

The Usage of Switzerland's Imperforate Sitting Helvetia Issue of 1854 - 1863

Introduction to Traditional Exhibit

Stamps became obligatory for prepayment of both domestic and international postage on October 11, 1854. Anticipating the need, the Swiss Post Office Department contracted for printing the imperforate *Sitting Helvetias* in March of 1852. The first stamps were printed in Bavaria on locally made paper. The first use of Swiss-made paper was in 1856. Slow production methods and constantly rising demand for stamps led to the many printings, stopgap use of earlier rejected printings on thin paper, and replacement of the hand press with a faster machine press. The Imperforate *Sitting Helvetia* are also known by the *Strubel* nickname, being named after a children's book character named *Strubel* (Struwel) Peter with wind-blown hair.

The first *Strubels* were available to the public on September 14, 1854, and lost their validity on July 31, 1863. During the *Strubel* era, the Postal Department issued dozens of versions of seven values denominated in rappen: 2, 5, 10, 15, 20, 40, and 1 franc (equal to 100 rappen). They were printed closely spaced in sheets of 25, 50, or 100. Their most noteworthy feature is the single imbedded silk security thread that runs horizontally through each stamp. Switzerland's imperforate *Sitting Helvetias*, are probably the most intensely studied issue in the history of Swiss philately. The latest and biggest study, published in 2006, forced the annual Swiss catalogs to add revised listings for these stamps in their 2008 editions. The biggest change was the addition of the 25D.

During the *Strubel's* approximate 10-year life, mixed frankings were possible with preceding imperforate and succeeding perforated issues for a very short time. Additionally, for all this time, complex pre-Universal Postal Union rates prevailed for foreign-bound mail until much time after this issues validity expired on July 31, 1863. Because the exhibit is focused on usages and order of release, used stamps and use on cover is featured. The seven different issuing periods are divided into three sections shown below.

Organization and Presentation

Using the classification of the *Zumstein Specialkatalog* of each issue, i. e., Aa, A, B, etc, the exhibit is divided into three parts:

- 1st Period: 1854 - 1855 **Munich Printing** (Aa, A, B.) green threads.
- 2nd Period: 1855 - 1857 **Bern Printing** (C, D, E.) different colored threads.
- 3rd Period: 1857 - 1863 **Bern Printing** (F, G) green threads.

The number of pages devoted to each printing reflects the variations in the number of denominations, number of color varieties, and length of use. The items are shown by issue, by cover, and by other varieties on and off cover showing normal and unusual rates. These are varied to maximize the number of typical items shown. Highlights are shown on red matting.

Frames/Page	#of Pages	Catalog Identity	Paper	Printing
1/2 - 2/1	16	Aa (4)	Munich	Munich
2/2 - 3/5	21	A (4)	Munich	Munich
3/6 - 4/9	18	B (4)	Munich	Bern
4/10 - 6/1	27	C (4)	Munich/Zurich	Bern
6/2 - 7/4	19	D (4)	Munich/Zurich	Bern
7/5 - 7/9	5	E (2)	Munich	Bern
7/10 - 8/10	17	F (4)	Munich	Bern
8/11 - 10/16	36	G (6)	Zurich	Bern

Reference

Hertsch, M., *Zumstein Specialkatalog Schweiz 2000*. Bern. Pages 47 - 64.