

Color Shades of SBK 37a and SBK 37b

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Figure 1 Zum 37a-h

Color shades constitute a fascinating, albeit complex, field. If one wishes to delve into this subject, one must have comparative material at one's disposal. To begin with, it is advisable to consult specialists or to acquire only those shades accompanied by a certificate confirming their specific nuance.

Certain issues feature very rare color shades—as is the case, for instance, with the "Standing Helvetia" issue. Here, however, I will limit my focus to the "Seated Helvetia" issue.

As part of the color change implemented in 1867, the 2-Rappen stamp shifted in color from gray to olive. According to the *Zumstein Spezial-katalog*, there are eight distinct shades. In the year of issue—1874—alone, four different shades are recorded; of these, the first three are the most sought-after. If one relies solely on the catalog's price valuations, one might conclude that shade 37a (Light Red-Brown) is far rarer than shade 37b (Pale Brown). But is this actually the case?

My personal collections—and indeed my entire inventory of "Seated Helvetia" stamps—were examined and recorded in a database. In this way,

I was able to log 81 entries pertaining to shade 37a and 18 entries pertaining to shade 37b. Within my inventory, shade 37b appears approximately four times less frequently than shade 37a.

What does the distribution look like when broken down by postal district? **Table 1** illustrates the distribution of these two color shades across the various postal districts. As can be seen from Table 1, the majority of the 37a stamps—approximately 32%—originate from Postal District VIII (Zurich), followed by Postal District V (Basel) with 27%. To date, no examples have been found from Postal Districts I (Geneva), IX (St. Gallen), X (Chur), or XI (Bellinzona). By comparison, the distribution of the 37b stamps is similar, with about 60% of all stamps coming from Postal Districts V and VIII. However, it must be noted that, given the small number of entries for the 37b, this observation is statistically less significant.

The 81 entries for the 37a consist of 54 single stamps and 27 covers. It is hardly surprising that 18 of these covers are printed matter, 7 are cash-on-delivery items, and 2 are standard letters, as these 2-rappen stamps were specifically intended for domestic



Figure 2. 37a

Figure 3. 37b

Figure 4. 37c



Figure 5. 37a
7.2.1874 Zürich
Postkreis VIII

Postkreis	Anzahl 37a	%	Anzahl 37b	%
I	0	0.00	0	0.00
II	4	4.94	3	16.67
III	7	8.64	1	5.56
IV	3	3.70	2	11.11
V	22	27.16	3	16.67
VI	12	14.81	0	0.00
VII	4	4.94	1	5.56
VIII	26	32.10	6	33.33
IX	0	0.00	1	5.56
X	0	0.00	1	5.56
XI	0	0.00	0	0.00
Nicht identifizierbar	3	3.70		
	81		18	

Table 1

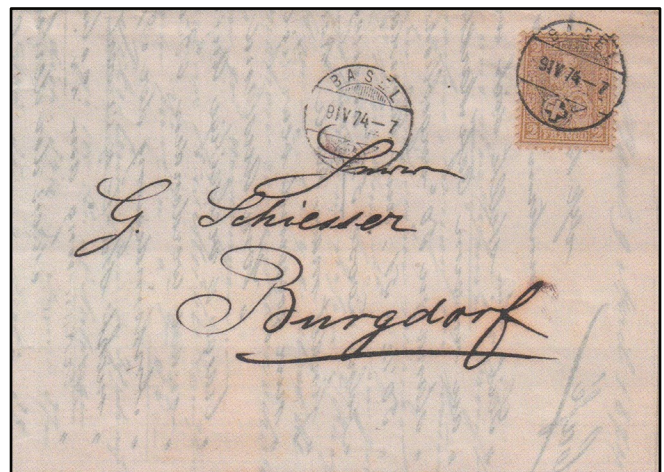


Figure 6. 37b, 9.4.1874 Basel, Postkreis V

printed matter and cash-on-delivery services. Practically the same observation can be made regarding the 37b stamps.

Of these 27 covers, only one is addressed to a foreign destination. Letters sent abroad bearing a 37a stamp are rare. In my database, neither standard letters nor foreign-bound letters bearing the 37b stamp are currently recorded.

According to the catalogs, the earliest recorded date for the 37a variety is February 5, 1874. Regarding an early date for the 37b variety, however, nothing can be found in these same catalogs. In my own database, the current earliest recorded date for this variety is April 9, 1874.

It is also interesting to examine the distribution of the usage of these color shades over time. I will illustrate this for you in the following tables:

37a													
Feb	März	April	Mai	Juni	Juli	Aug	Sept	Okt	Nov	Dez	1875	1876	
6	26	23	3	11	4	1	3	3	0	0	0	0	1
7.4%	32.1%	28.4%	3.7%	13.7%	4.9%	1.2%	3.7%	3.7%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	1.2%

Table 2

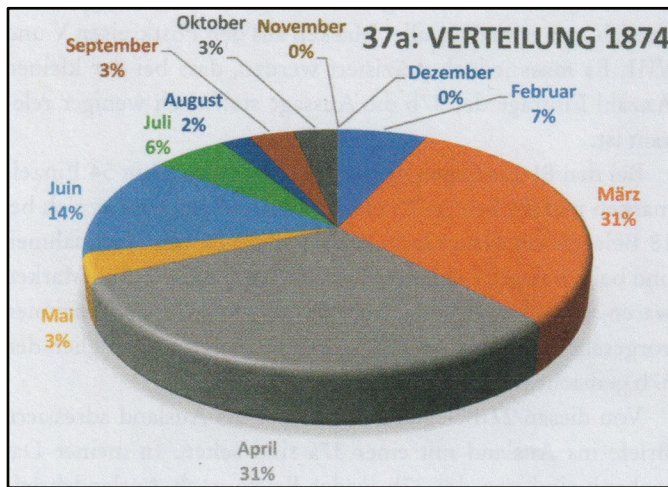


Table 3

With the exception of one outlier, all examples of the 37a variety from the year 1874—which account for the majority of recorded usages—occurred during the months of March and April 1874.

In comparison, the period of usage for the 37b variety extends from April to October 1874. To date, no outliers have been recorded for this variety. Here, too, it must be emphasized that the statistical significance of these findings is limited by the small sample size.

37b													
Feb	März	April	Mai	Juni	Juli	Aug	Sept	Okt	Nov	Dez	1875	1876	
0	0	1	3	4	7	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
0.0%	0.0%	5.6%	16.7%	22.2%	38.9%	5.6%	5.6%	5.6%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

Table 4

Having presented the dry statistics, I now offer a few visual examples for the eye.

"Dwarf cancels" (small-format postmarks) are predominantly found on the "Seated Helvetia" issue. However, finding one of these cancels specifically on the 37a color shade requires time—a great deal of time. After several years of searching,

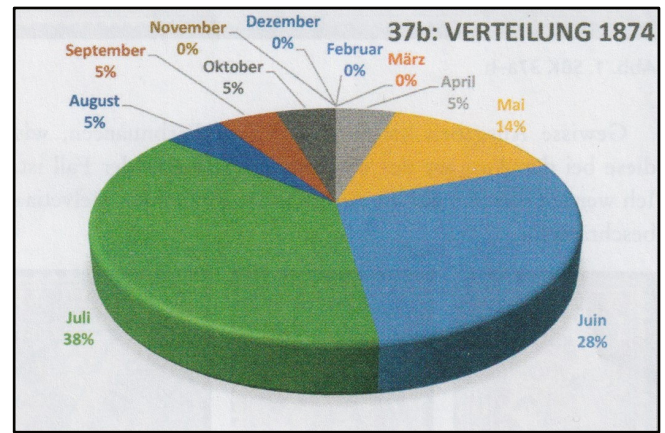


Table 5

I finally came across an example from the fourth post office—the last one I was still missing. Presented here are the only four examples of dwarf cancels on this specific color shade known to exist to date:



Figure 7 Trüllikon



Figure 8. Gümligen, Postkreis III Bern



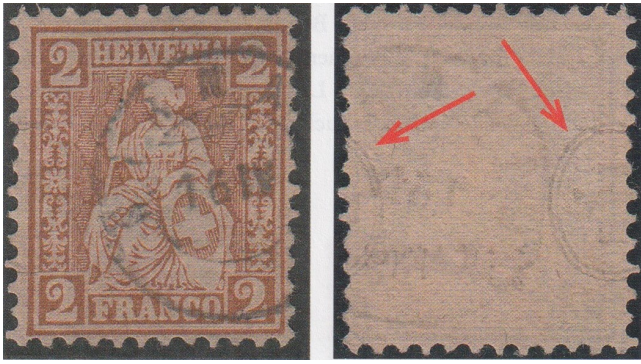
Figure 9. Sirnach, Postkreis VIII (Thurgau)



Figure 10. Ottenbach, Postkreis VIII (Zürich)

In the image above, the first three stamps appear to be of a different color than the fourth stamp. This is due to the use of older scans (the original scan has since been replaced). All of these stamps have been duly certified by an expert from the Association of Philatelic Experts.

Upon examining the reverse side of the stamp bearing the "Sirnach" postmark (Figure 9), one can observe that the control mark has been bisected by the stamp's perforation (in a 1/3 to 2/3 ratio). Apart from this variety of control mark, I was able to discover yet another variety—one that I would like to share with you here.



Figures 11, 12. Clearly visible division of the control mark on the reverse.

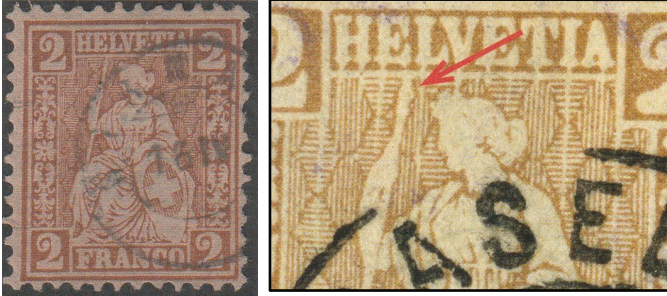


Figure 13. 37a.2.04 Figure 14. Vertical colorless lines.

You are likely familiar with the "vertical colorless lines" variety, which appears on various stamps within the "Seated Helvetia" issue. This variety can, for instance, be found on the light reddish-brown issue (SBK 37a).

Finally, I would like to present an interesting

(Medical Missions continued from page 7)

date, since the duration of the individual missions is exactly known. It goes without saying that the address is given for the mission, as in Figures 3 and 4.

As far as the freedom of postage is concerned, this seems to have had an effect on the home-front traffic, but not vice versa. Only the voucher Figure 1 is stamped, which is probably due to the fact that Dr. Nicole was on an outpost whose Field Postal officers probably did not yet have exact knowledge of the status of the members of the Mission and proceeded according to the general rule "Free postage is granted for correspondence to family members in Switzerland - the rest must be franked". +

Literature:

cover to you. The letter was sent as printed matter from Trüllikon to Zurich. Upon passing through the accounting office in Andelfingen, the item was rejected as printed matter because it contained a handwritten message. The postage was subsequently topped up by 8 Rp. All 5 copies of the 2 Rp. stamps belong to the light reddish-brown variety (SBK 37a). Furthermore, the date stamp in Trüllikon was set incorrectly: 7 VI instead of 7 IV!

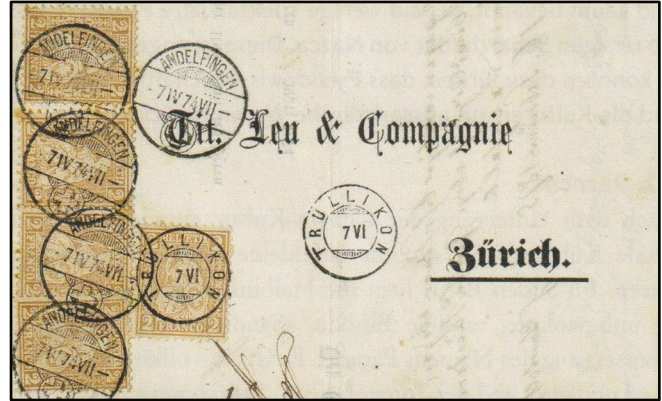


Figure 15. Zwergstempel from Trüllikon

As you have seen in this article, color discrepancies can sometimes be caused by scanning; therefore, caution is advised should you wish to purchase stamps on various online platforms. There are those who will not hesitate to exploit this fact in order to mislead the buyer. It is generally worth noting that, when dealing with expensive stamps, it is well worth requesting a certificate of authenticity from a specialist. +

"Festschrift für Eugen Bircher", 1952, Verlag Sauerländer

Rudolf Bucher: "Between Betrayal and Humanity", 1967, Verlag Huber & Co., Frauenfeld

"Die Ostfrontmission Divisionär Birchers im 2. Weltkrieg", by Dr. W. Gautschi, in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* Nr. 287 for 9./10. December 1978, p.35f.

"Schweizer Ärzte unter dem Hakenkreuz", by Peter Hufschmid, in: *Das Magazin*, supplement to *Tages-Anzeiger* and *Berner Zeitung* BZ No.13, 30/31 March 1990

"History of Swiss Neutrality", by Professor Edgar Bonjour, vol. 4.



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