



TELL

Basel: Zeppelin Post Exchange Office

by Cheryl Ganz

In the zeppelin era, “exchange offices” handled Swiss mail to prepare for Germany. Mail passed through these designated offices to track postage accounts, presort mail, and to determine routing. In the 1920s and 1930s, Romanshorn served as the Swiss mail exchange office for LZ-127 *Graf Zeppelin* flights to Friedrichshafen. Dispatches from Switzerland moved by rail to Romanshorn and then by ferry across Lake Constance to Friedrichshafen. In 1936, however, the new zeppelin LZ-129 *Hindenburg* operated most flights from its new zeppelin base at Frankfurt am Main. Consequently, Basel served as Switzerland’s mail exchange office (Fig. 1) for Frankfurt zeppelin posts.



Fig. 1 The Basel 2 post office building at the central station SBB was built in 1910 and served as the exchange office for zeppelin posts in 1936-37. On March 11, 1975, the building was demolished for a more modern building, *The Postreiter*. In 2023, after forty-three years in operation, landowners Swiss Post and SBB slated the Postreiter building for dismantling as part of the area’s renovation project. A postal service counter moved to the Centralbahn Passage. In Basel 2’s location, a new multi-use development project *The Nauentor* will include apartments, offices, and postal operations to open in 2032.



Fig. 2 Basel’s SBB central train station featured on a postage stamp in 2016

In 1936, from the Swiss railway station in Basel there were four trains a day direct to Frankfurt. From the central train station (SBB or *Schweizer Basel Bahnhof*) (Fig. 2), the trains traveled a few minutes across the Rhine River to Basel’s German train station (BBB or *Basel Bad-*

ische Bahnhof) (Fig. 3) before entering Germany. The route to Frankfurt took approximately five hours. That was less than half the time for a train from Friedrichshafen to Frankfurt, which also required a change of trains in Stuttgart. As a result,



Fig. 3 The Reichsbahn train, depicted here in Basel SBB, transported zeppelin mail to Frankfurt for *Hindenburg* and *Graf Zeppelin* flights from Frankfurt. Stiftung Historisches Erbe der SBB.

the train schedule determined that the Swiss postal network needed Basel as a second exchange office for zeppelin mail.

Many of the Swiss posts destined to fly aboard *Hindenburg* received the “Frankfurt—Basel” rail transit marking on the envelope’s reverse (Fig. 4). The evening trains (Fig. 5) arrived after midnight, when night

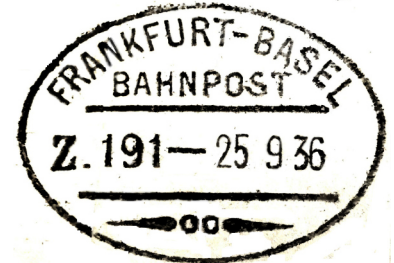


Fig. 4 The train transit postal marking included the train number, Z 191, and date.



Fig. 5 The Reichsbahn D Zug steam engine traveled between Basel and Frankfurt in approximately five hours. Stiftung Historisches Erbe der SBB.

shift postal clerks at the Frankfurt 19 railway post office (Fig. 6) could finalize *Hindenburg* mail in time to transport it to the airport for loading on an early

Collecting Obliterations

A Passion Like Any Other

by Roberto Lopez

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Philately allows us to make multiple collections. Thus we can discover during exhibitions, classic collections, postal history, thematic collections and collections on the study of a specific philatelic subject, such as that of postmarks. The subject of obliterations, if we want to break it down and develop it, is also very vast. Thus, you will find postmarks from the different groups which are listed in the "Manual of Swiss Cancellations" published at the beginning of the 20th century by the two authors Andres & Emmenegger.

Among all these cancellations, there are some which have been more or less well studied, such as those known as "razor blades", the Group 104 cancellers known as "Fingerhutstempel", the "dwarf cancellers" known as "Zwergstempel", Güller's postmarks with "elzévir" characters, etc! Despite everything, we still manage to find new dates and beautiful documents today. But this is only possible if the lists with dates are made available to collectors, managed and updated by one or two people who commit to doing this work on a regular basis.

Güller's postmarks

The postmarks we want to present to you in this article were designed by Güller and do not appear in the "Manual of Swiss Cancellations". Here is their description: "postmarks with two circles and bridge, fine hatching, time indication, postal indications or geographical, all in stick character and in capital letters".

As already mentioned, these devices were created by the engraver Güller in Hüttikon. So we will find them in the books by Güller published by the Consilium in 1999. This canceller was identified by Amédée Roueche (†2018) who introduced us to this subject through two publications in the Swiss Philatelic Journal (JPhS/SBZ) in 2004 and 2005.

Cancellers without known use date

As already described in the two articles mentioned above, four cancellers documented by Güller do not appear to have been used, as no date of use is known so far. These are Güller cancellers No. 7, 20, 870 and 1238.

The stamp of "ZURICH FIL. BAHNH." (Güller No. 348) is the only one which was struck in blue from 27.III. to 3.IV.73.

Three of this type of canceller are not found in Güller's books. It's about the cancellers following

which are referred to in the list as "NG" (Non-Güller) 1-3:

Bern Briefexped. (NG1)

Geneve Succ-gare (NG2)

Geneve Succ-Rive (NG3)

Currently, there are 141 records in my database. Among these 141 records, 80% are used as departure cancels, 12% as transit date stamps and 8% as date stamps.

Analysis of the listed documents makes it possible to determine on which issues these cancellers were used:

- + 50% Seated Helvetia (50% on white paper and 4% on granite paper)
- + 30% Whole Tübli
- + 8% On postal stationery
- + 4% Cross and Numeral type
- + 1% Letter without stamp (BoM)
- + 1% Tax stamps
- + 1% Tübli combined with type
- + 0% Helvetia standing

The purpose of this article is to remind philatelists that this post mark is not forgotten and it is always possible to find new dates which we would like to present to you below. The updated list can be

consulted on my website www.lopez-phila.ch under "Forgotten group" (Liste - Groupe d'obliteration oublié).

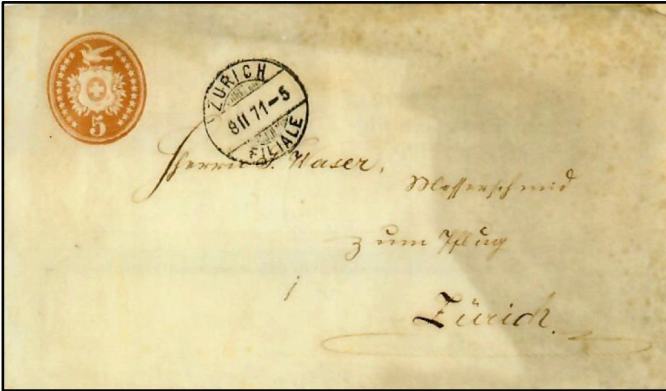
The dates of use may have been extended from the publication in 2004 to the publication in 2005. Pierre Guinand updated the list in 2018. However, as mentioned, new dates can be found by searching at fairs and auctions.

The first letter allows the early date to

be brought forward by a few days. (Figure 1) This is a letter from Geneva to Saint-Jeoire in Haute-Savoie franked at 20 cts (SBK 32a), which corresponds to the rate for the bordering radius for a letter weighing less than 10 grams (rate from 1.10.1865 to 30.6.1875). This is the Geneva stamp (one of the three cancellers not listed by Güller) properly affixed both on the stamp and next to it on the letter.

The following letter (Figure 2) allows the early date to be pushed back by no less than five years. The letter leaves Affeltrangen (Group 30 linear elzévir stamp) transits via Wyl (accounting office; Güller n°123) and by Uzwyll bound for Niederbüren.





The letter above (Figure 3) we present to you has not retained all its freshness, but its 150 years of age will make us a little indulgent! However, it also allows us to advance the early date of use by a few days. This is a postal stationery (Tübli letter) pre-franked at 5 cents for a letter within Zurich. The stamp is properly affixed and clearly legible.

During the lockdown, we all had time to sort our philatelic material. So it was while examining various documents that I came across the following little letter which, at first glance, does not look like much (Figure 4, 4A). I had a double surprise,

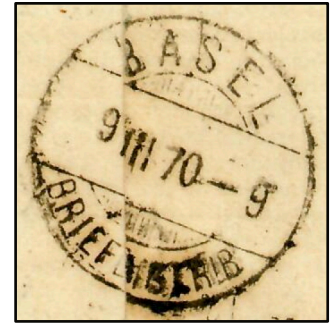


because the two date stamps, departure and arrival, are part of the cancellation group that I am treating here. On top of that, these are two early dates!

The letter left Berne on March 8, 1870 (BERN BRIEFEXPED., "R" of BERN large) bound for Basel arrival date March 9, 1870; BASEL BRIEF-DISTRIB) with the arrival date stamp on the back. A letter that pleases us, because it allowed us to

push back the early date by several months for the two cancels.

If you find stamps or documents in your collections with one of these clearly legible cancels that allow you to add new information to the list, do not hesitate to send me a scan at 400 dpi by email. The list will be updated and posted online as soon as there is anything new. Thank you in advance. +



References:

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/JPRS 10/2018, p. 366- 367.
4. «Güller-Stempelbücher 1867-1977», de Michael Rutherford, Consilium Philateliae Helveticae, 1999.

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