

Part Three

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Switzerland

Its Essays and Proofs

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(Continued from JOURNAL No. 8, page 212.)

Perforated Helvetia 1862-82

The public's reaction to the "Strubeli" design was not altogether favorable. Critics were prompt to voice their objections, some claiming that the designer had placed horns instead of hair on Helvetia's head; others recognized this "hair-do" as disheveled, hence "strubeli"; the head in profile, just as it was on the then current silver coins, was demanded by others — minor criticisms, perhaps, but nevertheless persuasive.

In course of time, the Postal Department found objections also: the high cost of manufacturing the "Strubeli"; the very small figures of value which were not quickly apparent to postal employees handling large volumes of mail; and the invention of perforating, which could not be applied to the "Strubeli." These furnished sound reasons for superseding the "silk thread" stamps.

Much of the high cost of manufacturing these stamps was due to the use of Dickinson paper. It has been stated that the Swiss stamps cost about 25 cents per thousand, whereas those in neighboring countries cost far less — six cents in some cases.

The size of the figure of value was sufficient for the average user of these stamps but to postal employees, handling large quantities of mail, it was a handicap to speed in operation. This of course, was not true in the case of employees having good color vision, for they depended on color in identifying the several denominations, just as many of our present-day postal employees do; but when you consider that a sizable percentage of the male population of Central Europe is color blind, to a greater or less degree, (15) it becomes obvious that color loses much of its value, and the prominence of the figure of value becomes important.

Perforating the sheets to facilitate separating the stamps, had been introduced by several governments during the currency of the "Strubeli" — Sweden in 1855, Norway during the following year, Russia in 1858. (16) The Department recognized the value of this invention, but could not adapt it to their stamps because of the presence of the silk thread and the almost complete absence of space between the stamps. A change of paper would have remedied the first condition, but to overcome the second, it would have been necessary to have made a complete new set of printing cliches of slightly larger cross section.

Eventually an opportunity to supersede the silk-thread stamps came about in connection with the new tariff of postal rates dated February 6, 1862 and effective July 1, 1862. A number of rates in this tariff were not matched by corresponding stamp values in the current series. Rather than make the printing cliches for these values after the "Strubeli" model, the Department decided to make the change.

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The Dies and Cliches

The dies for the new stamps (Scott's design A18) were engraved in steel by J. P. Riess of the Bavarian Mint in Munich. just what Riess used as a model is not recorded but inasmuch as the Perforated Helvetia design is simply a modification of the "Strubeli," it is quite likely he used the latter and simply made those changes necessary to give effect to the suggestions made by the Swiss Postal Department.

15 Vogt, Dr. A.—Farben-Fehldruck 5 Rappen Strubel in *Journal Philatelique Suisse*, Vol. 55, No. 1.

16 Scott—Standard Postage Stamp Catalog.

The several steps in production from master die to printing cliches, all of which work was done in the Munich Mint, no doubt duplicated those of the "Strubeli." Presumably, the printing cliches were made of brass, a metal which had been used for the silk-thread issue and for several subsequent Swiss issues. Naturally, these were solid blocks of metal and produced in the same manner as coins were produced, that is, by means of a die press.

The Stamps

The gumming, printing and perforating operations were performed in the Swiss Mint in Bern. The printing method was the same as that used for producing the "Strubeli," that is, typography in semi-relief in which the albino portions of the design were embossed in high relief (cameo). Four assemblies of 100 cliches each provided the printing "plate" and the work was done on a flat-bed hand-press. The perforating was completed in a 100 subject frame-perforator of 11 gauge. By means of this machine, several 100 subject sheets of stamps were perforated in a single operation.

During the first twelve years of their currency, the Perforated Helvetia stamps were printed on a medium weight, opaque paper, slightly off the white in color. The gum on the stamps printed on this paper is slightly brownish due to the "yellow" sugar in its composition. In 1874, in order to improve the impression, a semi-transparent paper — thinner and harder — was adopted. It is well known — other things being common — that embossing shows up sharper on thin paper than on thick paper. The gum on this paper is colorless. The final change occurred in 1881 when a type of safety paper containing red and blue silk fibres and known to the trade as "granite paper" was put into use.

All these papers were manufactured, without watermark, by the Sihl Mills of Zurich, commonly known as "Der Papierfabrik an der Sihl." To make up for the absence of the watermark, a control mark, suggested by Postal Controller Fuchs, was impressed into these stamps after they had been printed. This was done by means of a 400 subject steel plate, the control marks being so spaced that one was impressed into each stamp. This control mark (Scott's watermark design No. 182) is erroneously listed in some catalogs as a watermark.

Essays and Experimental Proofs

As pointed out previously in this monograph, the Department was concerned over the possible loss of revenue due to unscrupulous persons removing the cancellations from stamps and re-using such "washed" stamps for postage. Extensive laboratory tests were conducted during the currency of the Perforated Helvetia issue, in an effort to find a cancelling ink and stamp printing inks that would frustrate such crimes. These experiments undoubtedly account for the wide range of proofs of this issue which have been recorded. In contrast, we find an extreme dearth of essays; the author knows of only one. This is a die essay (Fig. 8) differing from the issued design, in the lettering — non-serifed instead of serifed. There can be no question that the die used in printing this essay derived from the same master die that was used for the production of the issued stamps. One other essay which may possibly belong to this group, is one of the two drawings submitted to the Munich engraver Merz, by Postmaster General Naef, at the time the "Strubeli" stamps were under negotiation. (17) Unfortunately, there are no data on this, other than the fact that the figures of value "stand out prominently."



Fig. 8

Essays

1861-62. Die essay on white cardboard

No. 63. Composite denomination, black (Fig. 8)

Proofs

1862-63. Die proofs on white cardboard (Fig. 9)

- No. 64. 2 Centimes, black
- No. 65. 3 Centimes, black
- No. 66. 5 Centimes, black
- No. 67. 10 Centimes, black
- No. 68. 20 Centimes, black
- No. 69. 30 Centimes, black
- No. 70. 40 Centimes, black
- No. 71. 60 Centimes, black
- No. 72. 1 Franc, black



Fig. 9

1863. Plate proofs on original stamp paper with control mark.

- No. 73. 40 Centimes, green (18)

1862-81. Plate proofs on paper of various thicknesses without control mark.

- No. 74. 2 Centimes, gray (b) (41P5)
- No. 75. 2 Centimes, red-brown (b) (51P5)
- No. 76. 2 Centimes, yellow-brown (b) (52P5)
- No. 77. 5 Centimes, light brown to violet-brown (b) (43P5)
- No. 78. 10 Centimes, blue (b)
- No. 79. 10 Centimes, blue on bluish
- No. 80. 10 Centimes, carmine
- No. 81. 15 Centimes, yellow
- No. 82. 20 Centimes, orange
- No. 83. 25 Centimes, green (b)
- No. 84. 30 Centimes, vermilion on reddish
- No. 85. 30 Centimes, blue (b)
- No. 86. 40 Centimes, gray (b)
- No. 87. 50 Centimes, violet (b)
- No. 88. 1 Franc, gold (b)

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The perforated proofs in the above group, Nos. 74 to 88 inc., usually are marked "Specimen."

Trial Color Proofs

1862-81. Plate proofs on original stamp paper with control mark.

- No. 89. 2 Centimes, black
- No. 90. 2 Centimes, black-brown (b)
- No. 91. 2 Centimes, red-brown
- No. 92. 5 Centimes, vermilion (43TC5)
- No. 93. 5 Centimes, bronze (43TC5)
- No. 94. 5 Centimes, gold
- No. 95. 5 Centimes, gray (a)
- No. 96. 10 Centimes, yellow-brown (a)
- No. 97. 10 Centimes, yellow-brown on reddish (a)
- No. 98. 30 Centimes, bronze
- No. 99. 30 Centimes, gold

18 Each sheet of these proofs was overprinted either "1 Fr per 100 Stuck" or "1 Fr. par Cent." This overprint extends over three proofs.

1862-81. Plate proofs on paper of various thicknesses without control mark.

No. 100. 2 Centimes, gray-black (b)

No. 101. 2 Centimes, blue (b)

Items marked (a) are perforated 11¾; those marked (b) are known perforated 11¾ and imperforate; all others of this issue are imperforate.

No. 102. 2 Centimes, pink (b)

No. 103. 2 Centimes, flesh pink (b)

No. 104. 2 Centimes, yellow (b) (41TC5)

No. 105. 2 Centimes, orange (b) (41TC5)

No. 106. 2 Centimes, vermilion (b) (41TC5)

No. 107. 2 Centimes, green (b)

No. 108. 2 Centimes, violet to red-lilac (b)

No. 109. 3 Centimes, black on blue (b)

No. 110. 3 Centimes, black on yellow (b)

No. 111. 3 Centimes, black on brown (b)

No. 112. 3 Centimes, black on lilac (b)

No. 113. 5 Centimes, blue (43TC5)

No. 114. 5 Centimes, carmine (43TC5)

No. 115. 5 Centimes, yellow

No. 116. 5 Centimes, vermilion

No. 117. 5 Centimes, violet

No. 118. 10 Centimes, brown on yellowish

No. 119. 20 Centimes, gray

No. 120. 20 Centimes, blue

No. 121. 20 Centimes, ultramarine

No. 122. 20 Centimes, reddish-gold (45TC5)

No. 123. 25 Centimes, brown

No. 124. 25 Centimes, blue

No. 125. 25 Centimes, carmine (55TC5)

No. 126. 25 Centimes, yellow (55TC5)

No. 127. 40 Centimes, sulphur-yellow

No. 128. 60 Centimes, yellow

1862-81. Plate proofs on safety paper.

No. 129. 5 Centimes, gold, vertical ribbed (Gerriptes) paper

No. 130. 5 Centimes, gold, horizontal ribbed (Gerriptes) paper

No. 131. 40 Centimes, green; horizontal striped (Gestreiftes) paper

No. 132. 40 Centimes, gray, horizontal striped (Gestreiftes) paper

No. 133. 40 Centimes, vermilion, horizontal striped (Gestreiftes) paper

No. 134. 40 Centimes, milky-blue, horizontal striped (Gestreiftes) paper

p. 13 1881.-82. Plate proofs on granite stamp paper with control mark.

No. 135. 5 Centimes, green

No. 136. 5 Centimes, carmine

No. 137. 10 Centimes, green

No. 138. 10 Centimes, dark-brown

No. 139. 10 Centimes, yellow-brown; rose tinted paper

Postmarked Proofs

Proofs of this issue bearing postmarks, probably are “laboratory” products, made at the time the Department was conducting experiments in the removal of cancellations. Listed below are those recorded by Zumstein. (4) This list does not pretend to be complete; others undoubtedly exist.

1863. Postmarked “Bern 15. Nov. 1863,” in black

- No. 140. 2 Centimes, red on gold**
- No. 141. 2 Centimes, blue on silver**
- No. 142. 2 Centimes, violet on silver**

1863 (?) Postmarked “Romanshorn” (? in black*)

- No. 143. 5 Centimes, blue**

1864. Postmarked “Oberpost-Controle 22 Juni-64” in violet.

- No. 144. 5 Centimes, vermilion**
- No. 145. 10 Centimes, blue on bluish**

1878. Postmarked “Bern 19-1-78” (? in black*)

- No. 146. 2 Centimes, black-brown (a)**
- No. 147. 2 Centimes, blue (a)**
- No. 148. 20 Centimes, blue (a)**
- No. 149. 20 Centimes, ultramarine (a)**

1878 (?) Posthorn applied by means of a roller postmarker, in blue

- No. 150. 30 Centimes, vermilion (a)**

1879. Postmarked “Weissenbach 6. VI. 79” in red.

- No. 151. 40 Centimes, green; horizontal ribbed paper (a)**

Proofs also are known bearing the postmark “Eidg. Munzstatte Bern”.

In addition to stamp essays and proofs, collectors of Switzerland are interested in what may properly be termed proofs of the control mark and the perforation. These are found on white paper — presumably stamp paper. A block of four of the control mark was in the collection of Martin Schroeder, of Leipzig.

Unprinted stamp paper perforated in the 11¾ gauge perforator is known to exist in full sheets of 100 subjects and in half sheets of 50 subjects. The latter 50 subject sheets — was the form in which the stamps of this issue were distributed to the post-offices. Such unprinted and perforated pieces are properly includable in an essay-proof collection.

As of October 1, 1883 the Perforated Helvetia stamps were demonetized.

(To be continued.)

* Inserted by the author.

(4) Zumstein, E.—Handbuch über die Briefmarken der Schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft—Bern, 1924.