



HELVETIA BULLETIN

SOCIETY FOR COLLECTORS OF SWITZERLAND

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Note of the Editor:

The summer is over, the vacations have been enjoyed, we are all going back to work with new strength eager to do a full day's job.

Our avocations and hobbies benefit of this mental and physical rebirth. Therefore, we expect to receive interesting reports from all our branches about the resumption of their meetings with suggestions for the improvement of our BULLETIN, that will be published regularly every month.

CUTTING of the
Northern N.J. Branch

The annual cutting was held as scheduled on September 12, on the pleasant and spacious grounds of Krucker's Restaurant at Lalentown, N. Y. The numerous attendance was increased by many guests who enjoyed exchanging views on their European vacations. There was no swimming this year, although the water had not cooled off too much. But the card players had a fine time before and after dinner. As usual the Krucker family contributed several musical numbers with their home-made instruments and everybody had a fine time. Thanks Mr. Spindler.

Nominations

May we remind our Branches that according to our By-Laws a Nominating Committee will have to submit to our October meetings the names of their selection for Officers and for the Board of Governors for the ensuing year. Please advise your Editor in time for the publication in the BULLETIN.

NEW ISSUES

Jack Brupbacher sends us copy of the advance notice about the issue of two special Swiss stamps showing the "Alpine Postal Coaches" scheduled for October 3, 1953. These new values will replace the Automobile Post Office stamps of 1937 and the reissues of 1946, the stock of which is exhausted.

NEW ISSUES (cont'd)

The two new stamps will be of 10 centimes and 20 centimes. The 10 c. shows a postal coach in winter - in green-yellow and dark green colors. The 20 c. will feature a coach in summer time and the colors will be red-yellow and dark red.

These stamps are printed on granite paper and will be valid for all postal uses, be it domestic or foreign.

Wedding Bells

We are happy to announce the wedding of our valued member Mrs. Edith Margaret Vanderpoel Fisher to Mr. Fred Faulstich that took place on September 5, 1953 at the Congregational Church at Park Ridge, N. J. Sincerest congratulations!

NEW CATALOG

Early in September, 1953, was published the new edition of "ZUMSTEIN EUROPA KATALOG 1954", Price SFr. 13.75 plus SFr. 1.80 postage for shipment abroad.

Resumption of
Monthly Meeting

The meetings of the Northern New Jersey Branch of HELVETIA have been resumed on September 14, at the Library in Hackensack, N. J. A large number of members gathered to discuss our scheduled activities during this fall and the coming winter months. Interesting reports about the very pleasantly spent vacation-months especially by those members who had just returned from abroad took up quite some time.

However, the philatelic discussion and the showing of appropriate material was not neglected. We all enjoyed Jack Brupbacher's album containing some fine items of permanent interest evidencing the issues scheduled for the discussion of that evening: "THE STANDING HELVETIA".

Note of the Editor

Because of the undiminishing interest of our fellow members in the well known issues of the "STANDING HELVETIA" of 1882 - 1907 we have thought that it would be quite appropriate to bring an article on this subject. Some of our older members will recall that George W. Caldwell had contributed an outstanding piece on that subject in our BULLETIN No. 13 of July 1939. This article being as timely now as it was before World War II we have asked Mr. Caldwell's permission for the reprinting of the same article. You will find it on page 3 of this issue.

Fair Exchange

Our member Max H. Rohde, 2755 Laguna St., S. Francisco 23, Cal., offers in exchange for Swiss stamps of equivalent value U. S. #230-245 Mint and U. S. C 13-15

Fair Exchange(cont'd) Mint singles and in blocks of four. Interested members may contact Mr. Rohde.

Our Secretary Mr. George E. Wettach, 17-20 Well Drive, Fair Lawn, N.J., will be pleased to supply information about our Society.

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STANDING HELVETIA 1882 - 1907

by George W. Caldwell

Probably cloth covered sealing wax
GWA

The current issue of stamps commonly known as the Sitting Helvetia Perforated was somewhat expensive. The printing in semi-relief necessitated the gumming of the paper prior to the printing, which made the sheets rather difficult to handle in the printing press. Another factor in the high cost was the fact that two plates -- a matrix and a patrix -- were required to produce the embossed design. The high cost together with the fact that the design had been in use for twenty years, made it desirable to have a new issue produced by a cheaper process.

DESIGN. In the new design the symbolic Helvetia is retained but in a standing position, whereas in the previous issues this symbol of Switzerland is shown in a sitting posture. The oval band surrounding the vignette contains twenty-two stars, representative of the twenty-two Swiss cantons. The figure of value is at the bottom center and is flanked on either side by the words franco, meaning franked, or postage paid. The figure of value is repeated in the upper right and left corners of the stamp.

The name of the designer does not seem to be known, but it is quite possible the work was done by Mullhaupt & Son, of Bern, a printing firm which produced these stamps during the first four years of their use. Essays somewhat similar in design were prepared by this firm at the request of the Postmaster General in 1880 and undoubtedly formed the basis for the stamp under discussion.

PLATES. These stamps were printed by the Intaglio process; that is, from plates with the design sunk and the paper "wetted down" before printing. The plates were what are commonly known as copper electros. An intermediate plate, made from the original steel die, was sunk into a sheet of lead. This lead sheet was then coated with a thin film of graphite and copper plating added by an electro-plating process. The first plates consisted of two hundred subjects in groups of one hundred subjects each. These were superseded in 1900 by four hundred subject plates.

Mention should be made here of the re-engraved or type II varieties found in the twenty-five and forty centime denominations. These were printed from etched steel plates, the forty centime appearing in 1904 and the twenty-five centime in 1906. They were experimental in character.

PAPER. A soft white wove, unwatermarked paper was used from 1882 until 1905. This was followed by a thinner paper containing a natural watermark. The granite paper met with in these stamps was used for a provisional issue. A new design and printing by typography in the Bern mint was scheduled for 1907, but due to delay in carrying the plans to completion, it was found necessary to hurriedly print a further supply of the Standing Helvetia type. As the contract with Girardet, who in 1886 had taken over the contract, had expired and was not renewed, the postmaster general sent the old plates and the remainder of granite paper currently used for the low value stamps to Bensiger & Co. in Einsiedeln. This printing was rather small and the stamps therefore somewhat scarcer than the other printings, the $9\frac{1}{2}$ perforation excepted. All these papers were furnished by the Sihl Mills of Zurich.

PERFORATIONS. Off all the stamps of Switzerland, the Standing Helvetia issue is the most prolific in perforation varieties. Due to the unequal shrinkage resulting from paper variations and varying speeds of drying, it was not practicable to produce well centered stamps on a machine of only one gauge. The $11\text{-}3\frac{1}{4}$ machine used for ordinary typographed stamps was used at first. As the result of complaints that these stamps separated too easily, a $9\frac{1}{2}$ (actually $9\text{-}3\frac{1}{4}$ by $9\frac{1}{4}$) was used. After a short experience, this perforation was found to be too coarse, resulting in many torn stamps, and was discontinued in 1891, the $11\frac{1}{2}$ by 11 machine taking its place. In 1901, coincident with the renewal of all plates, the gauge was changed to $11\frac{1}{2}$ by 12. From thereon with the exception of the $9\frac{1}{2}$, these machines were used more or less as required by the spacing of the stamp subjects.

Due to long use, the perforation holes became worn and it was necessary to replace the pins, each replacement being of larger diameter than the previous ones. This added further perforation varieties.

The perforating as well as the gumming of this issue was done in the Bern Mint.

VARIETIES. Due to the softness of the plates and the long period during which these stamps were current, many printing varieties are available -- worn plates, worn spots, scratches, cracks, etc. To prolong the use of the plates many of these spots were retouched. It is interesting to secure specimens showing worn spots, and other impressions showing these spots corrected. Double impressions are known, but many of these are rather scarce. Creased paper added a further variety. To one interested in shades, this issue offers a very fertile field with rich rewards.

POSTMARKS. The most common postmarks on this issue are the double circle types with which all collectors of Swiss stamps are familiar. Occasionally, however, we meet with the single circle and also the Douane or customs type. There are found occasionally, though rarely, the old single line town so familiar to collectors of Strubeli. Postmarks of the Swiss offices in foreign countries are found on this issue and form a very interesting study.

ESSAYS and PROOFS. Very few of these are known. A so-called proof frequently found on the market and sold as genuine is what might be called the unofficial Paris reprint. These are in a wide gamut of shades and colors and on various papers, such as white wove, vertical and horizontal

laid, and on card. They were printed by a Parisian who had purchased the plates from Girardet after his printing contract had expired. They consist of the twenty-five and forty centime type II, and are of no real value other than curiosities.

Contemporary essays showing the influence of this Helvetia design sometimes come on the market.

COLOR CHANGES. The postal rates during the period under study remained fixed and therefore color changes were very few. The most important was the interchange of the twenty-five green and the fifty blue in connection with a ruling of the Universal Postal Union in its congress at Washington in 1897, whereby green was standardized for the domestic postal card rate, red for the international postal card rate and blue, for a single international letter rate. The only stamps of this issue affected by that ruling were the twenty-five and fifty mentioned above and a simple interchange of colors was made. One other change should be noted -- the one franc lilac to carmine. This change was made in an effort to improve the appearance of this denomination.

WATERMARKS. The so-called watermark "cross in oval" is not strictly a watermark. This mark was impressed in the paper after the sheets came from the printing press, and before being gummed. It is found in two types. The original plate, after twelve years of use, became very much worn, and was replaced in 1894 by a new plate. The proportions of the arms of the cross differ between these two types, the second type having the proportions prescribed by law of the Federal Assembly. In the second type the complete width of the cross is 2/10 of a millimeter longer and the individual arms of the cross 3/10 of a millimeter narrower than in type one. The distance between the oval lines in type two is slightly more than one half that of type one. In 1905 paper containing a natural watermark in the form of the Swiss Cross was placed in use.

Generally speaking, the Standing Helvetia is one of the most interesting of Swiss issues. It lends itself well to specialization and is well within the reach of the average collector.

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QUESTION BOX

We shall gladly publish any question that our members may submit concerning philatelic matters covering the various departments of Swiss and Liechtenstein collecting of stamps, covers, and of their postal history.

Editor's Note

To all our MEMBERS we extend again the cordial invitation to send to our editor, Henry A. Gieffers, 283 Union Street, Hackensack, N. J., articles relating to the philately of Switzerland and Liechtenstein for publication in our BULLETIN under their own name. Please share your findings with our fellow Members.