

# *Cinderella Time:* **Rübezahl's Kingdom**

By Christer Brunström, AIJP



Recently I was very pleased to find the solution to a mystery which has baffled me and numerous other Cinderella collectors for a very long time. My collection has included a set of four



stamps inscribed Rübezahls Reich for at least 20 years and I have always wondered where this kingdom was located.

In Britain, L. N. & M. Williams mentioned the Rübezahl Reich stamps in their book *Cinderella Stamps* (London 1970). They believed the four stamps might have been issued to commemorate the 25th anniversary of a hotel or guest house in the Riesengebirge mountain area (located on the border between today's Poland and the Czech Republic). Rübezahl is a figure in German folklore associated with the Riesengebirge area. They also suggested that they might have been issued by a local postal service run by a hotel in the area but covers testifying to such a service have never been seen.

The solution came in the July 2014 issue of *The Cinderella Philatelist* (the quarterly magazine of the Cinderella Stamp Club in Great Britain). Don Avery, a U.S. collector of classic local postage stamps, had found the four stamps affixed to a postcard mailed from the Schneekopp in 1905. The picture side indicated that the card had been published to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Riesengebirgs-Verein, an association of German mountain hikers. It had been founded in 1880.

The anniversary was celebrated on June 12-14, 1905 and the celebrations included a large gathering of hikers on the top of the Schneekopp.

The four stamps were obviously sold in connection with the anniversary but sales must have been slow as the stamps have always been very scarce.



At the time there were German and Austrian postal agencies at Schneekopp during the hiking season.



The four stamps carry denominations of 2, 3, 5 and 10. No currency is indicated but Don Avery believes they denominated in pfennigs.

The 2-pfennig depicts sledding on a slope below the Peterbaude, one of the oldest buildings in the area. Rübezahl himself is depicted on the 3-pfennig stamp. The elegant man shown on the 5 pfennig is Prince Heinrich of Prussia, a younger brother of the German Emperor. The 10pf value is larger in size and has a view of the Schneekopp. The four labels all carry the number 25 in a circle at the top.

The four stamps scarce in used condition and even rarer in mint condition.