

The
BUNDESFEIER
POSTCARDS
of
SWITZERLAND

The Forerunners
of
Semipostal Stamps

"PRO PATRIA".

In French, it would be "Pour la Patrie". In German, "Für das Vaterland". In English, for my country, my nation, my homeland.

The Swiss national holiday is celebrated on the First of August each year. Honoring the Swiss Confederation, the Bund, it is known in German as the Bundesfeier, the Celebration of the Confederation; in French it's the "Fete Nationale"; in Italian it's the "Festa Nazionale". And it is a day marked all over Switzerland by special patriotic observances, expeditions into the beloved Swiss homeland, parades and ceremonial fires burned in the night on the mountain tops.

It was on Dec. 16, 1909 that a group of Swiss men and women founded, in the Swiss capital city of Bern, an organization known as the "Bundesfeierkomitee" -- the Committee for the Celebration of the National Holiday. Its name was changed on Dec. 12, 1917 to the "Schweizerisches Nationkomitee zur Feier des 1. August", the Swiss National Committee to Celebrate the First of August. It was an organization of men and women dedicated to furthering the thought of the fatherland by adding a contribution of deeds to the annual celebration.

To further its purpose, the national committee sought, among other things, to reach its goal by creating and developing a Bundesfeier collection of funds for artistic and literary use. Especially, the Bundesfeier Postcards were used to raise the funds. The net proceeds from the cards went to an existing or new work of Swiss general public value or welfare. In conjunction with the Federal postal authorities, the committee caused to be issued each year, on the occasion of the First of August, one or more Bundesfeier Postcards which carried, on the address-side, symbolic representations and inscriptions of the purpose of the cards, while on the reverse there was a colorful piece of art work representing first episodes from Swiss history, then scenes out of the life of the Swiss people, or a work to give expression to some thought or wish of the Swiss people.

The Bundesfeier Postcards, first issued in 1910, were continuously sold each year after that until 1937 -- with postage stamps imprinted on them. (The first year they were sold at postal offices only from Aug. 1 to Aug 31; since then they went on sale in July.)

Beginning in 1938, special Bundesfeier semipostal stamps (carrying a surcharge for the Bundesfeier committee's purposes) were issued, and they have been issued by the postal authorities ever since. The Bundesfeier cards, however, continued to be issued without stamps until the year 1960, when the cards were finally halted after a 50-year history.

The Pro Patria stamps, however, continue to do the work begun back in 1910 by the cards -- which can truly be called the forerunners of the stamp series Pro Patria.



Die Wächter der Heimat
 ♦ pro patria ♦

1910. BUNDESFEIER Postcards.

To benefit the water-damaged.

Art work by Rich Schaupp --
 The Watchers Over the Homeland,
 Tell and Winkelried.

Edition: 309,300. Herewith,
 one mint and one used.

This is the first of the Bundes-
 feier postcards that were to con-
 tinue through 1937, after which
 they were replaced by the Pro Patria
 series of postage stamps.



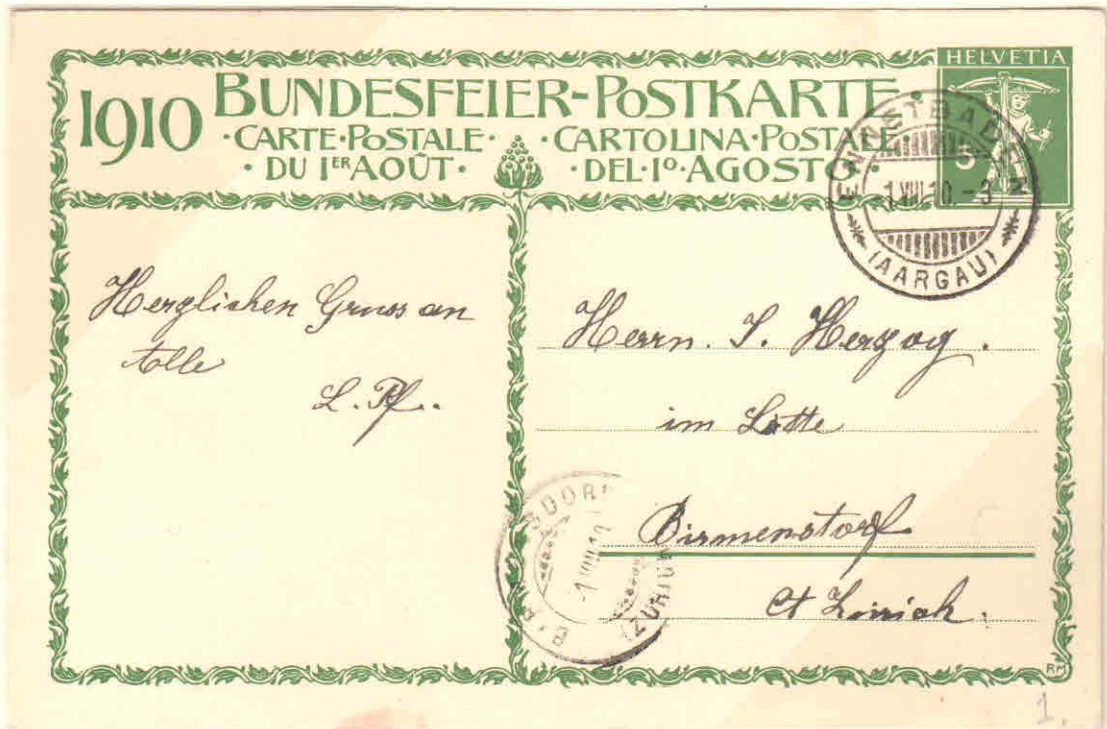
1910.

BUNDESFEIER Postcards -- continued:

FIRST DAY CARD

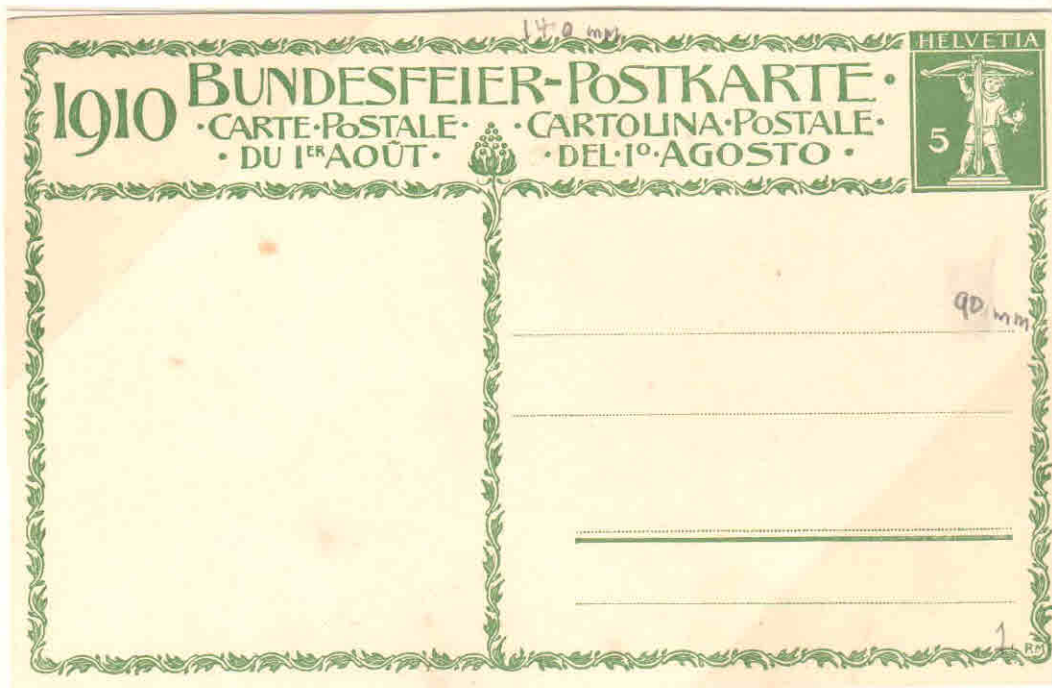
In 1910, the first year of the Bundesfeier Postcards, the cards did not go on sale until August First, the holiday. This card, then, was purchased, written, and mailed and postmarked on the first day of issue.

The Bundesfeier cards cancelled on the holiday are especially prized by Swiss collectors, and they command a healthy premium in the marketplace. In this collection, all used cards cancelled on the holiday are signaled with a red arrow as follows:



(Note that this card is also arrival-stamped on the holiday. They used to work harder than the postal service does now.)

This first card appeared originally in a size of 145 mm by 95 mm, as can be found in the top card. But that proved to be too large, so it was later produced in a 140 mm by 90 mm size, as in the bottom card.



1910.

BUNDESFEIER Postcards -- continued:

Another First Day cards and also an early-date used as a holiday greeting but cancelled on the third of August 1910 --

