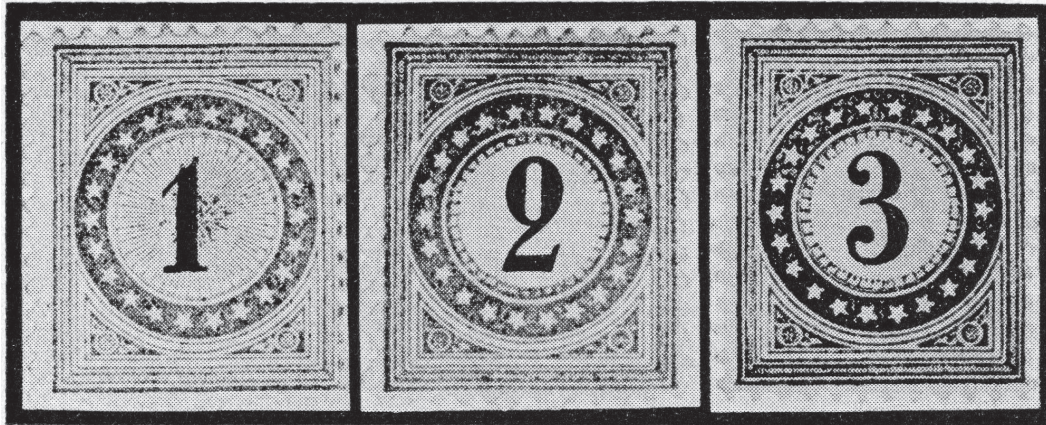


Postage Dues Addendum

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Switzerland The 1874, 1910 Postage Due Dies & Printing Cliches



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Introduction

On July 7, 1878, Switzerland distributed its first postage due adhesive stamps to post offices. Prior to that date, throughout several centuries, it was the custom to indicate postage due by means of manuscript notations in writing ink or crayon on the face of the cover. Prepaid mail prior to the introduction of postage stamps in 1850 was indicated in the same manner on the back of the cover. There were several instances when these notations were handstamped.

The Postal Department considered the postage due adhesives as service stamps for exclusive use on unpaid or part paid mail addressed to points within Switzerland. Hence, no inscription other than the figure of value was needed. It was desired that the stamp not be overlooked by the employee responsible for collecting the postage due. Also, it wanted the figure of value to be large for the same reason.

Durussel of Bern designed the stamp on this basis. It consists of a symmetrical frame in axial balance with an interior star band inclosing a starburst, on which the value was printed in a color or shade differing from that of the frame (Scott's D1).

In this piece we arbitrarily use die numbers to facilitate cross-reference. We don't know that the actual dies were numbered.

Type la Frame

There are three frame types, but catalogs use only two numbers. Hence, for this study we assign the above number to the first dies, printing clichés and stamps. Type 1a appears solely on the 1c. value of the first printing (See Type 1 frame for reason).

Durussel engraved the original die (1) in relief, and laid down an intaglio die (2). He also made a working relief die (3) and two intaglio dies (4 and 5). All these were in steel and were hardened except one of the intaglio dies (5) which was held in reserve.

With the hardened intaglio working die (4), the design was entered on 250 copper printing clichés of which 50 were placed in reserve. The others were set up in two assemblies of 100 clichés separated by a vertical gutter and used by Stampfli & Co., of Bern for typographing the stamps on a two-color cylinder press. (The Mint took over the printing late in 1906).

Type 1 Frame

The starburst proved to be very unsatisfactory. The very slender interstices between the very thin ray lines of the starburst had a tendency to accept the printing ink in various places, thereby producing blotchy stamps. Hence, the Department ordered it removed.

Durussel drilled the starburst out of the working relief die (3). Also he ground the design off the working intaglio die (4), and re-entered the modified design (7). The 250 copper printing clichés also were drilled leaving a deep mould. Thus, all these became Type 1 (Scott's D2) .

Two New Type 1 Frame Dies

Immediately after the second issue had been printed, Durussel laid down a relief die (8) and an intaglio die (9) ; and used the former working dies (6 and 7) to make a seal (Medaille!). These dies were not hardened. They were held in reserve. Why this replacement was made we don't know. Possibly the modified dies (6 and 7) were defective.

Type 2 Frame Dies

Inasmuch as these Type 2 frame dies were produced in the Mint, a brief statement of the organization in the Mint's Stamp Workshop is of interest.

Effective January 1, 1873, Director Albert Escher of the Mint and several of his associates, having formed a company, took over the work of the Mint's Stamp Workshop. This change was in accordance with a Postal Department plan to have all stamps produced by commercial firms, the thought being that competitive bidding might result in a saving in cost.

As we have mentioned, Stampfli & Co., typographed these postage dues. The Escher group performed the other steps: 1) impressed the control marks; 2) gummed the stamps; 3) cut the sheets into 100-subject panes; and 4) perforated these panes. Possibly, examining, counting and packaging were also among their responsibilities. This arrangement continued until some time in 1881, when, upon Escher's death, the Mint took over with a new director.

In mid-August of 1878, the Escher group hardened the reserve intaglio die (9), laid down a working relief die (10), and with the latter after hardening, a working intaglio die (11).

In the course of hardening the working relief die (10), four small particles of steel flaked off the design, thereby creating Type 2. The working intaglio die (11) was used at the end of August for re-entering 200 the printing clichés which thereby became Type 2. The 50 reserve clichés had not been used; hence, they required no re-entering and remained as Type 1.

On the Type 2 stamps the most prominent of these four breaks is the colorless tie extending from the colorless ring of the winged wheel in the upper right portion of the stamp, to the adjacent colorless curved line.

A minute break in the innermost circle, framing the figure-of-value space is at the right slightly below the horizontal axis of this circle. Heavily inked clichés often cover this break.

The two remaining breaks consist of the shortening of the long horizontal sharp points of the winged wheel background. These appear in the upper left and lower right sections of the stamp.

On stamps printed from inverted frames all these positions naturally are reversed. No additional frame dies were made, nor further modifications made during the currency of this design.

The Figure of Value Dies

For each of the nine values — 1, 2, 3, 5, 10, 20, 50, 100 and 500 centimes — Durussel engraved a relief die in steel, laid down one working intaglio die and one intaglio reserve die. Obviously, the first two were hardened but we don't know about the third. The working intaglio die was used for entering the

design on the single-subject printing clichés. These dies served throughout the currency of this design with neither change nor replacement.

The Frame Cliches

In addition to the facts pertaining to the frame-printing clichés mentioned previously in this study, there are several others of interest which we include under the above caption.

Due to the worn condition of the clichés it was necessary to re-enter them on five occasions. These preceded the printing of the fourth, eighth, twenty-eighth, thirty-second and thirty-fourth issues.

On three occasions the clichés were so worn that only 100 of the least worn were used. These comprise issues 27, 30 and 31.

Issues 34 and 35 of 1909 and 1910 respectively were printed from assemblies of 100 clichés, notwithstanding all 200 were serviceable. The combined total of these two issues was small, only 494,700 stamps all of which were of the 1 centime value. In a sense, these may have been provisionals pending the superseding issue of September 1, 1910 in a new design.

During the thirty-two years of currency, it was necessary to replace a working cliché on two occasions. The first occurred in mid-January 1881. While re-entering the clichés due to their worn condition, one was damaged and had to be replaced by one of the 50 Type 5 reserve clichés. Inasmuch as the working clichés had been re-entered once before, it was necessary to reduce this replacement to the type height of the others. This was accomplished by re-entering. In doing so, it lost its Type 5 characteristics and became a Type 2 cliché.

The second replacement occurred between the printing of the fourteenth and fifteenth issues. After printing the first of these, the cliché assembly, no doubt, was dismantled, cleaned and stored; and reassembled later for printing the fifteenth issue. In which of these steps the damage occurred we have no information. It was necessary to reduce this replacement to the type height of the working group because the latter had been re-entered twice before. We presume this was accomplished by filing or grinding off the bottom, as this Type 1 cliché continued as a Type 1 until the cliché assembly was reentered for printing the twenty-eighth issue.

No further changes in the frame clichés were made.

The Figure of Value Cliches

Like the frame clichés, these were made of copper. But they were only 9 x 9 mm in cross section, whereas the frame clichés were 20 x 24. Hence, spacers were required in the cliché assemblies.

The quantity of these clichés varied from 211 for the 50c. value to 228 for the 5c. All in excess of 200 were set aside as reserves. We are not informed why this variation in the reserve group was made.

Re-entry of these clichés never became necessary because the wear was not sufficient. The ratio of use between frame and figure of value clichés was nine to one. Obviously there was some erosion but this is barely perceptible on the printed stamps.

Disposition of the Dies and Printing Cliches

p. 174 In this category some data are not available to the writer at this time. This is particularly true of the period following the final printing in the design we have been discussing. Postage Due stamps in a new design were issued to post offices September 1, 1910.

Frames

On January 1, 1890, the original engraved relief die (1), the corresponding intaglio die (2), and the reserve intaglio die (5). all with the starburst, were destroyed. As we have already stated, the working relief and intaglio dies (3 and 4) were modified (6 and 7), and later were cleaned of the design and used by Durussel for making a seal. The relief die (8) made by Durussel at that time was destroyed prior to 1908.

The corresponding intaglio die (9) was in existence in 1938 or possibly later, as was the working relief die (10) which had been laid down by the Escher group. The working intaglio die (11) also laid down by Escher may have been destroyed in 1910.

Five of the 250 printing clichés were placed in the Postal Museum, possibly in 1910, and may be in its archives to-day. We are not informed on their types 1 or 2. The remainder may have been destroyed in 1910 or later.

Figures of Value

The nine original engraved relief dies of the figures of value were not in the Postal Department's inventory of December 16, 1908. We presume they had been destroyed prior to that date. The working relief and intaglio dies presumably were not disposed of until after the final printing. Information on the disposal is lacking.

Four of the printing clichés of each value were placed in the Postal Museum. We have no information on the others.

Essays & Proofs

Illustrated in JOURNAL No. 61 (October 1957) through the courtesy of Zumstein & Co., is the only essay we have seen reported. Listed but not illustrated in that Journal are twenty proofs in normal colors and so trial color proofs.

Some years ago a very important trial color proof was reported. This consists of two blocks of 8 (4 wide) separated by a 30mm vertical gutter, on granite paper and with impressed control marks. The block on the left includes cliché positions 87-90 and 97-100 with pale orange frame and green figures of value. The block on the right is in light green with dark carmine-red figures of value, consisting of cliché positions 181-184 and 191-194. On the bottom sheet margin is the oval handstamp of the Postmaster General's office dated October 23, 1882. This in all probability is a unique item.

We have seen a somewhat similar piece consisting of two blocks of 4 with 30mm vertical gutter printed on granite paper, and with impressed control marks but without sheet margin. The colors are the same as those on the larger piece. Also seen were four singles and a block of 4 in the colors of the left block — pale orange and green; also a block of 4 in the colors of the right block — light green and dark carmine-red.

All these eight pieces are imperforate and possibly came from the same sheet. We don't know whether they were pulled by hand or printed on Stampfli's 2-color cylinder press.

Other proofs undoubtedly exist.