

## Part Ten

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# Switzerland

## Its Essays and Proofs

By George W. Caldwell, E. P. S. 318.

(Continued from JOURNAL No. 15, Page 196.)

### D. Postage Due

The mention of postage due brings to the mind of the average stamp collector those special adhesive stamps used by postal people to collect and account for insufficiently paid or unprepaid postage. On the other hand, the marcophile, student of the pre-stamp period, visualizes the several postal markings which attempted to accomplish the same end.

Undoubtedly, postage due was born during the very beginning of organized postal service. During those early days and well into the nineteenth century, prepayment of the postal fee was the exception rather than the rule. To prepay postage was considered unethical; it presupposed that the addressee was unable to pay or that he might refuse to pay the postage. There were some exceptions, notably on mail addressed to foreign countries when, by the terms of a postal treaty, prepayment to the frontier was required.

By the simple expedient of pen and ink, or crayon markings, the Swiss indicated the postage status on the "cover"; prepaid postage was marked on the back of the cover, while postage to be collected from the addressee was noted on the front. With but rare exceptions, these markings consisted of numerals only, the monetary unit was omitted. Rare also are those cases where a stamping device in place of manuscript was used. It was customary also, in the case of prepaid mail, to add the word "Franco" on the face of the "cover" indicating it was "franked"; that is, the postage had been prepaid. On letters prepaid to the frontier, we find the notation "Franco Frontiere" or "Franco Grenze" these being, respectively, the French and German language indications of the letter's postage status.

Generally speaking, these manuscript numerals indicated the amount of postage in Kreuzers, the one monetary unit having universal exchange value throughout Switzerland. Although the French monetary system was standard in Geneva, the Kreuzer did have a fixed exchange value in that canton. Other monetary variations existed, particularly in the very early years, but here we encroach on the field of numismatics.

The use of manuscript markings to indicate postage-due was subject to irregularities on the part of some postmen. It has been said (40) that in France, where this same system was in use, some postmen increased the amount to be collected, by adding an additional digit to the number on the "cover" and retaining such added charge. The adoption of postage-due stamps by France, in 1859, undoubtedly was motivated by a determination to eradicate that practice.

Notwithstanding the close and intimate relations that existed between France and Switzerland, and the obvious advantages of postage-due adhesive stamps, the Swiss did not adopt such postal reform until almost two decades later.

### Durussel Die 1878-1910

It was early in 1878 that the Swiss Postal Department decided to use postage-due adhesive stamps. The preparation of the dies and printing cliches was entrusted to a Bernese engraver named Durussel, and the stamps, (Scott's designs D1 & D2) with one exception, were distributed to post-offices in July of 1878 — the 3 Centimes was made available on January 31, 1880.

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40 Hahn, Mannel — The French Postage-Due Markings on Letters from the U. S., 1848 to 1857, and their background — in *Third American Philatelic Congress Book* page 30.

p. 262        Fortunately for philately, Hermann Ritter, architect and philatelist of Zurich, made a very detailed and complete study of this issue. The results of his extensive and painstaking research have been made available to the philatelic world. (41)

According to Ritter, Durussel engraved a high relief steel die of the frame, a conventional, geometric design in axial balance. After hardening this, he made an intermediate, intaglio steel die, followed by a high relief steel die. With this latter, Durussel made two intaglio steel dies. One of these was hardened and used for producing the copper, high-relief printing cliches. The same process was used in making the printing cliches for the figure of value. Be it noted that these stamps are bi-colored, the frame in one hue and the figure of value in another.

On the first dies and printing cliches (Scott's design D1), the design included a sort of sun-burst consisting of 80 very fine lines radiating from the center and each alternate line terminating at the inner circle. The printing ink tended to accumulate in the narrow spaces between these lines and produce irregular spots of color on the stamps. To remedy that condition the sunburst was removed from the secondary high relief die and a new intaglio die and high relief printing cliches made. The extreme ends of the longer radii, those terminating at the inner circle, were retained and can be seen on all stamps of this issue, except of course, the 1 Centime of the first printing, which contains the complete radii.

The printing contract was awarded to Stampfli & Co., of Bern, and they continued to print these stamps until 1907 when the work was taken over by the Federal Mint in Bern.

The Sihl Mills in Zurich supplied the paper in cut form of a size to accommodate 400 stamp-subjects. Hence for printing, assemblies of 400 cliches arranged in units of 100 subjects separated by gutters, were used. On several occasions, due to the worn condition of many of the cliches, printings were made from assemblies of 100 cliches.

The gumming and perforating operations were performed in the Mint, the old 11 $\frac{3}{4}$  gauge frame perforator being used for the latter.

These stamps are found on three kinds of paper: the early printings on unwatermarked, white wove; followed by unwatermarked, granite (red and blue silk fibers) ; and, finally, by granite paper containing a natural watermark (Scott's watermark design No. 183). Control marks (21) were added to the stamps printed on the unwatermarked papers.

Color changes found in this issue present a fertile field for the advanced collector who is interested in such study. Not only do we find the usual variations resulting from long currency, but there appears to have been planned changes with a definite purpose in view. It seems to the author that the Department was trying to find a color that would cause the postage-due adhesive to stand out on the cover and thus not be overlooked; and yet be one that would increase the visibility of the postmark. The author is of the opinion that the postmark served a purpose in addition to that of simply cancelling the stamp — accounting, perhaps.

Let's look at a hypothetical case. Mr. X in London, England, mails a letter to Mr. Y in Birmingham and franks it at the domestic rate. In the meantime, Mr. Y has departed for a Continental vacation, headed for Geneva, and the letter is forwarded to that city. The Geneva postal clerk, seeing the franking is insufficient for the international rate, adds a postage-due stamp and cancels it with the office cancellor. The letter-carrier finds that Mr. Y. has departed, leaving a Zurich forwarding address, Whereupon the Geneva clerk annuls the postage-due stamp by postmarking it "Annule" — French is the language used in Geneva. Upon arrival in Zurich another postage-due stamp is added and cancelled with the office cancellor. Again this letter fails to catch up with Mr. Y.; he has departed for home. Accordingly, the Zurich clerk annuls his postage-due stamp by postmarking it "Ungültig" — German is the language used in Zurich.

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41        Ritter, Hermann — Die Portomarken der Schweiz — Published by Zumstein & Co., Bern.

21        See JOURNAL No. 9, page 10.

Here we see two due stamps have been used but no money collected. Certainly some accounting for the due stamps used in this case must be made, and that would include cross-reference between the two post-offices. Undoubtedly, visibility of the post-mark in such cases becomes important. This hypothetical case is typical of a number of such postage-clue covers in the author's collection.

Color variation to which we refer, concerns the frame portion of the design only. The figure of value presents some variation, but this is of minor importance.

The first few printings – 1878 to 1882 — are in blue with an ultramarine influence. In 1883 there was a radical change to a very pale green which, during several years following, shows a strong influence of yellow, at times becoming more of a greenish-yellow. From 1892 through the final printing in 1909 an olive influence is seen. Ritter records the final printing — one Centime value only — in light gray-greenish-olive.



**Fig.46**

Courtesy of Zumstein & Co.

## Essays

But one essay of this period is known to the author: a 500 Centimes value (Fig. 46) recorded by Zumstein. The general idea of the design composition is somewhat similar to the issued stamp, but whether it is a predecessor or not is not recorded.

**Date (?\*). Die (?\*) impression (Fig. 40) on white paper without control mark; imperforate.**

**No. 328. 500 Centimes, violet.**

## Proofs

**1877-1878. Designed (?\*) by Durussel of Bern. Typographed plate-impressions, (cliche assembly) in normal colors, white paper without control mark; imperforate.**

- No. 329. 1 Centime, blue, blue**
- No. 330. 2 Centimes, blue, blue**
- No. 331. 3 Centimes, blue, blue**
- No. 332. 3 Centimes, blue, blue**
- No. 333. 10 Centimes, blue, blue**
- No. 334. 20 Centimes, blue, blue**
- No. 335. 50 Centimes, blue, blue**
- No. 336. 100 Centimes, blue, blue**
- No. 337. 500 Centimes, blue, blue**

\* Inserted by the author.

1882. Designed (?\*) by Durussel of Bern, typographed plate-impressions (cliche assembly) in normal colors; white paper with control mark; imperforate.

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- No. 338 5 Centimes, light bluish-green, carmine-red
- No. 339. 10 Centimes, yellow-green, dark red
- No. 340. 10 Centimes, light bluish green, carmine-red
- No. 341. 10 Centimes, blue-green, dark red
- No. 342. 10 Centimes, light green, carmine-red (granite paper)
- No. 343. 10 Centimes, light yellowish-green, carmine-red
- No. 344. 10 Centimes, light green, carmine-red
- No. 345. 20 Centimes, light bluish-green, carmine-red
- No. 346. 50 Centimes, light bluish-green, carmine-red
- No. 347. 100 Centimes, light bluish-green, carmine-red.
- No. 348. 500 Centimes, light bluish-green, carmine-red

### Trial Color Proofs

1882. Designed (?\*) by Durussel of Bern, Typographed plate-impressions (cliche assembly) without control mark; imperforate.

- No. 349. 10 Centimes, brownish-yellow, dark red
- No. 350. 10 Centimes, brownish-yellow, violet.
- No. 351. 10 Centimes, brownish-yellow, green (granite paper)
- No. 352. 10 Centimes, dull pink, deep blue
- No. 353. 10 Centimes, pink, light blue
- No. 354. 10 Centimes, yellowish-orange, dark brick-red
- No. 355. 10 Centimes, yellowish-orange, light blue
- No. 356. 10 Centimes, dull lilac-gray, brown
- No. 357. 10 Centimes, dull-gray-violet, deep yellow
- No. 358. 10 Centimes, violet, dark brick-red

Other trial color proofs are believed to exist.

### L'Eplattenier Design 1910-1924

On September 1, 1910, after a little over three decades of currency, the Durussel design was superseded by one (Scott's design D3) essayed by the late Charles L'Eplattenier (1874-1946), a drawing instructor in La Chaux-de-Fonds. This composition depicts a grouping of Alpine Roses, the Swiss Cross, and the figure of value on a silhouetted background of the Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau peaks. Albert Geel of Sargans is credited with having engraved the original die — presumably in steel, the remaining manufacturing steps took place in the Postal Printing Plant. Watermarked, granite paper (blue and red silk fibers) was supplied by the Sihl Mills of Zurich. Very likely this was furnished in cut form of a size to accommodate 400 stamp subjects. We presume such was the size of the typograph printing plates. The frame perforator of 11¾ gauge, used for all typographed stamps, was used in this issue.

The bi-color policy for postage-due stamps, established in 1878, was continued with this issue, the stamps being printed in blue-green and vermillion.

Essays and proofs of this issue do not appear to have been philatelically recorded.

### Salzmann Design 1924-1938

Albert Salzmann of Geneva essayed the design (Scott's design D4) for the superseding issue of 1924. This is somewhat heraldic in concept in that it shows the figure of value in a sort of shield with two children serving as supporters. Like all previous Swiss postage-due stamps, this issue is bi-colored — greenish-olive and vermillion.

The typographic printing took place in the Postal Printing Plant. Watermarked, granite (blue and red silk fibers) paper was supplied by the Sihl Mills. Beginning with the 1934 printings, this paper appeared with light grilling on the gum side, and chalky surface on the printed side.

The remaining manufacturing details are similar to those of the preceding issue. Essays and proofs are not known to the author.

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### **The First Monochrome issue 1938**

The Department discontinued using typography for the manufacture of its postage stamps, when, in 1936, it installed modern equipment using the intaglio engraved process. The printing press is a continuous rotary machine in which all steps are automatic. The pre-gummed roll of paper is fed into the press at one end and, in its course to the far end and return, it is dusted, dampened, printed, dried, perforated, postal-pane numbered; and cut into sheets ready for checking by an inspector.

The preliminary steps — hardening of the original die, taking up the design on the transfer roll, and the final “rocking-in” of the stamp designs on the printing cylinders — form a part of this modern, efficient stamp-manufacturing plant.

On February 1, 1938, postage-due stamps, manufactured in this plant, were placed use. These were the first stamps of this category printed in monochrome — a single color for all denominations.

The design (Scott’s design D5), simple but dignified, was essayed by Werner Weiskönig of St. Gallen; the engraving is credited to Gottfried Matter of Zurich. The steel printing cylinders contain 200 subjects arranged in groups of 50 subjects. These 50 subject groups follow one another in single-file around the periphery of the cylinder which is sufficiently long to accommodate ten stamp subjects of ordinary size.

Two varieties of paper were used in the early printings of these stamps. One of these, supplied by the Sihl Mills, is lightly grilled; the other, furnished by the Biberist Mills is smooth. Both are white wove and unwatermarked, It would seem that the grilled variety was used only for a short time.

Postal panes are of 50 subjects and are perforated 11¾. These stamps are still in current use.

Essays and proofs of this issue do not appear to be in philatelic ownership.

(To be continued.)