

Collecting Cancellations: A Passion Like Any Other

This article first appeared in *Rhône Philatélie*, No 170, December 2020 and is reproduced with permission of *Rhône Philatélie* and the author.

by Roberto Lopez

Philately allows us to build a wide variety of collections. Thus, at exhibitions, one can discover classic collections, postal history collections, thematic collections, and collections dedicated to the study of a specific philatelic subject—such as that of cancellations. The subject of cancellations, if one chooses to explore and expand upon it, is itself vast. Consequently, you will find postmarks belonging to the various groups cataloged in the *Manuel des oblitérations suisses (Manual of Swiss Cancellations)*, published in the early 20th century by the authors Andres and Emmenegger.

Among all these cancellations, some have been studied to varying degrees—such as the so-called "razor blade" cancellations, the Group 104 postmarks known as "Fingerhutstempel", the "dwarf postmarks" known as "Zwergstempel", the Güller postmarks featuring "Elzevir" typefaces, and so on. Nevertheless, even today, it is still possible to discover new dates and find philatelic documents. However, this is only possible if lists of these dates are made available to collectors—lists that are managed and updated by one or two individuals committed to performing this work on a regular basis.

The Güller Cancellations

The cancellations we wish to present in this article were designed by Güller and do not appear in the *Handbook of Swiss Cancellations* mentioned above. Their description is as follows: "a two-circle postmark with a bridge; fine cross-hatching; includes geographical indications; all text is rendered in sans-serif block capitals."

As previously noted, these postmarks were created by the engraver Güller in Hüttikon. Consequently, they can be found in the Güller catalogs published by the Consilium in 1999. These postmarks were identified by Amédée Roueche (d. 2018), who introduced this subject to the philatelic community through two articles published in the *Journal philatélique Suisse (JPhS/SBZ)* in 2004 and 2005.

As described in the two articles mentioned above, four postmarks documented by Güller do not appear to have ever been put into use, as no dates of actual usage have been recorded to date. These are Güller postmarks Nos. 7, 20, 870, and 1238.

Postmarks with No Known Dates of Use:

The "ZURICH FIL. BAHNH." postmark (Güller No. 348) is the only one that was struck in blue between March 27 and April 3, 1873.

Three postmarks of this type are not listed in Güller's catalogs. These are the following postmarks, designated in the list as "NG" (Non-Güller) 1–3:

- BERN BRIEFEXPED. (NG1)
- GENEVE SUCC-GARE (NG2)
- GENEVE SUCC-RIVE (NG3).

Currently, there are 141 entries in my database. Of these 141 entries, 80% were used as departure postmarks, 12% as transit postmarks, and 8% as arrival postmarks.

An analysis of the cataloged documents makes it possible to determine on which stamp issues these postmarks were applied:

- 50% Seated Helvetia (50% on white paper and 4% on mixed paper)
 - 30% "Tübli" postal stationery
 - 8% On other postal stationery
 - 4% "Numeral and Cross" type
 - 1% Unstamped letters
- (BoM)
- 1% Postage due stamps
 - 1% "Tübli" combined with "Numeral and Cross" type
 - 0% Standing Helvetia

The purpose of this article is to remind philatelists of a category that has largely fallen into oblivion—and to demonstrate that it is still possible to discover new dates of use, which we present to you below. The updated list can be viewed on my website at www.lopez-phila.ch, under the section "Group oublié" (The Forgotten Group).

The usage dates have been extended to cover the period from the 2004 publication to the 2005 publication. Pierre Guinand updated the list in 2018. Nevertheless—as previously mentioned—new dates can still be discovered by searching through philatelic fairs and auctions.

The first letter (Figure 1) allows us to push back the earliest known usage date by a few days. It is a letter sent from Geneva to Saint-Jeoire in Haute-Savoie, franked at 20 centimes (SBK 32a); this corresponds to the rate for the adjacent postal zone for a letter weighing less than 10 grams (rate in effect from October 1, 1865, to June 30, 1875). It bears the Geneva postmark—one of the three



postmarks not listed by Güller—neatly applied both directly onto the stamp and alongside it on the envelope.

The next letter allows us to push back the earliest known usage date by no less than five years. This letter (Figure 2) originated in Affeltrangen (Group 30 postmark; a linear mark in Elzevir type), transited through Wyl (an accounting office; Güller No. 123) and Uzwyll, and was destined for Niederbüren.



The next letter we present to you has not entirely retained its original freshness, though its 150-year age surely warrants a little indulgence on our part! Nevertheless, it, too, allows us to push back the earliest known usage date by a few days. It is a postal stationery item (a "Tübli" letter) pre-franked at 5 centimes, sent from Zurich to Zurich. (Figure 3) The postmark is neatly applied and clearly legible.



During the lockdown period, we all had the time to sort through our philatelic material. It was while examining various documents, therefore, that I stumbled upon the following small letter—one that, at first glance, looks rather unassuming. I received a double surprise, as both postmarks—the dispatch and the arrival marks—belong to a specific group of cancellations that I am currently researching. Moreover, both represent early dates!

The letter (Figure 4) was dispatched from Bern on March 8, 1870 (BERN BRIEFEXPED postmark, featuring a wide "R" in "BERN"), bound for Basel (arriving on March 9, 1870; BASEL BRIEF-DISTRIB." postmark), with the arrival mark stamped on the reverse side. (Figure 5)

This letter is a welcome find, as it has allowed us to push back the earliest recorded date for both postmarks by several months.



If, while browsing your own collections, you come across any stamps or documents bearing either of these postmarks—provided they are clearly legible and could contribute new information to this list—please do not hesitate to email me a scan at 400 dpi resolution. The list will be updated and posted online as soon as any new information becomes available. Thank you in advance for your assistance. +



1. *Un groupe d'oblitérations oublié*, de Amédée Roueche, SBZ/JPhS 4/2004, p. 126-127.
2. *Un groupe d'oblitérations oublié jusqu'ici*, de Amédée Roueche, SBZ/JPhS 12/2005, p. 504-505.
3. *Un groupe d'oblitérations oublié*, de Pierre Guinand, SBZ/JPhS 10/2018, p. 366-367.
4. *Güller-Stempelbücher 1867-1977*, de Michael Rutherford, Consilium Philateliae Helveticae, 1999.

Postmark Definitions

Have you ever been confused by the terminology describing postal marks on cover? Below is a simplified list of the most common markings and when they are used appropriately:

Cancel – only applies to markings used to deface stamps.

Postmark – a marking indicating originating town applied by a mail handling entity, with or without a date

Date stamp – a marking applied by a postal entity to indicate receipt, transit, or arrival of an item

Circular Date Stamp (CDS) – a particular type of postmark

Straightline postmark – term used typically found on a stamped or stampless cover