Synopsis (updated February 2019)

Theme. Postal history of the rural post in Germany as exemplified by the city of Lehrte, Kreis Burgdorf, Germany, which was the central receiving office (Leitpostamt) and rural hub for this area near Hannover.

Scope. Start of the service in Lehrte in 1933 to the end of the rural service, as such, in the early 1990s, as rural areas and then their post offices were consolidated into towns and branch post offices of those towns, respectively. In Lehrte, this began with the 1974 land reform in Kreis (County) Burgdorf. As this consolidation happened, the rural offices were gradually closed and the Kraftpost lines privatized. Lehrte was chosen for two reasons: it was a transportation nexus, making it an ideal example of a rural mail hub, and it was the town the exhibitor lived in in the Spring of 1973 as an exchange student.

Importance. Rural populations are an important part of any country's populace, given the high percentage of rural populations in the early to mid-20th century. Even today, almost 30% of Germany is rural. How a country serves that population postally is thus quite important to the history of that country, especially in a major postal system like Germany. One important reason was the growth of mail order.

Treatment. The items chosen for this exhibit were the best quality available to the exhibitor at this time. A variety of usages, types of mail, and rates are shown. As mail order was particularly important for rural areas, there is a selection of items appropriate to this. A secondary goal was to show markings and cancels from as many of the rural offices as possible. Rates are given in *italics* in smaller type; important items shown in **BOLD** type with green matting (see list below). Town names are color coded: red, north; blue, central; green, south; roughly corresponding to routes. The last five pages are the epilog.

Scarcity: Examples of the German rural post are relatively common (over 50,000 different markings), but specific usages from Lehrte as Leitpostamt and in particular some of the very small villages (pop. 200 or less!) are not. Lehrte was slightly over 11,000 persons in 1939, with a current population of 43,000 (now includeing some of the former rural offices). But Kolshorn, for example, has only 368, Harber 423, and Clauen 140 residents. In 1939, there were 13 communities in Kreis Burgdorf with a population under 200. PSt II offices in this exhibit are thus challenging to obtain. Four digit PSt II auxiliary markings are even scarcer, as they were quickly replaced (less than a year) in most cases by 4 digit cancelers. Branches can be rarer: the Kolshorn Lehrte 12 office cancel has not even been *seen* by Mr. W. Barten who grew up *in Kolshorn* during the era it was used (addressee of second item on p 90) and Mr. Eckhard Krause, a Lehrte specialist from Lehrte/Ahlten, does not have an example of the 3161 Röddensen cancel, which this exhibit has. There are 3 PSt II covers from November 1933, at the start of the rural service in Lehrte. Early rural covers are considered challenging to find by rural mail collectors.

Research. The sources shown were consulted as well as the aforementioned German collectors of this area. A full search of the 1944 Ortverzeichenis was done to ascertain all of the possible offices in the Lehrte region in that year. The exhibitor speaks German and can read the original sources.

Note on Quality. Use of two hole punches (sometimes one hole) on some of the items are a result of the German filing system in use for commercial correspondence, which stored the items this way in a two hole binder or other device. This is common for non-philatelic German business mail and does not affect the philatelic value of the pieces shown. This filing system preserved, albeit not perfectly, many usages and town postal markings and cancels that otherwise might have been lost. Items were presented in chronological order within their section.

Coverage. Of approximately 54 rural offices used during this period, 45 are represented in some form here: 30 of the 44 open before 1945; 38 of the 47 offices open after WW II thru the land reform in 1974; and 7 of the 13 or 14 Lehrte branch offices after 1974.

A Note on Addresses. Old German (Sütterlin) script can be very difficult to interpret as the letters can look considerably different from modern usage. An example is on page 26 where Hohenhameln looks like "Gofrufenulu". Close inspection of the letters and comparison with an on-line Sütterlin chart allowed an accurate reading in most cases.

Page	Highlighted Item
11	Rare local usage of PSt II marking as canceling device--see also p 26
18	Lehrte landpost cancelled other than in Lehrte
24	Important local usage via Lehrte (much longer trip)
31	Iraq cover to Obershagen with Currency Control (Devisenkontrolle) labels
47	Soviet Zone hand-overprint cover used on last day of validity
49	International package card with customs markings
50	Interesting commercial postcard selling honey (illustrating importance of mail order)
78	Scarce 4 digit PSt II markings
79	Interesting use of booklet stamps on registered cover
86	Example of express mail--usage and markings

Highlights are not necessarily rare but are of interest or are good examples of a usage.

Selected References (English translation/identification given, where needed, below in smaller type)

Ortsverzeichnis I; Reichsdruckerei: Berlin-Tempelhof, 1944.
> Listing of all towns and cities in 1944 Germany with postal facilities and the type of facility

Michel Deutschland-Spezial Katalog 1993; Schwaneberger Verlag: Munich, 1993
> Basic German stamp catalog 1993

Greise, P. *Poststellen Stempel 1928-1988*; Neue Schriftenreihe der Poststempelgilde, e.V., Band 175; Poststempelgilde: Manching, Germany, 2008.
> Poststelle (i.e., rural postal agency) Markings 1928-1988; New Reports from the Postal Marking Guild

Michel Postgebueren-Handbuch Deutschland; Schwaneberger Verlag: Munich, Germany, 2001.
> Michel Postage Rate Handbook for Germany

Mikus, W. *Lehrte: Die Auswirkung eines Eisenbahnknotenpunktes auf die geographische Struktur eine Siedlung-am speziellen Beispiel von Lehrte*; Buchdruckerei Michael Lassleben: Regensburg, 1966.
> Lehrte: The Effect of a Railroad Crossing Point on the Geographic Structure of a Settlement

Die Post im Hannoverschen; Oberpostdirektion Hannover: Hannover, 1967.
> The Post in Hannover (Region)

Der Landkreis Burgdorf; Walter Dorn Verlag: Bremen, 1961.
> The Rural County of Burgdorf

Google Map was used to obtain approximate distances between locations in the area around Lehrte.

http://www.briefesammler.com/wt_landpost.htm is a good German language source on Landpost focused on the town of Esslingen

https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poststelle_(Postamt) is another German language source.

Articles on the various towns and villages surrounding Lehrte as well as the history of postal codes in Germany from Wikipedia proved useful (usually German Wikipedia, as it was more detailed).