



Coil Numbers—Which Way Is Up?

by Richard T. Hall, C.Ph.H.



Figure 1. Coil strip of Zumstein 392RM, control M0095

At the November 20 AHPS ZOOM meeting I showed some examples of coil stamps with control numbers rotated 90° from the usual orientation. Let me explain by showing a coil strip with the control number in the “usual” orientation (Fig. 1, Zumstein 392RM with control number M0095). Notice that the number reads correctly with respect to the short dimension of the stamp. Almost all control number coil stamps in my collection have this orientation.

Now let me show you a coil strip with the rotated orientation (Figure 2, Zumstein 356RLM with control number 0340). Here the number reads correctly with respect to the long dimension of the stamp.

Before I proceed any further, let me explain what the control numbers are and how they are printed.

(Continued on page 4)

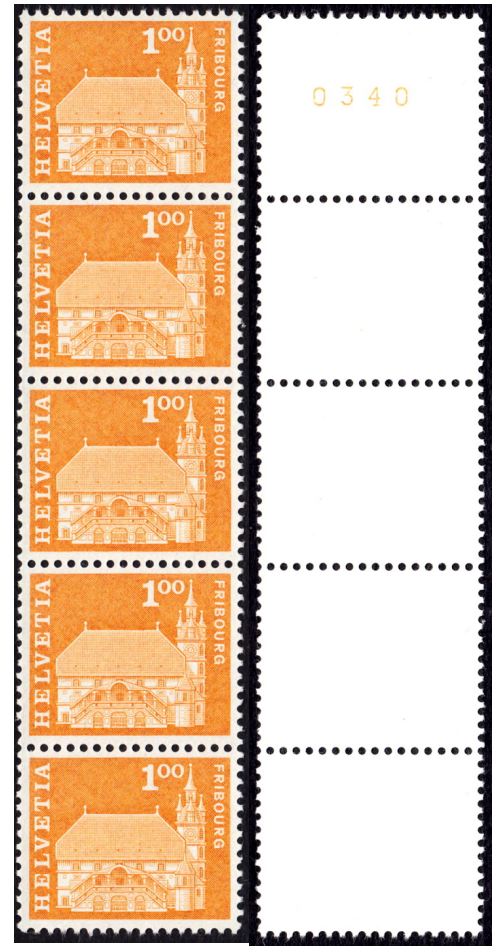


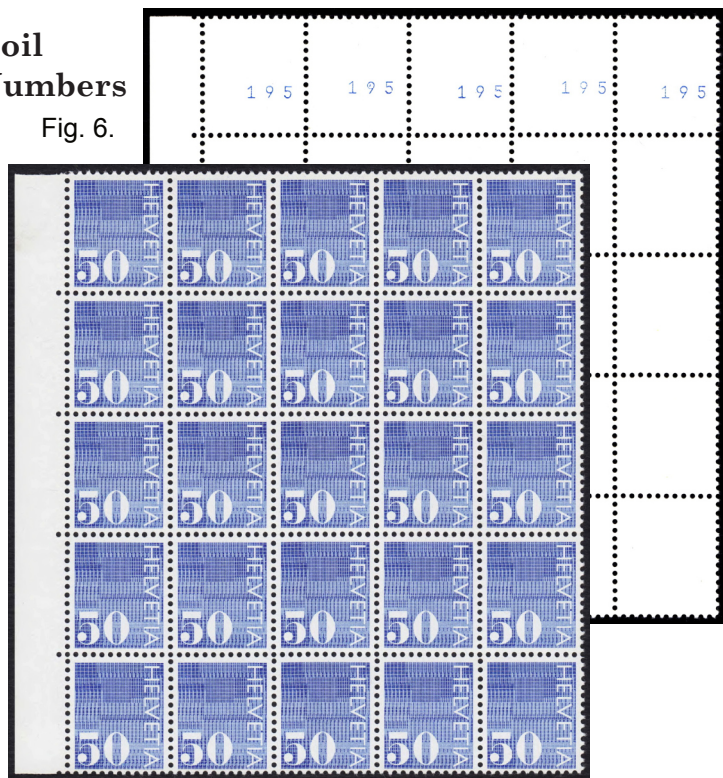
Figure 2. Coil strip of Zumstein 356RLM, control 0340.

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Coil Numbers

Fig. 6.



Three stamps of the 68E, with the details.



Fig. 1 - 68E



Fig. 2 - 68E.2.5
plate defect



Fig. 3 - 68E.3.13 - retouch

Tableau		68De	68Eb-d	88Aa	88Ab	88Ac
	Planche originale	II	II	II	II	I / II *
	Planche d'impression	Ila	Ila	Ilb	Ilc	Ilc *
Case 25		DP	DP	DP	DP	DP
Case 125		DP	DP	DP	DP	DP
Case 225		DP/R	DP/R	DP	DP	DP
Case 325		DP/R	DP/R	DP	DP	DP

DP: Défaut de planche

R: Retouche

* La plupart des 88Ac proviennent de la planche originale I; on trouve des exemplaires de la planche originale II (planche d'impression Ilc).

Standing Helvetia: The "Helvetta" Variety

by Roberto Lopez

This article was previously published in *Rhône Philatélie*, December 2017 No. 158. It is reprinted here with the gracious permission of *Rhône Philatélie* and the author. The translation is by Google and monitored by Roger Heath.

Once again, we will talk about the "Helvetia Standing" stamps. This is a Swiss stamp issue that has been in the news since its first day of existence!

In fact, in 1882, the first Swiss stamp produced by the intaglio process was issued. The Helvetia Standing was issued from April 1, 1882 to December 31, 1924. This beautiful lady, an allegorical and emblematic figure of Switzerland, marked her time in an elegant way, much to the delight of philatelists. The great diversity of this stamp, due in particular to the printing techniques, is still today the joy of many collectors.

The most famous plate defect of this issue is probably the variety "HELVETTA" on the 30 ct brown. It is described in the catalogs (Zu 68D.2.50/II, Zu 68E.2.50/II and 88A.2.50/II) and in the specialized literature as "2.50/IIa-c".

But what does "2.50/IIa-c" mean?

The number "2" shows us that it is a plate defect (in contrast to the retouching, which is numbered "3"). The number "50" is the catalog number of the plate defect. The Roman numeral "II" indicates that it is the original plate 2. And the letters "a-C" tell us about the printing plates.

In fact, the plate defect exists on three distinct stamps: 1) the 68De (white paper, 13 teeth, control mark II), 2) the 68E (white paper, 14 teeth, control mark II) and c) the 88A (white paper, 13 teeth, large cross watermark).

The accident occurred in position 25 of the original plate II, which is at the origin of this interesting defect, which is reproduced on the three printing plates used for the 30 centimes from 1901 to 1907.

On each printing plate, we find this characteristic distortion of the letter "I" in the inscription "Helvetia" in positions 25, 125, 225 and 325. It is in 1901, on the 68E, that we meet this defect for the first time.

From 1895 to 1903, we will find neither the defect nor the retouching on the 68Da-d since this stamp with its shades of color comes from the original plate 1.

Only issues from 1901 to 1905 (68Eb-d, 68De) present this defect and the retouch-

ing. This retouching appears for the first time at the end of 1902, and this only on positions 225 and 325 of the 68Ec+d and 68De, since these stamps were printed with the printing plate IIa. On the printing plates of 88A, plates I Ib and I Ic, the defect was not corrected.

The table on the previous page will give you an overview, making it easier to sort your stamps.

Each printing plate has its own specificities allowing one to define the 5, 125, 225 and 325 positions. The dots, lines and other small defects are sometimes so discreet that they make the determination difficult. We will not go into all these details here, as it would go far beyond the scope of this article.

But you should take the time to study them, to consult the existing literature and, above all, not hesitate to ask for the opinion of a member of your society or club, or of a specialist: this is the only way to move forward. In case of doubt, and before paying too much for fake stamps, do not hesitate to ask for an expert opinion or to ask the seller for a certificate.

I will end with a proverb from Protagoras:

"The science of philatelic happiness is to love one's collection and to seek pleasure in it."



Fig 6 - Finding these defects on covers is even more interesting. The cover shown is interesting, even if it is obviously philatelic (it has superfluous franking; the correct postage would have been 15 centimes).

I hope to have "contaminated" you with the Standing Helvetia. ✚

Fig.4 - The stamp below is a 68De with the plate defect. It is position 125 and the printing is done with the printing plate IIa. This position was never retouched.



Fig 5. - This stamp is also a 68De, but this time position 225. The retouching is clearly visible on the enlargement.



References -

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