



## Early Swiss Mail to Spain

by Michael Peter

As I have been putting together my exhibit "SWISS MAIL TO FOREIGN DESTINATIONS 1854-1882", I have come across some interesting aspects to certain pieces of mail during this time period. I will be sharing some of my findings over the next few issues of TELL.

We begin with a recent acquisition of a stampless piece during this time period. (Figure 1) At first glance, it looks like just another boring stampless item from Bern to Barcelona from July 11, 1855. The imperforate Strubels had been issued, so why was it unfranked?

Swiss postal connections with Spain already existed since the time of the old Swiss Confederation. Transport was carried out under postal agreements with France. Letters were either routed via Basel-Paris or via Geneva-Lyon. On November 2, 1850, a postal agreement was finalized with Spain in Basel. Franked mail was not included, thus, mail to Spain was absent postage stamps. However, postage stamps were mandatory for parcels, printed matter and newspapers. On July 29, 1863, the previously mentioned agreement was replaced by a new postal agreement (In force since September 1, 1864) with reduced rates and allowing postage to the destination. Thus, no mail to Spain bore Strubels. They do not exist.

Letters according to the 1850 postal agreement was ratified in January 1851. This led to the following restrictions of the tariff:

- 1) Letters had to be sent as postage letters, meaning that the recipient had to pay postage.
- 2) Letters collected daily in Basel or Geneva and forwarded in a closed container (Large envelope or Bag) to the border Post Offices in La Junquera or Irun, Spain. Thus, they do not bear a French border transit cancels.

- 3) Letters were charged at a weight progression of 4 adarmares (equivalent to a quarter of an ounce or 7.5 grams at 4 Reales each).
- 4) Letters to Gibraltar and Portugal were not covered by this agreement and they needed to be routed through the French postal service to the Spanish border.

As mentioned, the letter dated July 11, 1855 was from the Federal Council in Bern to the Swiss Council in Barcelona. Transit marking from Geneva dated July 12 and arrival marking in Barcelona dated July 15 are on reverse.

The letter was heavy - 120 grams. It required 64 Reales which was the equivalent of 16 Swf. Quite a sum of

money during this time period. To date this is the second highest weight class letter known to Spain during this time period.

To indicate the applicable postal agreement/tariff, the letters were marked with a hand-stamp. In this case, the blue boxed SUIZA which indicated that the letter was subject to the Spanish-Swiss postal agreement.



Figure 1 - Bern to Barcelona 11 July 1855.



Figure 2 - Basel to Madrid 26 July 1868.

# Dwarf Cancels - An Exciting Collecting Area That Allows Research

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Translation by Google monitored by Roger Heath.

by Roberto Lopez, CPhH

I'm an absolute fan of ARGE Switzerland because, as it's so beautifully written on the website: "PS: It's nice to have a partner you can lean on." This isn't fake; it's actually true.

<https://arge-schweiz.com/>

The small group that meets every Tuesday to make the Güller cancel books more user-friendly and interesting is the best example of this. Information, knowledge, and friendship are shared there, as philately should be.

I'm very happy to be able to share my work in my specialty, dwarf cancels, with the members, thus contributing to this titanic task.

I'll use four examples here to show how and what research can be done in the field of dwarf cancels.

First, you need vast quantities of documents on which you can identify a year in some way (departure, forwarding, or arrival postmarks, or in the text), since the dwarf postmarks are conspicuous by the absence of the year. This approach already allows you to determine early or late use dates. To avoid duplicate entries the data is recorded in an Excel file, which naturally contains the date and a brief description. Only data that can be verified is included in this Excel spreadsheet (this means scans of documents with at least 300 dpi, front and back, if no year can be identified on the front).

Why should all documents be recorded even if they are not early or late dates? By recording all the data, you can determine rarity. It will come as no surprise that certain dealers often own "absolute rarities" that they are willing to sell at high prices. However, if they know the frequency, they will not pay high prices for common cancels, even if claims to the contrary are made.

Another argument for collecting all data is to determine the period of use of the various color cancels. Certain cancels were used with different color inks (black, blue, etc.).

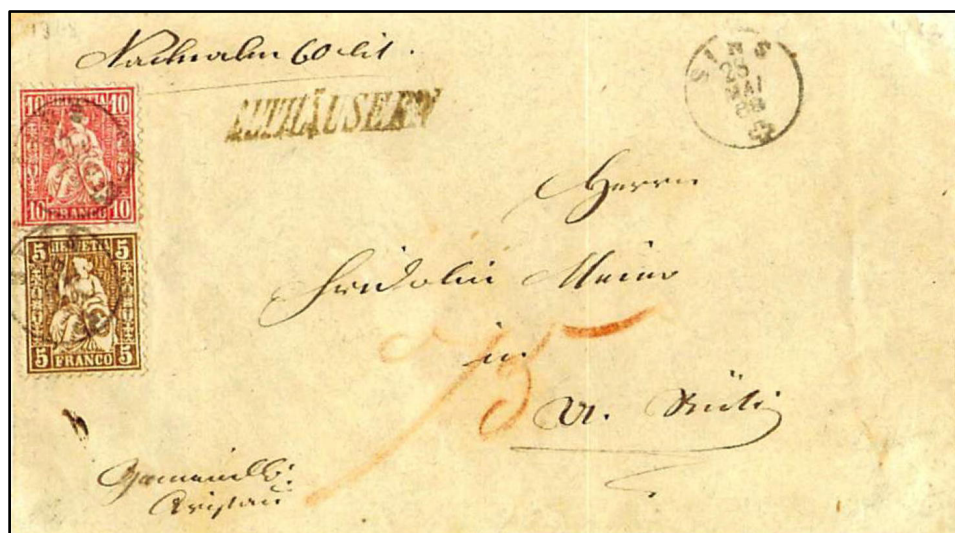
Let's start with the Althäusern dwarf cancel. This cancel was in use from April 25, 1872, to September 14, 1883 and can be determined from the current database. It is now interesting to know which cancels were used before and after the dwarf cancels were used. This information can also help narrow down the period of use.

The letter I am showing here is a COD (to collect 60 cents) in the local area, which corresponds to a rate of 15 centimes. The COD was posted in

Althäusern (bar cancel of Group 40), which at that time was a non-invoiceable depository, to be canceled with a round cancel in Sins, the nearest invoiceable post office. This cancel is a thimble cancel (cancel Group 104). Further information on this will follow at the end of the article.

Now, it would be interesting to know the early date of Güller cancel No.13820, which would allow us to determine the late date of the dwarf cancel. It should be noted, however, that the dates in the Güller books are not valid until February 1881 which after that time correspond to the chronology of production. From February 1881 onwards, the dates are more reliable, but even these should be treated with caution. It would be better to document the dates with a documented postal item.

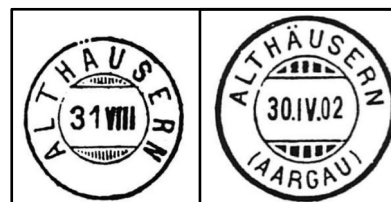
The registration scheme is the same for the next dwarf stamp from Aristau. Only, in the Güller cancel books, you will find "Aristan" instead of Aristau. This is an error by the engraver. Since no cancel impression with Aristan has been found on a



Straight line  
Cancel Group 40,  
28.5.1868



Dwarf cancel  
25.4.1872 – 14.8.1883

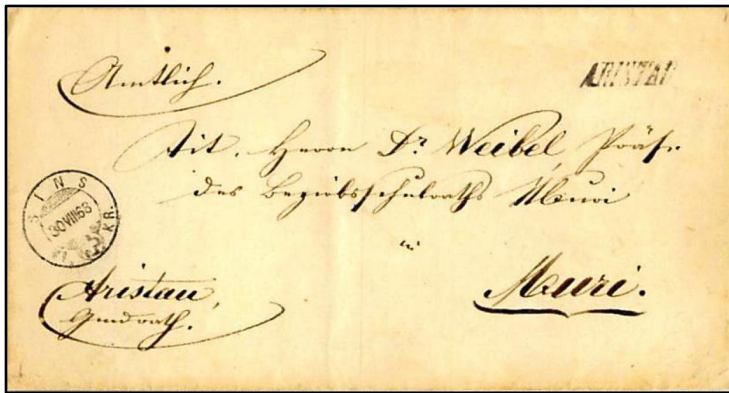


Güller No 13820  
Manufactured 30.4.1902

	Frühdatum	Spätdatum
Schwarz	07.04.1872	08.07.1893
Violett-schwarz	?	

First and last dates of Althäusern dwarf cancel



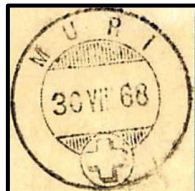


Cancel Group 40  
30.08.1868



Dwarf cancel  
07.04.1872 to  
08.07.1893

Corrected canceler  
Güller-Nr. 13819



Arrival datestamp of Muri  
Güller No 47

document so far, the error seems to have been noticed immediately and a new, correct canceler made. The period of use extends from April 7, 1872 to July 8, 1893.

With this canceler, it is even more important to document all documents, because the stamp is said to have been used in two different colors, namely black and violet-black ink. However, so far, only black cancels are found.

The next document is an official letter (letter without cancels, BoM), therefore unstamped, from Aristau (cancel postmark of Group 40) via Sins (Güller No.103) to Muri (Güller No.47; you will also find additional information about this postmark at

the end of the article). These unstamped official letters also had to be forwarded via a post office subject to billing.

The early postmarks for the town of Auw are also not found in the Güller postmark books. We will only find Auro, a town that doesn't even exist. Here, too, no Auro cancellation has been found on any documents to date.

The Auw dwarf postmark was used from November 18, 1871 to June 12, 1877. Here, too, it is an official letter from Auw (bar postmark of Group 40) to Muri (thimble postmark, Group 104).

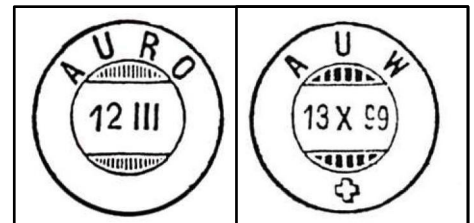
It is now interesting to obtain information from collectors that allows us to know which postmarks were in use between March 1866 and November 18, 1871.

The three towns mentioned so far were elevated to billing offices with the introduction of the dwarf postmarks. It is often claimed that all towns

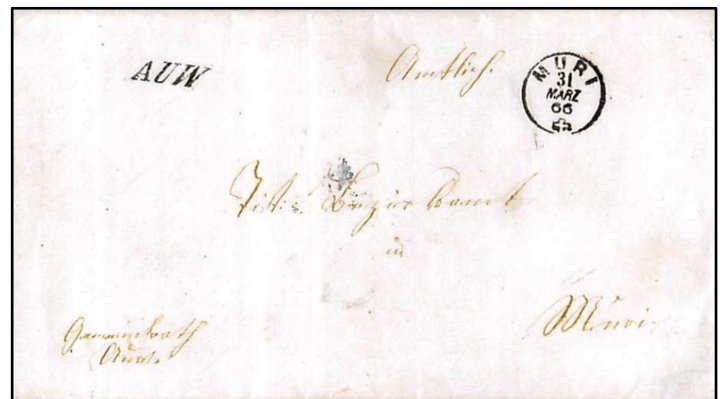
Cancel Group 40  
31.3.1866



Dwarf cancel  
Güller Nr. 473  
18.11.1871 -  
12.06. 1877




Güller Nr. 3142



**David Feldman**  
INTERNATIONAL AUCTIONEERS

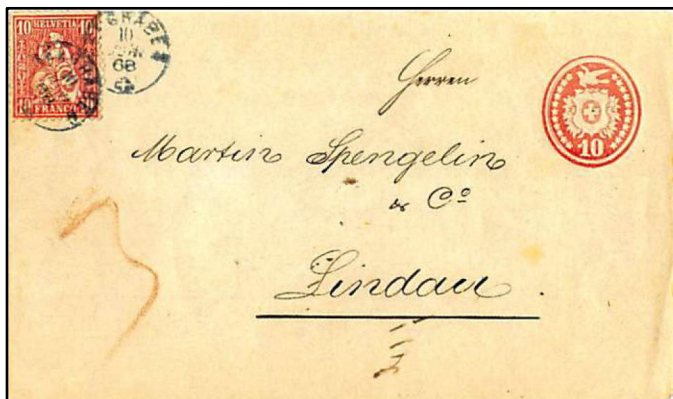
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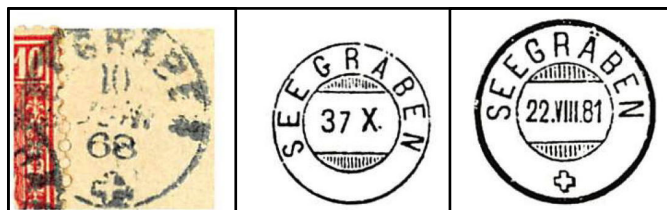
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became billing offices with the receipt of the dwarf postmarks. That this is not the case is demonstrated by the next example. The "identifying mark" of a billing post office is the use of a round postmark. However, in Seegräben, a round canceler, a so-called thimble cancel (stamp Group 104), was already in use before the time of dwarf cancels. Thus, the theory mentioned at the beginning can be considered refuted.



Tübli letter from Seegräben to Lindau (border area) franked with 10 centimes (SBK 38)



Group 104  
15.07.1863 -  
06. 10.1868

Dwarf cancel  
12.11.1869 -  
29.03.1881

Güller-  
Nr. 4346

The usage data for thimble cancels were kindly provided by Bernard Lachat, who, with well over 25,000 entries, owns the largest database on thimble cancels.

It should also be mentioned here that 27 localities that had a dwarf stamp had already used a thimble canceler.

The dwarf canceler of Seegräben was used in three different colors: blue (very frequently used), black (represented by only one example in the database), and blue-green, which, however, has not yet been documented. Exotic color combinations such as blue-green, green-black, etc. should be enjoyed with caution. It is very likely that these are due to color fading over time.

As you can see, the thimble cancels were already blue. It is therefore not surprising that the dwarf cancel was also already blue when it was first used on November 12, 1869.

	Frühdatum	Spätdatum
Blau	12.11.1869	30.06.1878
Schwarz	29.03.1881	
Blau-grün	?	

First and last dates of Seegräben dwarf cancel



Group 104  
(Thimble cancel)  
01.01.1853 -  
28.05.1868

Güller-Nr. 103  
30.8.1868

Güller-Nr. 103  
Güller Book,  
Vol. 1

Speaking of postmarks: Did you notice the forwarding postmark from Sins (Canton of Aargau)? Both the letter from Aristau and from Althäusern have a forwarding postmark from Sins. Three months after the use of the thimble postmark, the new postmark, Güller No.103, was used.

Interestingly, the stamp impression in the Güller book contains an error. Have you discovered it? Sins is located in the canton of Aargau in postal district VI and not IV as shown in the Güller book.



Group 104  
(Thimble  
cancel)  
02.3. 1853 -  
28.3.1883

Güller-Nr. 47  
30.8.1868

Güller-Nr. 47  
Güller Book,  
Vol.1

Two of the letters shown above have an arrival postmark from Muri. With these two cancels, it is interesting to know when and why one or the other was used, because the thimble canceler was used from March 2, 1853 to March 28, 1883. Nevertheless, we find a strike of Güller cancel No.47 dated August 30, 1868. Was the thimble canceler used as a temporary stamp until 1883?

As you can see, research can and is still being diligently carried out. This is, as mentioned at the beginning, only possible if philatelists work together and not against each other. What good is it to other collectors if they keep their data to themselves? After all, every person only makes a fleeting passage on earth, so such reticence is completely inexplicable to me.

I now look forward to every Tuesday when I can meet my colleagues from the ArGe via video conference. Meeting them via video is better than the rather short and sometimes fleeting personal encounters in Zollikon. +