allowable.

But to reach Sweden the letter passed through Germany, where the German censors had a good look at it. By holding a flashlight inside of the cover one can see where the Nazis slit it open on the reverse side and resealed it with the usual Berlin brown tape, Code “b” for Berlin. German censors also chemically examined the outside of the envelope very heavily front and reverse. As the war went badly for Germany the use of censorship chemicals on mail increased dramatically. But the letter tells us even more about its stay in Germany.

For much of the war German censorship was carried out by the Wehrmacht (the German Army). Late in 1944 Hitler, in an attempt to tighten up the censorship system, assigned censor duties to the fearsome SS. The red SS markings, tying the brown tape to the cover read "Zensurstelle Geprüft". This particular SS marking was in use from September 1944 to March 1945 and is quite scarce. The pencil markings on the front left side, top and bottom, are the notes of the German censors on the cover. They show that a three page letter was enclosed. The black 68 on the front is a German file number. We believe that every letter censored in Berlin was recorded in a numerical file.

Finally the letter flew to Malmo, Sweden courtesy of Lufthansa. From Sweden the journey continued to Great Britain via the BOAC link from Stockholm to RAF Leuchars in Scotland, then by rail to meet Great Britain Censor Number 3320 who was working in Liverpool at this time and who opened the left side of the letter. It is not possible to exactly date the transit of the letter through GB, but during the week ending 4<sup>th</sup> November 1944 there were three flights from Sweden to GB. Was the letter on one of these flights? There is no way to tell.

The GB censor 3520 closed the letter with the Standard GB Form P. C. 90 that was in use throughout the Empire for most of the war. This one is interesting because it shows the printer's mark lower left 51 – 851 – W.H.H. Ltd. To date the full list of printers has not been found in the GB WW II Archives. Several collectors are studying these numbers at present.

The letter left GB via Pan Am and landed in San Juan, Puerto Rico, where the US Censor Number 64120 had a look at it by opening the right side of the letter. There is no way to establish the date of this event. The letter transferred to the Pan Am South American route for the final leg of its journey. On the reverse is a Buenos Aires arrival marking that is, sadly, unreadable. There is also a large 21 in a black circle that is, as yet, unexplained. Finally, on the reverse, we see two impressions of the number 1008 in black and in red what appears to be 907. Such numbers appear on the back of most WW II mail arriving in Argentina but they are, as yet, unexplained. Argentine collectors report no known WW II censorship.

So there is still more to be discovered. Enjoy reading your covers!

#### BUNDESFEIER CARDS – THE ANSWERS

WERNER GATTIKER/EDITOR

Reference the article in the March 2020 edition of the HPSN (Page 27). Werner Gattiker was quick off the mark to respond to my queries on this fascinating and, in my experience, very rewarding collecting area. He writes: "All the answers to your questions can be found in the excellent book "Bundesfeierkarten – Idee und Wirkung" by Guido A. Zäch, available to borrow from our Society Library.

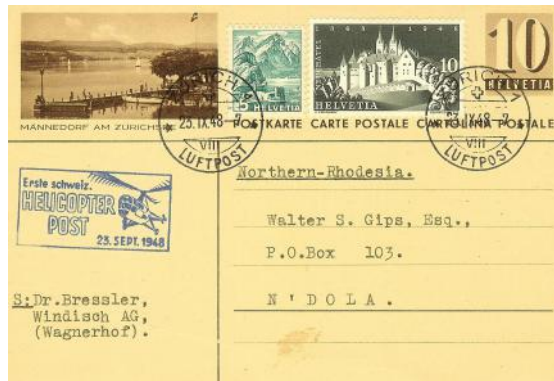
Very briefly, here are some generalized answers:

- Bundesfeier Cards with value-imprints (postal stationery) were sold by larger post offices, usually in the months of July and August each year. Mail orders were accepted and handled by the Bundesfeier Committee, but the actual distribution (and thus stock control) remained in the hands of the PTT. Many charitable or civic organizations, also hotels and some shops helped with the sale of BF cards; they also had to order their supplies via the BF Committee. Mail orders for art-cards without value-imprints from 1938 to 1960 were handled exclusively by the Bundesfeier Committee, but many charitable institutions, town-halls and also commercial enterprises such as kiosks, book-shops and hotels continued to help with retail sales.
- Prices for 5c stationery cards were 20c, 7½c cards cost 30c or 35c, 10c cards were 30c each, and similar premiums were added to the higher denomination airmail cards. Art-cards from 1938 onwards cost 20c each up to 1948, 30c each from 1949 to 1960.
- In general, cards issued in series were also available singly, but there are exceptions (e.g. 1919 with Tell-boy 7½c imprint only available in a set of 3, cost 1 fr.)
- First dates of sale are listed in Zäch's Bundesfeier handbook and were generally in early July.
- The 1920 "Gymnasts" card was a late addition to that year's BF cards, issued following pressure by the Gymnastics Federation. There was no announcement by the PTT and the card did not figure in their publicity posters, nor did post offices selling Bundesfeier cards receive any initial supplies. Retail sales were largely through Gymnastics Clubs. For those reasons, fewer cards were sold and it is now much scarcer than the other 1920 cards."

**Editor: Why not let me have your queries on aspects of your particular collecting interest and I will publish them in the Newsletter requesting answers from fellow members. You have nothing to lose!**

FIRST HELICOPTER POST, SEPTEMBER 1948: A POSTSCRIPT

BOB MEDLAND



After the articles in recent Newsletters about 'Helicopter Post' and the Zürich demonstration flights – and with the theme of the October 2019 Southern Group meeting being 'Airmail' - I couldn't resist buying a couple of items for my collection. All such items are of a 'philatelic' nature of course but I am showing the more interesting example here - a postcard sent to Northern Rhodesia. The flight was on 25<sup>th</sup> September 1948 so it was correctly franked with the 25c foreign postcard rate that had been introduced on 1<sup>st</sup> March that year.

Furthermore, whilst researching further on the internet I was amazed to find that there is film footage of the demonstration flight taken by Pathé News. The 2½ minute video shows the helicopter hovering just above the roof of the PTT depot in Bern and the loading of the items in mailbags onto the helicopter. You can watch it on Youtube at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uuKh1hM4wZ8>

HORSE-DRAWN POSTAL COACHES

EDITOR



In May last year I published an article on transportation by diligence ('Travel on the High Passes' by Mrs. Edith Rawnsley), partly in the hope that it would encourage some of our members to provide snippets of information or full-blown articles on this relatively short but very "romantic" period in Swiss postal history. Details of significant books or articles on the subject you may have come across would also be welcomed. I am aware of a number of fascinating books on British mailcoaches and their routes, but what about the Swiss experience?

Dickens provided some vivid descriptions of travel by coach, including some of his exploits in Switzerland. To spur you on here is the stamp issued to promote the 'LEMANEX 78' philatelic exhibition. It features a mailcoach route plate from Canton Vaud – not to be confused with that from Fribourg illustrated on the 40+20c. stamp of the Pro Patria set issued in 1981.

The Society is grateful to Swiss Post for enabling it to reproduce illustrations of their products.

## Werner Gattiker



### For most aspects of Swiss Philately and Postal History

- Free Standard Price List 1850 – 2012 with both Zumstein/SBK and Stanley Gibbons numbers.
- "Werner's Treasure Trove" sent most months to my customers, full of offers of stamps, covers, cards, blocks, collections & lots, literature, etc.
- Liechtenstein also available.

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