

# Return receipt in the Austrian Empire (pre-G P U)

**R**ETOUR RECEPISSE (*return receipt, avis de réception, Rückschein; RR*) was a postal service wherein a form (here called an *RR form*) signed by the recipient of a letter (usually registered) was returned to sender. Austria seems to have been the first to implement *RR* service, near the end of the eighteenth century.

The exhibit naturally divides in two (unequal) parts: *RR forms*, and *RR covers*, the latter being covers sent with *RR* service. We restrict to those sent in the *Briefpost* (letters), excluding those in the *Fahrpost* (for insured parcels and letters of value). In the *Briefpost*, registration was a prerequisite for *RR* service.

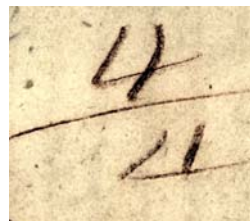
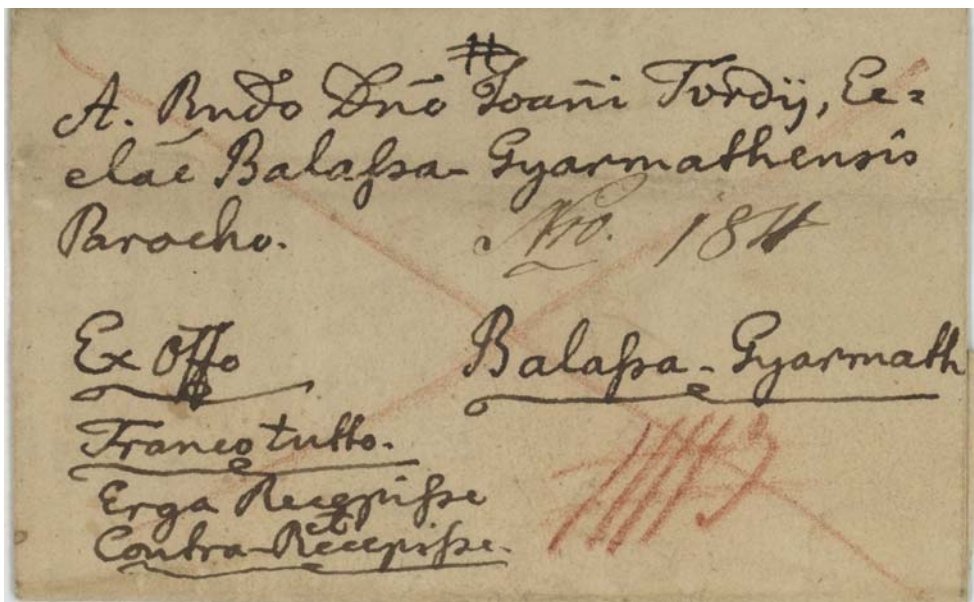
*RR forms* There is a wide variety of Austrian *RR* forms, varying slightly in wording, considerably in shape, colour, typography, and languages used. They were usually headed *Retour-Recepisse*, but some early ones were headed *Recepisse*, which means only receipt (in which case, the rest of the wording would decide whether it was an *RR* form, or merely a registration receipt). We present a sampling of forms, from 1807–68.

Among them are the 1807 example, a pair consisting of *RR* form and the corresponding registration receipt (1843), early stamped forms (1850, 1852), forms returned from German states (1858, 1864; foreign uses are very difficult to find), and a very odd form with half the franking on one side, half on the other (1865). This section concludes with a *duplicate* *RR* form, a result of the first form not having been returned (1868; I believe this is extremely rare).

*RR covers* These are typically inscribed (usually by the sender) *Erga/gegen/mit Retour Recepisse*, or variants (and should not be confused with *Erga Recepisse*, which usually means only that a registration receipt was issued). We show fairly early examples (1818, 1819 [below], 1823), one to Germany (1839), and an early stamped *RR* cover (1851) from Lombardy-Venetia. We conclude with a mystery item, an *RR* cover from the Austrian office in Constantinople (ca 1870), which the reader is invited to explain.

## An illustrative (and early) example of an *RR* cover

- The red crayon hashmarks (sometimes resembling *MM*) mean that the cover is registered.
- The red  $\frac{4}{4}$  (or  $\frac{4}{4}$ ) on reverse means the the registration fee (4 kreuzer, the bottom four) was prepaid by the sender, as was 4 kr postage (indicated by the upper four). In this case, all postage was paid (*Franco tutto*), and it was sent on Government service (*ex-offo*, meaning *ex-officio*).
- Notation at lower left, *Erga Recepisse*, refers only to a (registration) receipt (not a return receipt), for which there was a 2 kreuzer fee until 1842. Nonstandard *Contra-R<sup>et</sup>cepisse* indicates return receipt service.



Romaviae 19<sup>o</sup> Januarii  
1819

From Romaviae (??) to Gyarmat (Hungary), *ex-officio*, 1819. Ms *Franco tutto/Erga Recepisse, Contra-R<sup>et</sup>cepisse* (all prepaid; both registration and return receipts).

Rated on reverse  $\frac{4}{4}$ , prepaid 4 kr registration and either 1 loth (double rate) and at most 3 relay stations, or  $\frac{1}{2}$ -loth and up to 6 relay stations.

# Austrian RR forms

Recepisse. Nro. 267

Daß ich, Endesgefertigter, heute Dato das aus dem k. k. böheim. Postamt  
zu Asch, an mich gegen Recepisse rekommandirte Schreiben  
dd. 29 ten Juny 1807  
unter der Aufschrift NB. An Herrn Anton von Tschudi  
in  
Lugosch  
richtig zu meinen Händen erhalten habe, bezeuget meine hierunter gestellte  
Fertigung. Datum

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Dieses vom Empfänger unterschriebene Recepisse, ist ersten Posttag an das k. k.  
böheim. Postamt zu Asch, einzusenden.  
Hansl von Tschudi

Very early form, 1807. Signed. *Recepisse* in roman (also appears in text)—no *Retour*, but the wording at the bottom indicates that this is a return receipt, not an ordinary registration receipt:

*Dieses vom Empfänger unterschrieben Recepisse, ist ersten Posttag an das k. k. böheim. Postamt zu Asch, einzusenden.*

This receipt is to be signed by the recipient, and returned by first mail to the Imperial and Royal Austrian post office in Bohemia at Asch.

Printed for the post office at Asch. *NB* (*nota bene*) indicates that the letter was registered.



## Austrian RR forms

Nr. 563. **Retour = Rezepisse.** *Michael*

Das ich Endesgefertigter heut Dato das von dem kaiserl. königl. böhm. Postamt zu Rokitzan an mich anher gegen Rezepisse rekommandirte Schreiben dd. *17. Aug* 1819

unter der Aufschrift NB. *an dem k. k. Magistrate Michael Truma am k. k. Kreis. Kreis. Com. munitatis Hahrs. sig. Hahrs. et 18. Aug. 1819.* richtig zu meinen Händen erhalten habe, bezeuge meine hierunter gestellte Fertigung. Datum *Hallasch d.*

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Dieses von dem Empfänger unterschriebene Rezepisse ist ersten Posttag nach Rokitzan in Böhmen einzusenden.

Early form, 1819. Properly signed. *Retour* in roman, but Fraktur *Rezepisse*, with *z* instead of *c*. This particular one refers to kaiserl. königl. böhm. Postamt zu Rokitzan (Rokitzan, Bohemia). *NB* (*nota bene*) indicates a registered letter.

Nr. 742. **Recepisse.**

Das ich das in dem k. k. obersten Hofpostamt zu Wien an mich hierher gegen Recepisse aufgebene recommandirte Schreiben von *25. 11. 1836* unter der Adresse an *M. J. M. M. M.* richtig am unten gesetzten Tage erhalten habe, bezeuge hiermit *M. J. M. M. M.* den 26 November 1836

Unterschrift.  
*M. J. M. M. M.*

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Dieses von dem Empfänger sammt dem Tag des Empfanges eigenhändig unterschriebene Recepisse ist mit erstem Posttage an das k. k. oberste Hofpostamt in Wien zurück zu senden.

From the main post office in Vienna, 1836. Properly signed. All in Fraktur. No *Retour*, similar wording to that on 1807 form. Refers to a registered letter. Fancy frame.





# Return receipt with its corresponding registration receipt



From Nikolsburg, 7 October 1843. Properly signed. All in Fraktur. Refers to a registered letter. Briefpost at upper left.



Same date; both refer to number 35. The rates are itemized: 18 kr letter postage (probably one Loth, at a distance exceeding 10 G-miles), 6 kr registration, and 12 kr for return receipt service.



## Austrian RR forms, 1850–

Austria issued stamps in 1850, and from this date on, registration and R R fees were to be paid in stamps, and in the case of R R, on the form. Sometimes the stamp is on the front, sometimes on the back (as here). Until 1866, stamps paying the registration fee were to be placed on the reverse of the registered item, but there does not appear to have been a regulation governing the placement of stamps on R R forms.

No. 411 Briefpost.

**Retour-Recepisse.**

Das ich das, bei dem k. k. Postamte zu **CASHAU.**  
 am 20. Novbr 1850 rekommandirt aufgegebene Schreiben unter Adresse:  
Jan Truzak jun. Sztropko  
 am untengesetzten Tage richtig erhalten habe, bezeuge ich mit meiner eigenhändigen Unterschrift.  
 den 2 ten December 1850.

Zur Nachricht.

Unterschrift:  
Drujar Jozef

1) Die Recepissegebühr ist vom Aufgeber entrichtet worden.  
 2) Der Empfänger ist gehalten, das Datum einzusetzen, und die Namensfertigung beizufügen.

Dieses Recepisse wolle mit erstem Posttage an das obengenannte Postamt der Aufgabe zurückgesendet werden.

From Cashau (now Kosice in Slovakia) to Sztropko (Stropkov in Slovakia), 1850. 6 kr R R fee paid by stamp.

No. 6 Briefpost.

**Retour-Recepisse.**

Das ich das, bei dem k. k. Postamte zu Konigsaal  
 am 7 ten Aug 1842 rekommandirt aufgegebene Schreiben unter Adresse:  
Johann Kotal  
 am untengesetzten Tage richtig erhalten habe, bezeuge ich mit meiner eigenhändigen Unterschrift.  
 den 8 ten August 1842.

Zur Nachricht.

Unterschrift:  
Johann Kotal

1) Die Recepissegebühr ist vom Aufgeber entrichtet worden.  
 2) Der Empfänger ist gehalten, das Datum einzusetzen, und die Namensfertigung beizufügen.

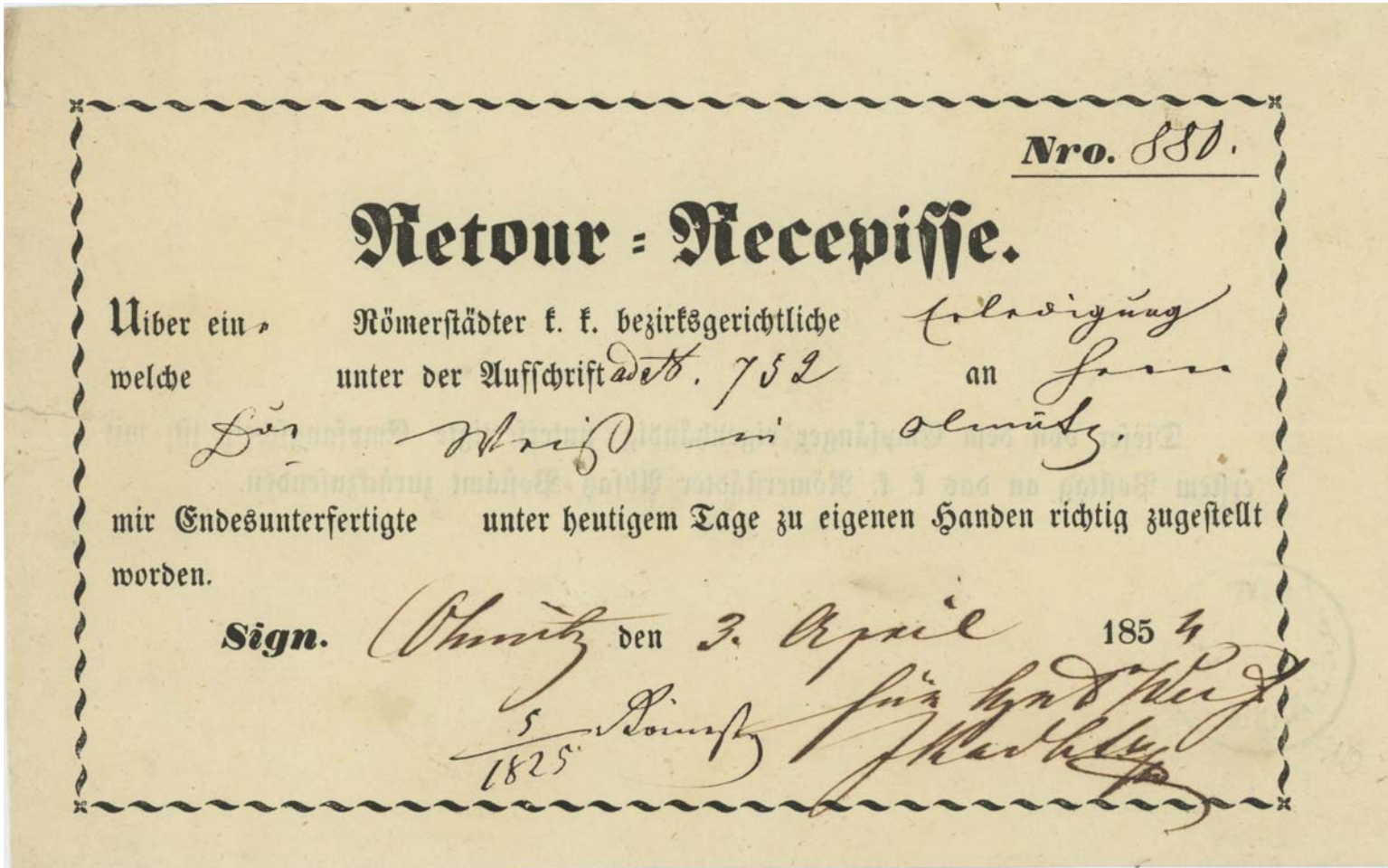
Dieses Recepisse wolle mit erstem Posttage an das obengenannte Postamt der Aufgabe zurückgesendet werden.

From Konigsaal (Zbraslav, a district of Prague) to Prague, 1852 (one of the occurrences of the year date 184 has not been corrected). Payment of 6 kr R R fee by stamp. Despite appearances, the Prague date stamps on front and back are the same.

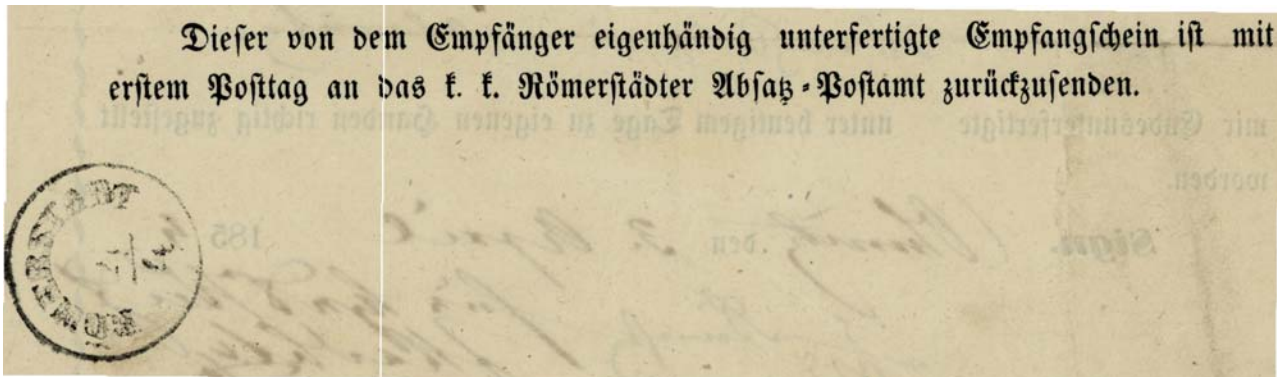




Austrian RR form without stamps



From Römerstadt to Olmutz, 1854. Properly signed. Quite different design; printed locally.





## Austrian RR forms

In the 1850s, treaties between German states and the Austrian Empire allowed (in particular) international RR service. Examples are difficult to find.

N<sup>o</sup> 162 Briefpost.

**Retour-Recepisse.**

Das ich das, bei dem k. k. Postamte zu *Roman*  
am 14<sup>ten</sup> *mai* 1858 rekommandirt aufgegebene Schreiben unter Adresse:  
*Monsieur Tekus de Theodori*  
*Munich*  
am untengesetzten Tage richtig erhalten habe, bezeuge ich mit meiner eigenhändigen Unterschrift.  
*Münchener* den 25<sup>ten</sup> *Mai* 1858

Unterschrift:  
*T. de Theodori*

Zur Nachricht.

1) Die Recepissegebühre ist vom Aufgeber entrichtet worden.  
2) Der Empfänger ist gehalten, das Datum einzusetzen, und die Namensfertigung beizufügen.

Dieses Recepisse wolle mit erstem Posttage an das obengenannte Postamt der Aufgabe zurückgesendet werden.

Drucksorte Nr. 226.

From (Sankt) Roman (Upper Austria) to *Munich*, 1858. Properly signed. Printing note at left, Drucksorte Nr. 226.

N<sup>o</sup> 3

**Retour-Recepisse.**

Das ich das von dem k. k. Handelsgerichte in Wien sub Nr. Exhib. *41525*  
bei dem k. k. Postamte zu Wien am *2*<sup>ten</sup> 1864 rekommandirt aufgegebene  
Schreiben unter Adresse: *H. Jakob Geisler*

am untengesetzten Tage richtig erhalten habe, bezeuge ich mit meiner eigenhändigen Unterschrift.  
*Offenburg* den *2*<sup>ten</sup> *August* 1864

Unterschrift:  
*H. Jakob Geisler*

Zur Nachricht.

1. Die Recepisse-Gebühr ist vom Aufgeber entrichtet worden.  
2. Der Empfänger ist gehalten, das Datum einzusetzen und die Namensfertigung beizufügen.

Dieses Recepisse wolle mit erstem Posttage an das obengenannte Postamt der Aufgabe zurückgesendet werden.

DRUCKSORTENR. 226

DRUCKSORTENR. 226

From Vienna to *Offenburg* (Baden-Württemberg, Germany), 1864. Properly signed. Printed for the Handelsgerichte (commercial court). RR fee paid by 10 kr stamp. With handstamp of sender.



# Austrian RR forms

From about 1860 on, we see (some) larger forms.

725-

*Konigl. Kommissar*

Nr. *297*

*St. Georgen* **Retour-Recepisse.**

Dasß ich das von dem k. k. Handelsgerichte in Wien sub Nr. Exhib. *1114*  
bei dem k. k. Postamte zu Wien am *5<sup>ten</sup> Jänner* 186*3* recommandirt aufgegebene  
Schreib**GEBÜHR** Adresse: *Palau Anronicz*

**10 KR. POSTSTAMP**  
**1863**

am unten gesetzten Tage richtig erhalten habe, bezeuge ich mit meiner eigenhändigen Unterschrift.  
*St. Georgen* den *8<sup>ten</sup> Jänner* 186*3*

**Unterschrift:**  
*Peter Anronicz*  
*3*

**Zur Nachricht.**

1. Die Recepisse-Gebühr ist vom Aufgeber entrichtet worden.
2. Der Empfänger ist gehalten, das Datum einzusetzen und die Namensfertigung beizufügen.

Dieses Recepisse wolle mit erstem Posttage an das obengenannte Postamt der Aufgabe zurückgesendet werden.

*KM-4 (Militär St. Georgen)*  
*12 P.*

From the commercial court in Vienna to St Georgen (military office?), 1863. 10 kr stamp cancelled at both origin and destination of registered letter. Properly signed. The 15 kr fiscal pays the court fee for submitting a document as evidence.





## Austrian RR form

RR fee paid with two 5 kr stamps, one on each side. While there were regulations covering the placement of stamps paying the registration fee on covers (until 1866, they had to be on reverse), there were no such for RR forms.

*Dr. Wawan Roborny jun.*

N<sup>o</sup> 1352

### Retour-Recepisse.

Daß ich das von dem k. k. Handelsgerichte in Wien sub Nr. Exhib. *65142*  
bei dem k. k. Postamte zu Wien am <sup>ten</sup> 186 *recommandirt* aufgegebene  
Schreiben unter Adresse: *Jur. Witz*

am untengesetzten Tage richtig erhalten habe, bezeuge ich mit meiner eigenhändigen Unterschrift.



*Carl Witz* den *17*<sup>ten</sup> *May* 186*5*

**Unterchrift:**  
*Carl Witz*

**Zur Nachricht.**

1. Die Recepisse-Gebühr ist vom Aufgeber entrichtet worden.
2. Der Empfänger ist gehalten, das Datum einzusetzen und die Namensfertigung beizufügen.

Dieses Recepisse wolle mit erstem Posttage an das obengenannte Postamt der Aufgabe zurückgesendet werden.



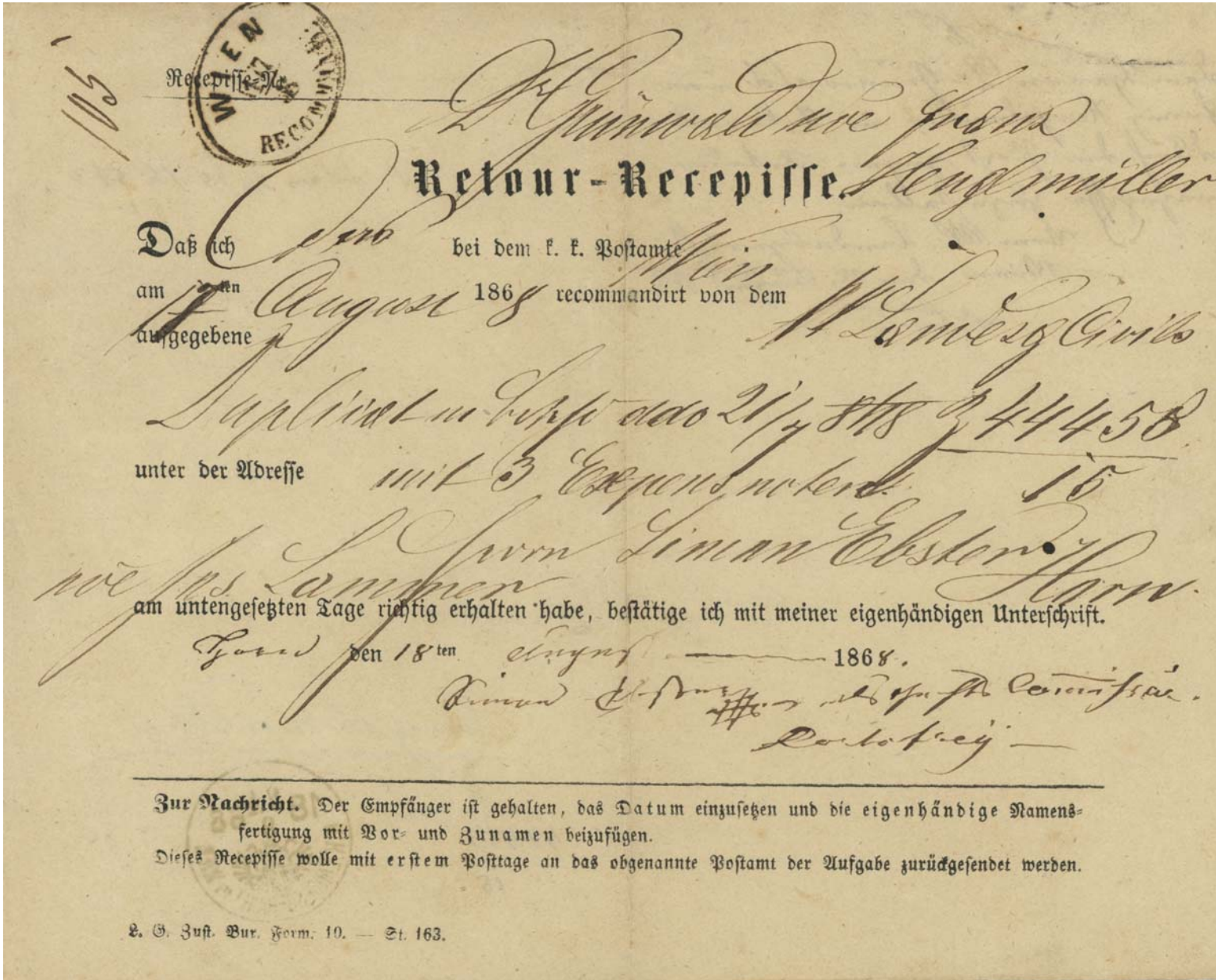
From the commercial court, within Vienna, 1865. Weirdly, the 10 kr RR fee was paid with one 5 kr stamp on the front and another one on the back.



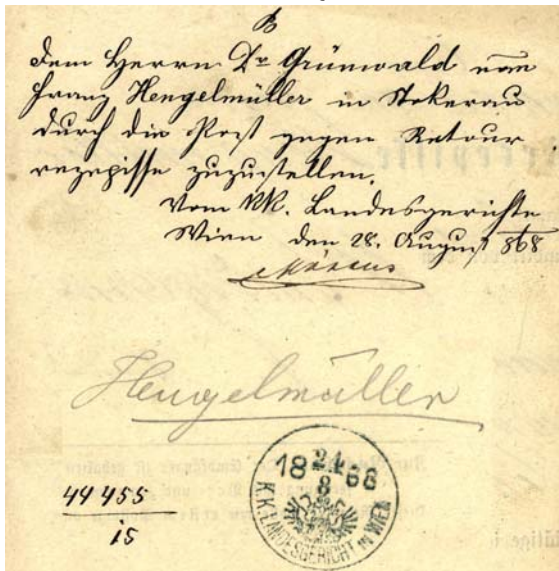


Austrian duplicate RR form

Duplikat ... appears on the line above unter der Adresse.



From Vienna, 1868. A duplicate RR form for a registered letter sent 21 July 1868; presumably, the original return receipt had not been received by the office of origin. No frame. Print data L. G. Zust. Bur. Form. 10 — St. 163.

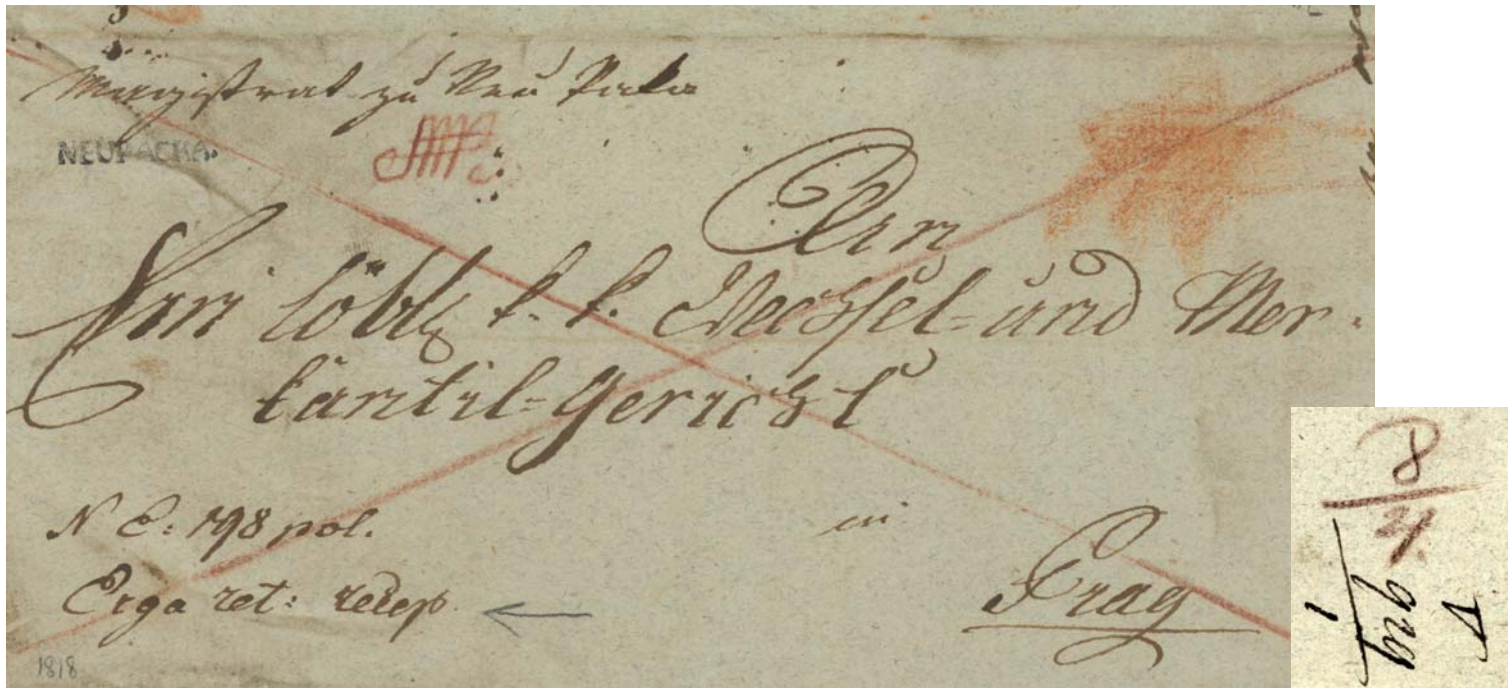




## Retour Receptisse registered covers

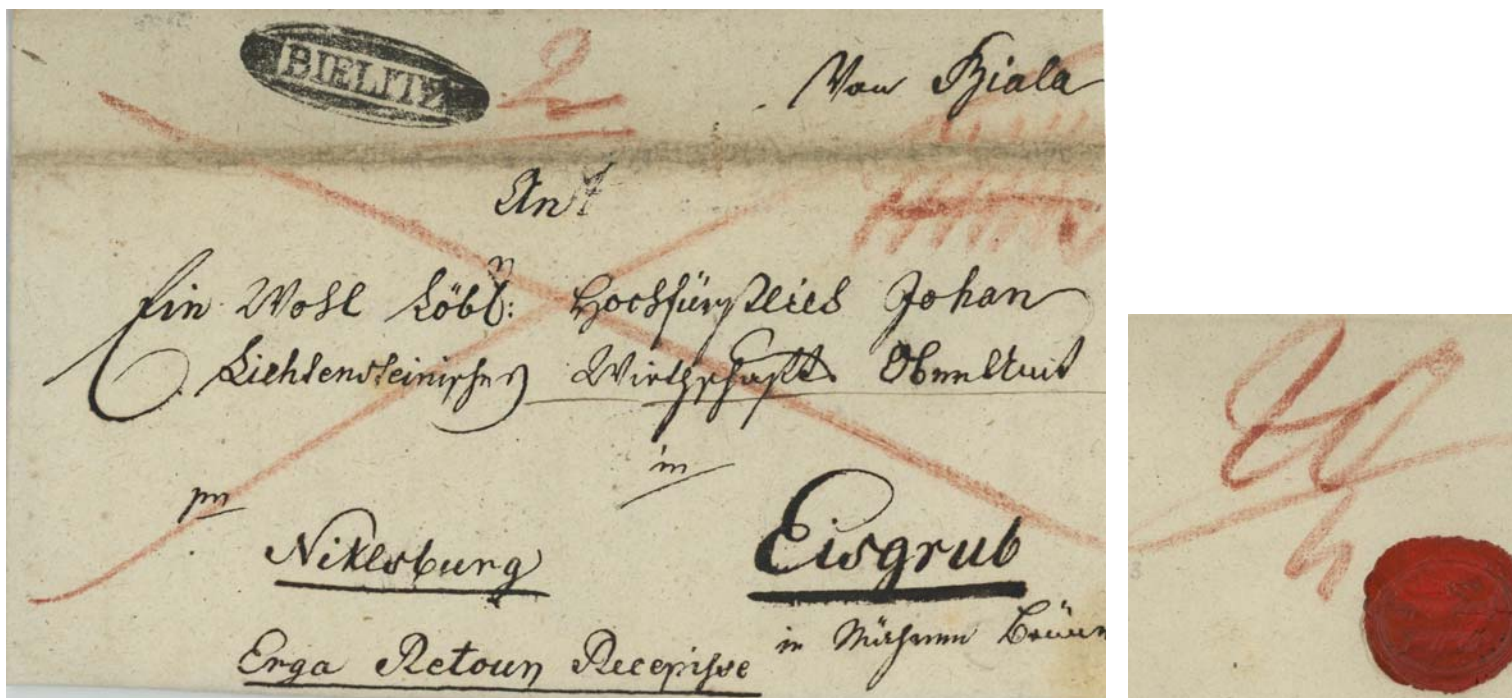
Usually marked *gegen/erga/mit Retour Receptisse*, or variants, typically in the lower left. The RR fee is *never* indicated on the cover.

Non-registered insured items, such as parcels and letters of value, could also be sent with RR, but in the *Fahrpost* (as opposed to the *Briefpost*), which we do not discuss in this exhibit.



From Neupacka (now Nová Paka in the Czech Republic) to Prague, 1818. Red crayon **M** with horizontal lines indicates registration (the mess at the upper right was done by the post office, the neat one on the left side may have been done by the sender. *Erga ret. recep* in the usual place (lower left).

Rated on reverse in red  $\frac{8}{4}$ , meaning prepaid 8 kr for up to 6 relay stations and weight of one Loth, plus 4 kr registration. The 12 kr RR fee is not indicated front or back.



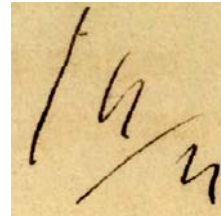
From Bielitz (Silesia; now Bielsko in Poland) to Niklsburg (or Nikolsburg, a Jewish centre of learning; now Mikulov in the Czech Republic), 1823. Ms *Erga Retour Receptisse*.

Rated on reverse in red  $\frac{20}{4}$ : prepaid 20 kr for up to 15 relay stations and weight of one Loth, plus 4 kr registration. I don't know what the crayon **2** on the front means.



## Retour Receptisse cover to Germany (Bavaria)

RR covers to foreign destinations are rare in this period, even to Germany.



From Vienna to Munich, 1839. Handstamped *Franco* (fully prepaid) and *ms gegen retour receptisse*.

Rated  $\frac{1}{4}$ , half-Loth, more than 18 relays to the border, and 4 kr registration; charged 9 Bavarian kreuzer.



## Retour Receptisse covers: stamps issued

Stamps were issued in 1850. Their use was compulsory for payment of domestic letter postage (to other countries, stamps were required from 1856), as well as all registration and RR fees. The last was to be paid on the form. Stamps paying the registration fee were to be applied to the reverse of the cover, until 1866.



From Venice to Verona (both part of Lombardy-Venetia), 1851. Ms *Consegna con ricevuta di ritorno*.

Rated 30 cents on front (equivalent to 6 kr); one Loth and up to 20 G-miles, and 30 ct on reverse, paying the registration fee.



From Karlstadt (Karlova in Croatia) to Presburg (Bratislava, in Slovakia), 1856. Ms *gegen Retour Receptisse*.

Rated 9 kr on front (one Loth, more than 20 G-miles), and 6 kr on reverse, paying the registration fee.



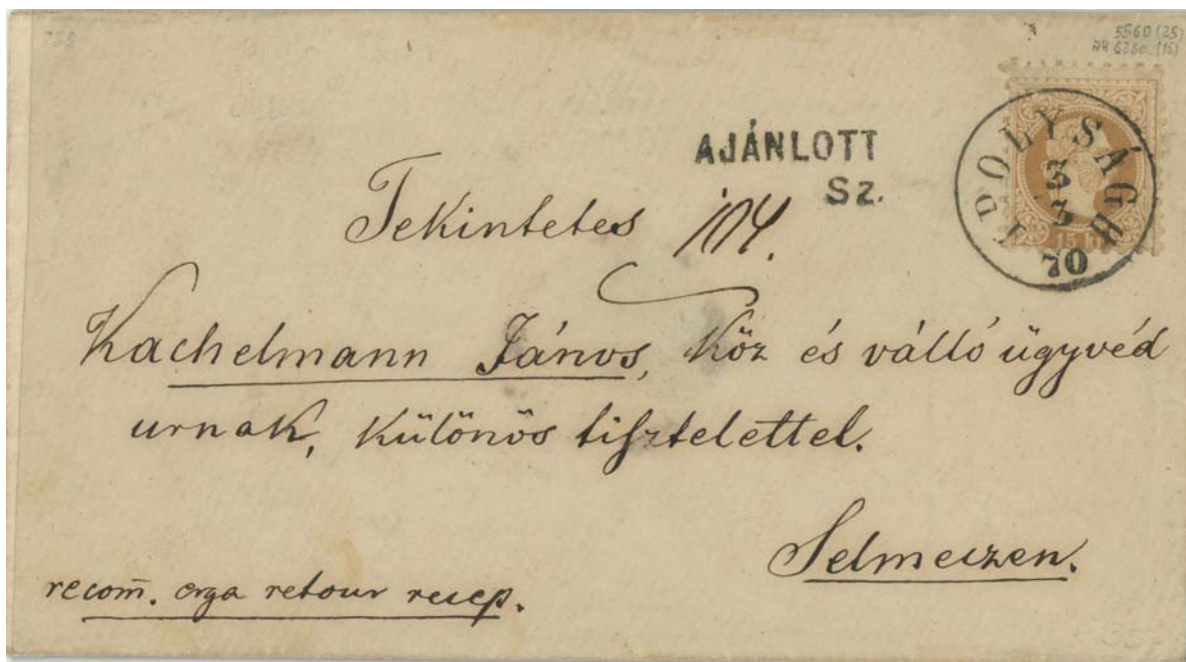
## Retour Receptisse covers

January 1866, rates change: local rate, 3 kr per 15 g; domestic, 5 kr per 15 g; registration and RR, each 5 kr if local, otherwise 10 kr. From this time on, the registration fee could also be paid on the *front* of the cover.



From Bielitz (now Bielsko in Poland) to Vienna, 1867. Printed **Retour-Receptisse**.

Rated 5 kr on front (single weight, domestic), and 10 kr on reverse, paying the registration fee.



From Ipolytság (Hungary; now Sahy) to Selmezbanya, 1870. Ms *recom erga retour recep.*

Rated 15 kr on front (single rate domestic plus 10 kr registration).



## Mystery item: undated Retour Receptisse cover

Austrian post office in Constantinople



From Austrian office in Constantinople, to Naples, 1867 or later. Ms *on reverse*, *Con ricepiso di ritorno*. I haven't a clue what the rates are.

Franked on front with a 10 soldi stamp, printed (1867) for Austrian offices in Turkey; on reverse, the two 5 centisimi stamps might not belong. They are marked **P.D.** (equivalent to paid to destination). 10 soldi is equivalent to 10 kr.

