

Yesterday in STAMPS: **The Swiss Hotel Posts**

By George W. Caldwell

(From STAMPS Magazine, August 7, 1943, with images added)

Although Switzerland ranks with the smaller countries in area and population, philatelically it is well up among the larger countries, and like them presents many channels for research and study. The regular postal issues are well known, but there are many interesting, absorbing, romantic byways. One such is the Swiss Hotel Posts, a purely private enterprise.

At the time the first stamps used by this private enterprise appeared, the Federal Postal System had attained its fifteenth birthday. Much had been accomplished in this short period, and much remained to be done. Hotels high in the Alps were still without benefit of postal collection and delivery to their doors. It was customary in such cases to have hotel employees carry the mail to and from the nearest point of contact with the government posts. A fee, varying from five to fifteen centimes, was charged for this service by some of the hotels. This constituted a real postal service and may be considered the beginning of the Swiss Hotel Posts. It was not a joint nor combined action, as each of the hotels operated independent of the others.

As a result of the extension of railroad facilities, and the natural demand for better postal service, the Federal Postal Department, from time to time opened post offices in some of these locations and the respective hotel posts automatically ceased. Finally, by Federal decree of September 26, 1883, the remaining hotel posts were suppressed. Presumably, some grade of Federal postal service was provided for those outlawed by this decree.

During the period, of the operation of the Hotel Posts, a few of the hotels sold special labels or stamps to guests for their convenience in paying the messenger fee. While

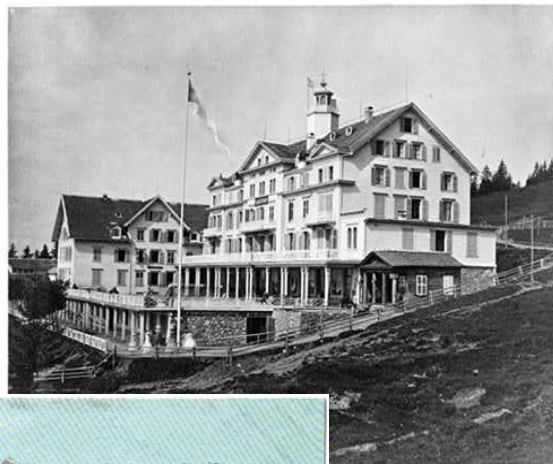
these are necessarily of a private nature, they do have an historical interest to philatelists. There does not seem to have been any fixed custom of placing these stamps on letters. They are often found on the backs of envelopes, and at other times on the front, often beside the government postage stamp, and in this latter case, they frequently show the Federal postmark. In several instances the hotels made a practice of cancelling the labels with a special hotel post canceler, but this custom was not general.

Rigi-Kaltbad, situated in the Lake Lucerne region at an elevation of 4,700 feet, and five miles from the post office in Weggis, was the first hotel to provide its guests with hotel



post stamps. Its proprietor, T. Segesser Faaden, had for some time charged fifteen cen-

times per letter for this private postal service. Later this was



reduced to ten centimes, but with the issuing of stamps, the rate was again set at fifteen centimes.

These stamps appeared in 1864. They are of vertical format, with an Alpine rose in the center on a background of very fine dots arranged in fairly regular horizontal lines. This vignette is enclosed within an oval band in color, containing the name of the hotel and two five-pointed stars. In the corners are conventional scrolls, and the entire stamp is framed by two undulating lines. They were lithographed on white, unwatermarked paper in sheets of one hundred subjects and nominally valued at fifteen centimes.



This stamp first appeared imperforate, but later, perforated 11-1/2. They are found in red, carmine, and purplish red. Another printing found only in the perforated form is bicolored, red and brick red.

The postmark used by Rigi-Kaltbad consisted of a single line octagon enclosing the complete date and is always found in blue. E. F. Hurt, well known British authority on private post stamps, states that in the later period of use of this postmark, the year date was omitted.

With the extension of the Federal Railroad to Rigi, a government post office was opened here in 1871, and the private post of Rigi-Kaltbad came to an end.

A fairly good counterfeit of this stamp is frequently seen. This is readily recognized by the poorly formed four pointed stars in the oval name band, in place of the well formed five pointed stars in the genuine. The dotted background of the vignette is somewhat irregular, the corner scrolls too thick, and in the lower left, resting upon the bottom frame line, is the letter L and over toward the right, the letter S. These initials do not appear on the genuine.

Rigi-Scheideck, the second hotel in Switzerland to issue hotel stamps, is in the Canton Schwyz, about five miles from the post office in Gersau, and looks down from an elevation of 5,500 feet. Its first stamp appeared in 1867 and was typographed in relief on coated paper; it is octagonal in shape, containing the inscription "Rigi-Scheideck" and was issued imperforate. This is one of the rarest of the Swiss hotel post stamps.



The following year—1868—a superseding design appeared. This is a simple

upright rectangle measuring 19 x 23-1/2 millimeters, with a vignette consisting of the back of an envelope on a background of fine vertical parallel lines which appear interrupted due to a conventional vine design. This vignette is enclosed within a name band in the form of a man's belt with buckle. This carries the hotel name, while on the end portion of the belt, appears the name of the proprietor, J. Muller. The remainder of the rectangle is filled with the conventional vine design similar to that found in the vignette. The first printings of these stamps were in various shades of green and yellow green, but in 1870 we find them in reds and in blues, dark blue being the scarcest. They were all lithographed on fairly thin paper without watermark, were issued imperforate, and sold at five centimes per stamp.

The postmark used by this hotel consisted of the name of the hotel in two lines within a double-lined rectangle, with chamfered corners. Appar-



The Rigi-Schneideck handstamp in blue applied to a 30Rp Sitting Helvetica issue on an 1869 cover to France, also with Gersau post office circular date stamps.

ently this was originally used to apply “corner cards” to outgoing mail, a practice which was quite common in Switzerland at one time. There is record of a letter dated July 6, 1866, bearing a Perforated Helvetia stamp tied by this postmark.

As this pre-dates the issuing of Rigi-Scheideck stamps, its preexistence is proven. Even after the replacement of this private post by a government service in 1875, this canceller continued in use. It is generally found on the Perforate Helvetia issue, and has been noted in blue and in black.



A cover to London on Swiss 30c postal stationery with 5c Rigi-Scheideck green stamp and “RIGI-SCHIEDECK” handstamp lower right.

Along about 1880 Rigi-Scheideck was taken over by Hauser & Stierlin, who put into use a stamp for publicity purposes. This seems to have been a somewhat common practice with some of these hotels. This label, properly inclusive in a collection of the Swiss Hotel Post stamps, is of horizontal format and shows a dove with an envelope in its beak flying toward the left. The background is a very fine quadrille.



The top panel contains the words “Kurort Rigi-Scheideck,” and the bottom panel “Hauser & Stierlin.” It was printed on white, unwatermarked paper, in blue and in red, and appeared both imperforate and perforated 12. In the perforated form there is a printing in greenish blue.

Apparently two different layouts were used, for there are specimens showing boardwalk margins on four sides, as well as those with normal margins.

Rigi-Kulm joined the group of stamp issuing hotels in 1870, when its proprietor, the brothers V. and J. Burgi, issued their first stamps. This hotel, at an elevation of 6,000 feet, is on the highest peak of the Rigi ridge.



A sign post at the Rigi-Kulm hotel, located 6,000 feet above sea level in the Swiss Alps, directing guests to the steep way or the easier way.

A view of the hotel. Note the train line lower right in this view, with closer views of the train, including peaks identified in the background.



Three 19th century views of the Rigi-Kulm. In the oldest (top), the peak in the background is identified as the Matterhorn.



These stamps are bi-colored and are found in several major varieties, but in general, they follow the one design. This consists of a red Alpine rose in the center, surrounded by a series of red dots in an oval formation. Outside this is an oval name band containing, in the upper part, the words "Hotel du Righi Coulm," and in the lower portion, the word "Franco," both in blue. The figure of value in blue is found in the four corners on a red background which resembles somewhat the interlacing of the seat of a cane seated chair. The entire stamp, in horizontal format, is framed with a double blue line. Various shades of red and blue were used in lithographing these stamps, and they were issued imperforate. Single subject transfers were used....

All these stamps of Rigi-Kulm were lithographed on unwatermarked paper from moderately thin to quite thick; and they are found in various shades of reds and blues.

A postmarker does not seem to have been used to any extent, if at all. Like Scheideck, Rigi-Kulm used a single line stamper for marking “corner cards” on outgoing mail. It has been seen on letters as far back as 1860 or earlier, and may have been used occasionally on these stamps.

The Rigi-Kulm post ceased in 1874 when a Federal Post Office was opened in this hotel. The stamps, however, continued to be used as advertising labels until about 1880.

In 1885 a party by the name of **Schreiber** took over this hotel and stamps for advertising purposes soon were issued. There are two of these, both upright rectangles, and both follow the same fundamental design, but vary radically in its execution. The first, lithographed in red and green, contains a sprig of Alpine rose in the vignette surrounded by a heavy red and green oval band. Outside this is an interrupted oval showing in the top portion, in red, the word “Schreiber’s” and in the lower portion, “Rigi-Kulm Hotels.” The remainder of the stamp is filled with a green conventional design in axial balance. The second stamp, also in red and green, is much simpler. Much of the ornamentation of the first stamp has been omitted. An Alpine rose on a colorless oval background forms the vignette; this is partly framed by the same wording as before, on a background of fine horizontal green lines. The ornamentation is supplied by a conventional leafy design often called “Acanthus Scrolls.” The first stamp is perforated 12, the second 11-1/2. On these advertising labels the German form “Kulm” is used, whereas in the previous stamps we

find the French form “Coulm” (see page 7).



Maderanerthal is situated in the beautiful Maderan Valley in the Canton of Uri, about seven miles from the post office in Amsteg. Practically from the opening of this hotel, its proprietor charged a fee of five centimes to carry a letter or postal



packet to or from the post office, but it was not until 1870 that he furnished his guests with stamps for this purpose. These continued in use until 1883, when such service was outlawed by Federal decree mentioned above. During this comparatively long period, a number of printings were made, and while the same general design was adhered to, the necessity of preparing new handdrawn lithograph transfers from time to time has given to collectors several different types. A description of the general design followed by notations of the major differences between these transfers will make identification fairly easy.



Of vertical format, this stamp shows a scene of the valley within an oval band bearing the hotel name "Maderanerthal" in the upper portion, and in a superimposed label at the bottom the word "Franco." The figure of value appears in each corner on a background of diagonal crosshatched lines. All were issued in some shade of blue, and except for one, are imperforate. These stamps were lithographed on medium white paper, unwatermarked. The indicated value is five centimes.

A postmarker was not used by this hotel. The service was suppressed on September 26, 1883. Six years later a government post office was opened here.

After the suppression of the Maderanerthal Hotel Post, the proprietor probably used the remainder of these stamps for advertising, and after exhausting these, issued new labels.



Altogether there were three of these advertising labels, all following the basic design of the previous stamps, but radically changed in detail. The figures of value have been omitted, and the word “Franco” superseded by the word “Extradienst.”

The Maderanerthal advertising label in a se-tenant pair, with figures of value omitted.

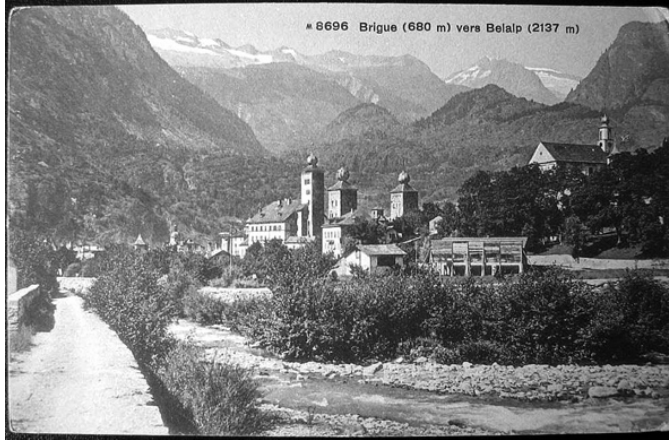
The first of these appeared in June, 1885. The vignette is well drawn and appears to be the same view as in the previous stamps; rosettes have replaced the figures of value, and the diagonal crosshatching consists generally of alternate single and double lines. Many of the double lines running from right to lower left appear almost as single thick lines. These labels measure 18-1/2 by 24-1/4 millimeters, are perforated 11, and are found in ultramarine blue and Prussian blue.

Another printing from a new transfer shows more careful workmanship except in the vignette which is poorly executed. It is distinguished from the former label by its size, 19-3/4 by 24-1/2, and its perforation, 11-1/2. Also the “T” of Maderanerthal is well formed, whereas in the former, the “T” is misshapen. The perforations of this label frequently appear rather rough.

There is a third type which shows an entirely different view of the valley, a view which was taken at a lower point. A raging torrent is shown flowing toward the lower right of the stamp. Colorless dots take the place formerly occupied by the rosettes. The ends of the “Extradienst” label are pointed instead of being rounded as in the other two labels. The top and bottom portions of the oval name band are drawn with a greater radius, giving a more flattening effect. This label is perforated 11-1/2. All these labels were lithographed on white, unwatermarked paper.

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Belalp, in the Canton of Valais, is situated on the south slope of the Bernese Alps about twelve miles due north from the town of Brig, which is reached by a mountain path. At an elevation of 7,000 feet, this hotel overlooks the Great Aletsch Glacier, the longest in the Alps, which descends from the Jungfrau. Mail was carried over this mountain path to the post office in Brig by donkey. The proprietor, Herr Klingele, who had been here since 1860 made a charge of five centimes per letter for this service.



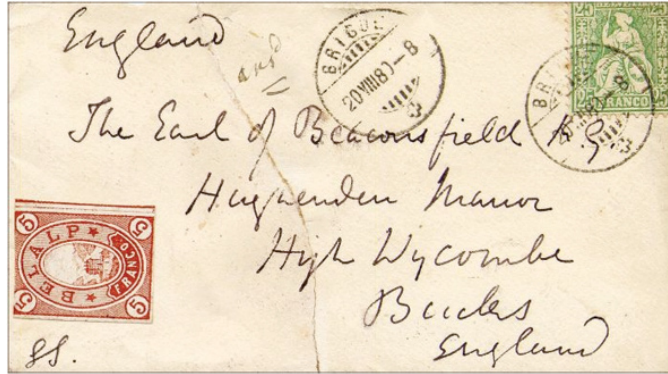
In 1873 the policy of selling adhesives to prepay this postal fee was adopted. The stamp, lithographed by G. Cuenod of Vevey, in violet on white unwatermarked paper, carries within an oval band, a scene of the hotel and immediate surroundings.

On the upper portion of this name band is the word "Belalp" and on the lower, the word "Franco" on a superimposed name plate. Two four-pointed stars or crosses complete this part of the picture. The figure of value appears in each corner outside the name band. This stamp, of vertical format, is framed with a double line and is only found imperforate.



Unofficial color trials in red and in green were made by Cuenod and are quite common.

A printing from engraved plates, using the same general design, appeared in 1877. These are readily distinguished from the previous issue by the presence of two five-pointed stars in place of the four-pointed stars of the previous issue. The design is more finely drawn, and the space between the letters "F" and "R" in the word "Franco" is



greater than between the other letters of that word. The letters of "Belalp"

are thinner as are the figures of value. These stamps were issued imperforate on unwatermarked paper and appeared in violet in January and in reddish brown in July.

Stamps closely resembling this 1877 issue, perforated and in various colors, are frequently found. These are a private printing which appeared probably in 1887 and are in the same class as counterfeits. A simple test lies in the fact that the stars are larger, the "O" in "Franco" almost a perfect circle, and there is no period after that word. There are of course other minor differences.



A third issue, which appeared in 1880, differs radically from the previous designs, although the designer evidently used the latter for his model. This design contains a vignette similar to the previous stamps, and two concentric oval bands. On the inner band are the words "Belalp" and "Franco" and on the outer band the figure of value appears four times. This stamp was lithographed in violet on white, unwatermarked paper and issued imperforate. The proportions are crude, the general idea far from attractive and the execution not up to the standard set by the previous printings.

The Federal edict of 1883 brought to a close the private postal service at this hotel, but unlike most of the other stamp issuing hotels, Belalp did not issue advertising labels.

Kurort-Stoos, in the Canton of Schwyz at an elevation of 4,000 feet and eight miles from the post office in Brunnen, was the last of the hotels to issue hotel post stamps. The first stamp issued by this hotel consists of a double circle containing in the upper portion, the words “Hotel—Pension” and in the lower “ob Brunnen Ct. Schwyz” and in the center the one word “Stooss.” This was printed in red on white paper without watermark and is one of the rarest of the Swiss hotel post stamps.



In 1877 a stamp of new design and of a nominal value of five centimes came into use. This is a horizontal rectangle with a triple frame. A post horn occupies most of the space, while entwined about this is a label in the form of a ribbon. On this ribbon is the name of the hotel and that of its proprietor, Carl Muller. It is found in several colors, imperforate and perforated 12. The imperforate form is noted in brick red, in blue, and in light green. The perforated form appears in red, brick-red, blue, light blue, green, and yellow green. This stamp was lithographed on white, unwatermarked paper. Judging from the number of specimens with one or two straight edges, it would seem that the sheets were straight edged. Specimens imperforate between



are known. Some authorities claim the red and the blue stamps appeared in 1877 and the green during the following year. The Zumstein Special Catalog, Ninth Edition, lists all three under the 1877 date.



A Kurort-Stoos 5c green tied by blue CARL MULLER-CARMENZINO cancel on 5c post card bearing BRUNNEN 7 IX 83 c.d.s. and SCHWYZ receiver.

After the suppression of the Hotel Posts by Federal Decree in 1883, Kurort-Stoos issued two stamps for advertising purposes; these are upright rectangles. The first, imperforate, shows the Swiss Cross in the center on a violet background with the inscription, "Hotel-Pension Stoos, Brunnen, Ct. Schwyz." The second is perforated and is found in four different colors. The design consists of a spray of Alpine roses entwined with a ribbon which contains the words "Kurort-Stoos Carl Muller"; the frame consists of three lines, the middle one being quite thick in comparison with the others. This stamp was lithographed on white, unwatermarked paper and perforated 12. It appears in carmine red, blue green, yellow green, and blackish blue.

Two different postmarks were used, at Kurort-Stoos both of which are double circles. In one the words "Carl Muller-Camenzine" appears between the two circles, and in the center "Kurort Stoos ob Brunnen" in two lines. In the other, "Kurort-Stoos ob Brunnen" is between the circles,

and in the center "Vierwald Stattersee (Schwyz)" in three lines; the outer circle is a double line. These postmarks are always in blue. Apparently they came into use in 1880 at the time



A Swiss 5c postal card to Belgium with two 3c gray issues tied by "Brunnen 2.1X.87-6" and a blue "Kurort Stoos ob Brunnen Vierwald Stattersee (Schweiz)" handstamp, also with "Marchienne-au-Port Sept 5" receiver.

the telegraph office was opened here. They have been noted on government postage stamps of this date and it is quite likely that they were originally provided for the telegraph service. One authority explains the presence of these postmarks on the Hotel Post stamps by stating that frequently



At www.paulfrasercollectibles.com we found this cover and description:

One of the most unique and most—if not the most—collectible of the Swiss hotel posts issues.

Apparently, the letter was originally sent by Swiss hotel post to London, hence the two green stamps. The cover reached London the very next day (August 17) when it received a circular datestamp on the back. However, the addressee was not in London anymore. So the letter followed him to Dorking... and from there onwards to Leipzig, Germany, where he'd apparently moved again.

This is evident in the additional Great Britain stamp in the envelope's top-centre, a 2-1/2d light blue of the 1881 definitives issue. (It was likely applied by someone in Britain who knew the addressee.)

It was tied with a datestamp in Dorking, on August 20, 1882, also in black.

The Swiss 25c green stamp of the Standing Helvetia issue is marked with a circular black datestamp (August 16, 1882) also cancelled in pen. The private hotel stamp is tied with a postmark which reads "CARL MÜLLER-CAMENZIND / KURORT STOOS OB BRÜNNEN" in blue, also pen-cancelled.

these stamps were placed on the backs of envelopes and as it was the practice to postmark telegrams on the back, these stamps naturally were postmarked. Both the stamps used for the messenger service and those used as advertising labels are found bearing these postmarks.

This account would not be complete without including additional hotels which issued advertising labels after the fashion of those which had used Hotel Post stamps.

These hotels were opened subsequent to the Federal decree which suppressed the Hotel Posts.

Mont Prosa, on the St. Gotthard [also spelled Gothard] in the Canton of Tessin, contributed three adhesives. One printed in green in vertical format (shown in a set-tenant pair) has a scene of and about the hotel inclosed within a circular band with the inscription “Hotel du Mont Prosa” and “St. Gothard.” In the four corners the figure “5” appears, probably to give the label the appearance of a stamp.

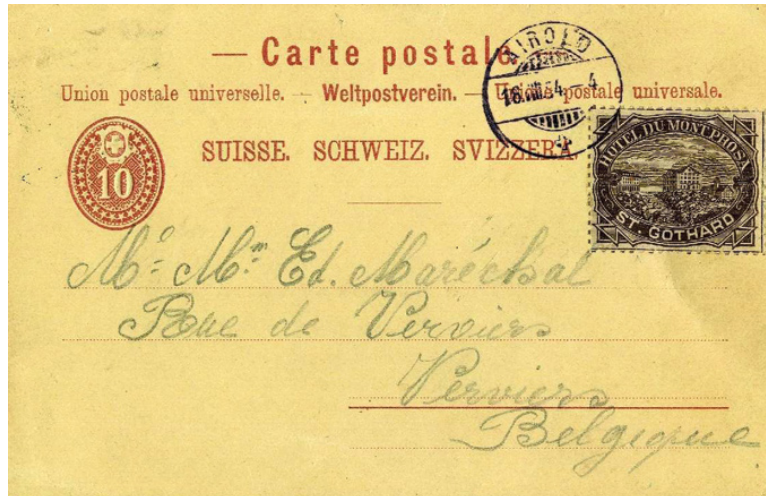
A second label (shown here in a full sheet



of nine) is in horizontal format and includes the data shown on the previous one, but the figures of value have been omitted. This one is found in claret and olive brown.

The third label resembles the second with the exception that it contains a lake scene with the view of the hotel. The color of this label is claret. These advertising labels were printed on white paper and were distributed in perforated form. The specialized catalog calls





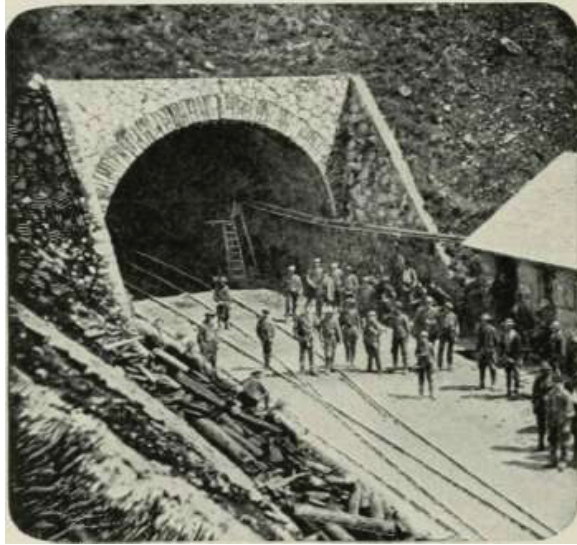
10c postal card with “Hotel du Mont Prosa St. Gothard” olive brown tied by “Airolo 18 VIII 84-4” datestamp, post card indicia not canceled.

attention to the fact that unused specimens with original gum and bearing the single line postmark “S. Gottardo” are remainders. This postmark appears to be the same as that used in the St. Gotthard post office, which had been opened in that community prior to 1871.

Piora-Tal, likewise in the Canton of Tes-



sin, lies not far from Airolo, a town well known because it is at the southern end of that famous engineering feat, the St. Gotthard Tunnel, 9-1/2 miles long, on the route of the very important international railroad, which connects central Europe with Italy via Switzerland. The label issued by this hotel is an upright rectangle modeled after that of the first of the Mont Prosa labels. It was printed in blue on white, and is known imperforate and perforated.



From <http://chestofbooks.com/travel/switzerland/John-Stoddard-Lectures/Switzerland-Part-7.html>:
 "...whether we...must not...belittle the great engineering triumphs here displayed....cut inch by inch out of the solid granite...When one drives over the mountain by the carriage-road, hour after hour, bewildered by its cliffs and gorges, it seems impossible that the engineer's calculations could have

been made so perfectly as to enable labor on the tunnel to be carried on from both ends of it at the same time. Yet...on the 28th of February, 1880, the Italian workmen and the Swiss both met at the designated spot, six thousand feet below the summit, and there pierced the last thin barrier that remained between the north and south.

Sonnenberg-Engleberg, in the Canton of Obwalden, issued a horizontal label containing a hotel scene inclosed within an oc-



tagonal frame. A label at the top contains the name Sonnenberg and a similar label at the bottom, the name Engleberg. These were printed in black on white paper and on tinted paper, including green, yellow, and rose. They were perforated.

Neues Stahlbad is located at St. Moritz-Bad in the beautiful Engadine Valley; one of the three longest in Switzerland. It seems hardly necessary to say more about this very popular resort, the fame of which has spread through-



St. Moritz-Bad Upper Engadine
SWITZERLAND
6000 FEET ABOVE SEA

RENOWNED HIGH-ALPINE HEALTH RESORT
with excellent Iron Mineral Waters, Mineral Baths, Hydrotherapy. Terminus of the world-famous Albula Railway

SEASON FROM JUNE 1 TO SEPTEMBER 30
FOR SPRING AND LATE SEASON, CONSIDERABLY REDUCED PRICES

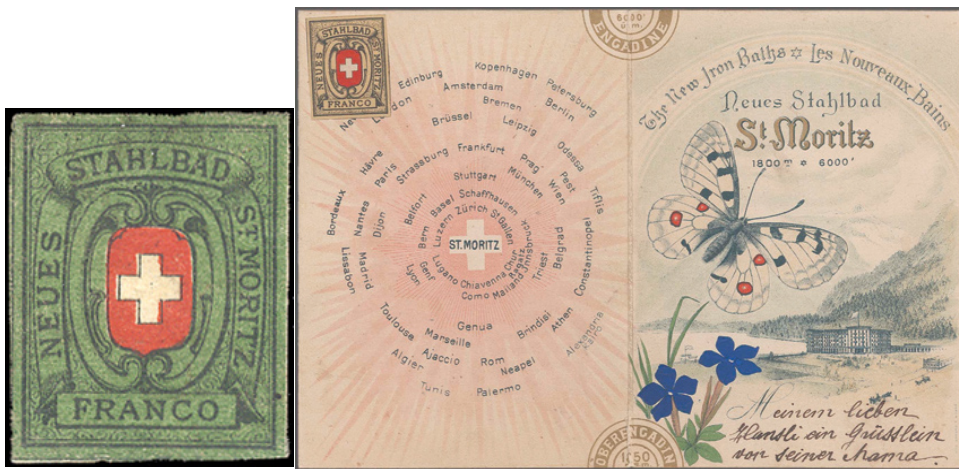
Lawn-Tennis. Golf Links. The Guests of the under-named Establishments are entitled to attend all Soirées, Concerts, &c., of the Four Hotels.

Routes: (a) *via* Basle-Zurich-Chur-Thusis and the Albula Railway: (b) Lindau-Chur-Thusis: (c) *via* Landeck-Schuls-Tarasp or Stilfserjoch and Bernina Pass by Diligence: (d) by Diligence *via* Chiavenna-Maloja.

Ask for latest Prospectus No. 13, sent gratis and post-free on application to the following Hotels:—

HOTELS: Kurhaus—Neues Stahlbad—Victoria—Du Lac

A St. Moritz luggage tag and a card promoting the “renowned high-Alpine health resort” with the Neues Stahlbad listed at the bottom.



Left, the 1892 Neues Stahlbad / St. Moritz gray green and red; right, the stamp on an illustrated card.

out the civilized world. The label issued by this hotel differs materially from the others, in fact it resembles in many respects the so-called “Neuchatel” stamp issued by the Geneva Cantonal Post. The vignette, consisting of a white cross on a red shield and inclosed within a conventional frame, is almost a direct copy of that well-known classic. The curley-cue background also is suggestive of that stamp. Four name bands complete the picture, in the top band we find the name “Stahlbad,” at the bottom “Franco,” on the left “Neues,” and on the right “St. Moritz.” These were printed in black and red on white; also in black and red in combination with yellow, graygreen, yellow-green, salmon, and lilac. The specialized catalog notes that “apparently these were not put into use.”

This would appear to be the proper spot to write the word “finis”, but due to the small number of collectible specimens and the dearth of covers it would seem fitting that so-called collateral groups might well be included in a collection of Hotel Post stamps.

Down through the years following the suppression of the Hotel Posts by Federal decree, many Government post offices were established in hotels throughout Switzerland and a collection of the postmarks used by these post offices might add interest. The search would not be easy, but the rewards certainly worth the effort. The only limitation on this group would be the number of denominations of each postal issue and the number of such issues. Covers naturally would add interest.

A second group, one which the economists might call marginal, would consist of hotel corner cards. The collectors of old Swiss covers are familiar with the name and address of the sender applied by means of a rubber stamp. Many of these are found with oval framing, while others take the form of a straight line. Some hotels and even business firms used designs resembling the contemporary postmarks and applied them on any available clear space on the cover, very much in the manner in which postmarks were applied. In many cases, particularly by the uninformed, these could be readily mistaken for Government postmarks as some of them contain the complete date. To carry the idea further we might also include the corner cards applied by mechanical means, such as typography, lithography, and engraving.

The inclusion of corner cards may be controversial, and undoubtedly will be criticized and condemned by some, but, what phase of collecting is not? Such difference of opinion may well be considered a healthy condition, but the controversy should be conducted in a friendly spirit.