

XXIV. LIECHTENSTEIN

One of the smallest political entities of Europe, *Liechtenstein*, a principality on the right bank of the upper Rhine, between Switzerland and Austria, borders to the west on the Swiss canton of St. Gallen, to the south on the Swiss canton of Graubünden and to the east on the Austrian province of Vorarlberg. Its territory covers only 61 square miles, with a population of 6,350 in 1850 and about 8,500 in 1875. The capital is *Vaduz* (old spelling *Vadutz*), which was in 1875 a village of about 1,000 inhabitants.

Liechtenstein has a short *history*, because as a political entity, it came into being only in 1719. Before that year, the territory had been in the possession of various Austrian and Swiss noble families. Vaduz castle already existed early in the 14th century. In 1699 and 1712, the Liechtenstein family, which at that time was headed by Duke Johann Adam, a prominent Austrian nobleman, acquired the territory, consisting of the counties of Schellenberg and Vaduz, from the counts of Hohenems, who had been the previous owners. In 1719, the territory was consolidated by Duke Anton Florian into a principality to which the Liechtensteins gave their name. The dukes of Liechtenstein ruled the country from Austria, where their ancestral home was at Mödling near Vienna. They had considerable property in Austria and a palace in Vienna, where they also founded the famous Liechtenstein Gallery of classic paintings. The Liechtenstein family continued to be closely connected with Austria; its members held high government posts and served in the Austrian army. During the Napoleonic wars, Liechtenstein, which formed part of the Holy Roman Empire of Germany, was invaded by French and Russian troops. In 1806, cut off from Austria by the Bavarian occupation of Tyrol and Vorarlberg, Liechtenstein was forced to become a member of the French-sponsored Confederation of the Rhine; this was during the rule of Duke Johann Joseph I, from 1805 to 1836. In 1815, after the downfall of Napoleon, Liechtenstein became a member of the German Confederation, which it remained until the confederation was dissolved in 1866. From then on, Liechtenstein was an independent country; it proclaimed its neutrality and abolished its army in 1868. Duke Alois Joseph II, whose rule extended from 1836 to 1858, was the first sovereign to

reside in the country, by moving his domicile from Vienna to Vaduz. He concluded several treaties with Austria, among them, in 1852, a postal and customs union, which brought Liechtenstein into close relationship with that country. He was succeeded in 1858 by his son, Duke Johann II, who ruled for 71 years, until deep into the 20th century.

The *postal history* of Liechtenstein is closely connected with the old mail route between Italy and Germany which passed through its territory on its way from Chur in Switzerland to Feldkirch in Austria. In the 18th century, this mail route was the enterprise of a private Austrian company, the so-called "Fussacher Boten". On their way from Switzerland to Austria they passed through the villages of Nendeln, Schaan, Vaduz and Balzers in Liechtenstein, accepting mail. Such mail was delivered to the Austrian post office at Feldkirch in Vorarlberg and treated like all other mail posted there. When Austria reorganized its postal service in Tyrol and Vorarlberg in 1770, it tried to put its hands on the mail service to Italy and created all kinds of difficulties for the "Fussacher Boten". Between 1805 and 1814, the Bavarian postal service, which was during that time in charge of Vorarlberg, also interfered. In 1814, Austria regained Vorarlberg and eventually decided to forbid the "Fussacher Boten" to operate in Liechtenstein. To replace their service, Austria opened a letter collecting agency at Balzers which started to operate on September 1, 1817, as the first postal establishment in Liechtenstein. Permission for the opening was obtained from the Liechtenstein government under the condition that its sovereignty would not be impaired. This was achieved by having the postal agent swear to the Duke of Liechtenstein that he would obey the Austrian laws and regulations, a rather unusual procedure, but one which was continued during the whole classic stamp period. The postal service of the "Fussacher Boten" was not permitted to function in Liechtenstein after October 31, 1817. But they complained to the authorities in Vienna and as a result were reinstated. They resumed service in 1819, which made the existence of an Austrian letter collecting agency at Balzers unnecessary; it was closed on August 31, 1819. In 1820, Austria concluded a postal treaty with the Swiss Canton of Graubünden which regulated the postal

service in Liechtenstein. The "Fussacher Boten" were dissolved and a private firm took over the mail route from Chur to Feldkirch, including collecting and delivery of mail in Liechtenstein. But the introduction of new mail routes greatly reduced the importance of the Chur-Feldkirch service, and the private firm which handled it abolished the service in 1825. Austria had to step in again and did this by reestablishing, on January 1, 1827, the letter collecting agency at Balzers. In May 1839, it became a post office and functioned as such to the end of the classic stamp period. On March 1, 1845, a letter collecting agency was established at the capital Vaduz. Since 1852, the postal relations between Liechtenstein and Austria were governed by a treaty which assigned to Austria the right to conduct the postal service in the principality. Two more postal establishments were opened during the classic stamp period, at Nendeln on October 15, 1864, and at Schaan on October 24, 1872. A new postal treaty with Austria was concluded in 1868 which also regulated the telegraph service. A telegraph line Feldkirch-Vaduz started to operate in 1869, and an Austrian telegraph station was opened at Vaduz on December 1, 1869 which was annexed to the Austrian postal agency there. At the end of the classic stamp period, in 1875, there existed four Austrian post offices on the territory of the principality, namely Balzers, Nendeln, Schaan and Vaduz, as well as the telegraph station at Vaduz.

Liechtenstein, during the classic stamp period, had the same currency as Austria, namely first 1 Gulden (gld), divided into 60 Kreuzer "Conventions-Münze" (kr), then from November 1, 1858, 1 Gulden equivalent to 100 "new" Kreuzer.—For *weights* and *measurements*, the Austrian systems were in use.

The same *postal rates* as were effective in Austria at the various periods were also valid for Liechtenstein, which in respect to postal conditions was treated as Austrian territory. In accordance with the treaty of 1852, the Austrian newspaper tax was also collected in Liechtenstein.

As the postal service in Liechtenstein was conducted by Austria, it also used the postal stamps of the latter. They were introduced at the same dates as in Austria proper. *Postage Stamps* came into use on June 1, 1850, *Newspaper Stamps* on January 1, 1851

and *Newspaper Tax Stamps* on March 1, 1853. Of postal stationery, *Postal Envelopes* were issued on January 15, 1861, *Postal Cards* on October 1, 1869, *Money Order Cards* on May 1, 1870, *C. O. D. Money Order Cards* on December 15, 1871 and *Postal Wrappers* on October 1, 1872. For the telegraph service, *Telegraph Stamps*, together with *Telegraph Blanks* and *Telegraph Receipts*, were introduced on August 1, 1873.

During the classic stamp period, from 1850 to 1875, all Austrian stamps and stationery were, at least theoretically, also issued and used at the post offices in Liechtenstein. Exceptions were the higher values of the newspaper stamps (6kr and 30kr), for which there was certainly no use in Liechtenstein, and the first newspaper tax stamps (2kr green and 4kr brown), which were only used at the seat of main tax offices, which in the case of Liechtenstein was at Bregenz in Vorarlberg. It seems equally doubtful whether the higher values of the envelopes were ever issued in Liechtenstein. There seems no doubt that telegraph stamps were also available in Vaduz, but probably not all denominations.

During the classic stamp period, the postal service in Liechtenstein was of very small proportions, and the amount of mail was rather insignificant. This is the reason that the classic *Austrian stamps, used in Liechtenstein*, are rare to very rare. While the 3kr, 6kr and 9kr of 1850, as well as the 5kr, 10kr and 15kr of the following issues can be found occasionally, generally only few examples are known of other denominations as well as of the newspaper stamps and newspaper tax stamps. It should be remembered that the Austrian newspaper stamps were regularly cancelled on arrival by the delivery post offices; therefore a Liechtenstein cancellation on a newspaper stamp does not prove that such a stamp was issued in Liechtenstein. Of postal stationery also, only few entire are recorded, and we doubt that all contemporary Austrian stationery exists with Liechtenstein cancellation. The same must be true for the telegraph stamps and telegraph stationery. Actually we have never seen any telegraph items cancelled in Liechtenstein, although they were undoubtedly used there.

On *entires*, all classic Austrian stamps used in Liechtenstein are elusive. There is a chance to find the red, brown and blue postage stamps, but the yellow, black or green

denominations are rarities, and we doubt that examples of all of them were preserved on entires. Equally rare are newspaper and newspaper tax stamps on entires; we have never seen telegraph stamps used on telegraph forms in Liechtenstein.

The four Austrian post offices which operated in Liechtenstein during the classic stamp period were assigned at their openings the same types of *postmarks* which were at that time put in use at the post offices in Austria proper. The oldest post office, Balzers, first received a dateless straight line BALZERS in Italics, which was replaced in the last years of the pre-stamp period by a straight line BALZERS in Roman capitals, with the date (day and month) in a second line. Vaduz obtained at its opening a straight line VADUTZ in Italics, with the date (day and month) in a second line. These three town postmarks were the only ones used in Liechtenstein during the pre-stamp period. They were stamped in black, the two Balzers postmarks also in red.

There were several additional markings in use, FRANCO for paid and RECOM. for registered letters, as well as "Too Late" markings, NACH ABGANG DER POST. In the years from 1820 to 1830, letters from Liechtenstein obtained at Feldkirch an oval origin marking "FÜRSTT./LICHTENSTEIN".

When postage stamps were introduced, the Vaduz postmark and the second postmark of Balzers were continued in use, now as cancellers. They can be found on the Austrian issues 1850, 1858, 1860, 1863, 1863-64 and 1867. While the Balzers postmark was replaced only in 1876 by one in circular design, the Vaduz postmark was already withdrawn late in 1868 and a thimble circle VADUZ in Roman capitals, with date (day, month and year) in the center, introduced, which was used until after the end of the classic stamp period. Nendeln obtained at its opening a regular single circle NENDELN in Roman capitals, with date (day and month) in the center. It can be found on the 1863-64 and 1867 issues; its use was continued long after the end of the classic stamp period. The post office at Schaan had from its opening on a single circle inscribed "SCHAAN/IM FÜRSTENTH. LICHTENSTEIN" and date (day, month and year) in center. It exists on the 1867 issue and was used far beyond the end of the classic stamp period, despite

the wrong spelling of the country's name. The ink of all postmarks which were used as cancellers was black. All together, six different postmarks were used in Liechtenstein before 1875, three of them during the pre-stamp period and five as cancellers. It is probable that the telegraph station at Vaduz also had a special handstamp, but we have never seen it.

Aside from the regular town postmarks, the post offices also had several additional markings, partly taken over from the pre-stamp period, such as the registration and "too late" markings. They are known only alongside stamps on mail.

As stated previously, Liechtenstein cancellations are mainly found on the red, brown and blue Austrian stamps. The Vaduz postmarks are the most frequent ones, the others, in order of increasing rarity, are Schaan, Nendeln and Balzers, the last being the least common one.

A collector who wants to collect Liechtenstein items from the classic stamp period has a very difficult task to face. The material he wants to acquire is elusive and, on top of that, eagerly sought after by a number of collectors, especially in rich Switzerland. This means that the existing material is to a large extent in collections and not available. If anything is offered for sale, it is quickly taken off the market at very high prices. Under such circumstances, we cannot encourage anyone to collect classic Liechtenstein, as he is sure to give up such a hopeless task after a short unsuccessful try. Classic Liechtenstein is a frustrating field, and it can only satisfy to some extent by being included as a kind of "preface" in a collection of Liechtenstein stamps, in combination with the post-classic Liechtenstein postmarks on Austrian stamps which are more plentiful and of which fairly sufficient material is available. A few examples from the classic period will enrich such a collection considerably, providing in their non-philatelic origin a sharp contrast to some of the too philatelically inspired Liechtenstein items of the 20th century.

(Next: XXV. Lombardy-Venetia)

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