

# Switzerland's Domestic and International Postage Dues Charges during 1862-1907

## A Synopsis

### Importance

Postage due rules and procedures lurk on the back-of-the-book underside of postal history, drawing the attention of exhibitors much less often than front-of-the-book subjects. Switzerland is a good choice to display the history of postage due because it introduced domestic penalties early (1862) and it was among the first countries to implement international penalties (1875) as a founding member of the Universal Postal Union. Even though Switzerland is a small country, it had many literate correspondents who received postage due mail from all over the world. Some 60 different foreign postal administrations are represented here.

### Treatment

Postage due exhibits often describe individual covers only in terms of the obvious, stating only the amount of postage due, which the viewer can see for himself, but not the calculations underlying the amount. The detailed analyses in this exhibit carefully note the payment, prepaid rate, postage deficiency in the sending country, its equivalent amount in Switzerland, and only then the self-evident postage due charge that the cover shows. Even though the specific postage due stamps used on a cover have no bearing on the amount of postage due, the exhibitor has gone to great effort to identify the individual Swiss postage due stamps from among the 35 mainly look-alike printings of the first design.

### Knowledge/Research

Some 20 years ago the exhibitor began to collect articles on both Swiss and UPU postage due history, a difficult subject since the authors usually described only certain pieces of the full puzzle. The first breakthrough came from Dr. Jann Etter, who authored "Taxierungen – am praktischen Beispiel" ("Taxation – Through Practical Example"), a 118-part monthly series in *Berner Briefmarken Zeitung*, the Zumstein house organ, running from March 1991 to April 2003. A second breakthrough came from *U.S. International Postage Rates 1872-1996* by Wawrukiewicz and Beecher. In listing the postage rates from each country to the United States, they also provided the rates to Switzerland, the key information needed to determine the amount of underpayment, and all in one place! Even with a growing database on rates, this exhibitor has found it difficult to understand some postage due amounts on covers. Postal clerks made mistakes. For details on the postage due stamps, the only comprehensive reference is Zumstein's *Specialized Catalog of the Postage Stamps of Switzerland*, last published in 2000.

### Rarity/Condition

In the domestic arena several special postage due rates are difficult to find because they can go unrecognized without advanced philatelic knowledge: return postage charges for readdressed

letters (p. 8 ), undeliverable registered letters (pp. 13, 16), and rejected printed matter (pp. 34-36). Another special cover has a bisected postage due stamp (p. 24).

At the international level difficult acquisitions include scarce letters before the UPU (pp.49-52) and during its first four years, especially letters from outside the UPU (pp. 58-60). A letter so heavy that it bears the highest value 500c postage due stamp is a rarity (p. 75). Mail with postage due from more than one country also deserves attention, certainly a letter that went through five countries (p. 76). Such kicked-around mail still deserves a place here despite its sometimes beaten-up appearance. Other elusive covers show the early 100c minimum charge on letters from outside the UPU (p. 131) and the early 65c minimum charge on letters from overseas members (pp. 151-152).

### Presentation

The one or two headlines on each page enable the viewer to understand quickly the significance of each cover. The subhead in the upper left corner identifies the postage rate and/or penalty period in which each cover belongs (as listed on the title page). The subhead in the upper right corner identifies, in the case of international mail, the continental area of origin for each cover. These areas, following the sequential groupings used in Swiss philatelic literature, are Europe, Africa, Asia, Pacific, North America, Central America/Caribbean, and South America.