

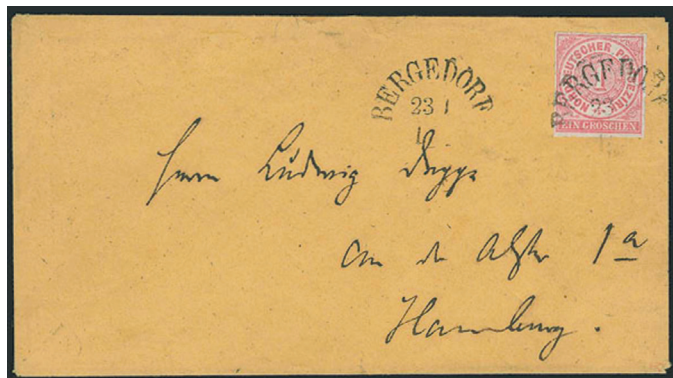
70 Years Ago in Mekeel's:

Stamps of Bergedorf

by W. H. Poole. (From *Stamps Magazine*, June 6, 1938 with photos added)

In the early days of stamp collecting one of the favorite conundrums the journals of the period was "Where is Bergedorf?" The little information obtainable from gazetteers and similar works of reference was of such a conflicting nature that, but for the tangible evidence of the postage stamps themselves, one might well be pardoned for doubting the existence of a state or town of this name. Even nowadays little of note will be found in any of the standard books of reference for the importance of Bergedorf has always been negligible.

Bergedorf consisted of the town of that name, in a little territory of less than fifty square miles, whose 20,000 or so inhabitants were chiefly engaged in raising vegetables to sell in the neighbouring town of Hamburg. The city fathers of Hamburg finally purchased Bergedorf in its entirety (August, 1867) the price paid being 200,000 thalers, or about \$150,000 in our money, but to whom this was paid history remains somewhat vague.



A rare cover showing usage of a North German Confederation 1868 1 groschen, Sc. 4, tied by Bergedorf arc datestamp, after Hamburg purchased Bergedorf in 1867 and joined the North German Confederation.

According to some writers the postal history of Bergedorf dates from 1837 when, it is said, a Prussian post office was established. Though the veracity of this statement has been questioned there seems no doubt that a post office under the joint administration of Lubeck and Hamburg was in existence in 1847. The two larger cities joined the German-Austrian Confederation five years later though no immediate provision was made for the issue of postage stamps as stipulated in one of the regulations of the Union. In fact it was not until January 1, 1859, that Hamburg and Lubeck issued stamps and shortly after these labels appeared letters posted in the Bergedorf district were required to be prepaid with Hamburg stamps.

Before long Bergedorf began to agitate for postage stamps of its own and though its postmaster, Herr Paalzow, did his best by both writing to and interviewing the higher officials his efforts were not immediately successful. Paalzow went to the trouble

of producing a lengthy document in which he made definite proposals for certain denominations, to be executed in a certain way, with an estimate of the actual costs.

Two years passed and then a convention was held in June, 1861, to discuss the matter with the result that Bergedorf was allowed to issue its own stamps. The issue was a modest one of five different values, all of the same unattractive design, but interesting from the fact that each denomination was of a different size ranging from 15-1/4mm square [c. .6 inch] for the 1/2 schilling to 21-1/2 by 21 [c. .82 inch] for the 4sch. The central portion of the design shows the combined Arms of Lubeck and Hamburg on a wavy ground within a circle of pearls. In the spandrels are the letters L, H, P and A respectively—standing for Lubeck Hamburg Post Ansaalt (office)—while the surrounding frame is inscribed BERGEDORF at top; POSTMARKE, at bottom; SCHILLING at right; and the value, in words at left. The stamps were produced by lithography by Herr Christian Fuchs of Hamburg. One type for each of the five values was drawn on the same lithographic stone and from these the transfers necessary to make the printing stones were taken.

The manner in which some of the printing stones were made up is particularly interesting. The lowest denomination, the 1/2sch., was printed in sheets of 200 divided into two panes of 100 each placed side by side. For some obscure reason the workman entrusted with the make-up of this stone took twelve transfers from the original drawing which he arranged in a block of two vertical rows of six each. This block was transferred to the printing stone sixteen times and the eight additional transfers necessary to complete the required total of 200 were added at bottom in the center. Consequently each pane contains thirteen horizontal rows, the lower one of which shows only four instead of the usual eight stamps.



1/2sch black on pale blue, Sc. 1

The 1sch was also printed in sheets of 200. A block of ten transfers was taken from the original drawing in two vertical



1sch blocks, left with vertical tete-beche pairs, Sc. 2a, right with horizontal tete-beche pairs, Sc. 2b

rows of five each. As the corner numerals in the original drawing were considered too thick and clumsy they were removed before the transfer block was made. The workman then had to draw in the whole of the forty numerals by hand with the result that many small differences may be found in the numerals "1". The block of transfers was reproduced twenty times on the printing stone and the two panes of a hundred stamps were placed one above the other and separated by a space of about 2mm. For some reason best known to himself the workman inverted all the transfers in the lower pane so that each sheet of this denomination provides ten tete-beche pairs (see page 10).

The original design of the 1sch was inscribed SCHILLINGE in the right border and though a stone was made and a number of sheets printed, these stamps were never issued and can at best be considered only as essays. When this mis-spelling was objected to the original drawing was corrected and although this value was to be printed in sheets of 200 the workman again, as in the case of the 1/2sch, made his transfers in a group of twelve in two vertical rows of six stamps each. Consequently he was again confronted with the problem of adding another eight transfers after he had transferred his original block sixteen times. He placed the two panes one above the other, as in the case of the 1sch, and placed the four extra impressions needed for each pane to the left of the center of the first vertical row so that each pane has twelve horizontal rows, the first and last four rows of which show eight stamps while rows five, six, seven and eight contain nine stamps. To make matters a little more complicated these extra four stamps for each pane were inverted so that each sheet provides eight tete-beche pairs.

The 3sch was printed in sheets of 160 stamps arranged in sixteen rows of ten each. A block of ten transfers was made from the original drawing in two horizontal rows of five each. This block was transferred sixteen times to complete the printing



4sch black on brown, Sc. 5

stone, and a space of about 4mm was left between each group of eight so that the sheets are actually two closely connected panes.

The highest value—the 4sch—was printed in small sheets of eighty. The transfer block used in building up the printing stone consisted of eight impressions from the original drawing in two horizontal rows of four each. There was a space of 5mm dividing the fifth and sixth rows so that the sheet was divided into two panes of forty stamps each placed one above the other.



1-1/2sch black on yellow, Sc. 3

The stamps were all imperforate and all were printed in black, with the exception of the 3sch which was blue, though paper of a different color was used for each denomination, viz:—pale blue for the 1/2sch, white for the 1sch, yellow for the 1-1/2sch, pink for the 3sch, and brown for the 4sch.

Although these somewhat unattractive stamps were in use for only a short period of six years they have been the subject of several important articles in the philatelic press from time to time and the legitimacy of some of its varieties has been the cause of many heated discussions. Two of these varieties are the 1/2sch in black on violet in place of the normal pale blue paper, and the 3sch in black instead of blue on rose paper. These varieties were certainly not mentioned in the official document relating to the issue of the stamps and on that ground alone their genuineness might well be questioned.



1/2sch black on violet

Although these varieties are listed as numbers 1 and 3 in the Scott catalogue the publishers of that estimable work state they "were probably never placed in use." At best they are essays we are perfectly willing to admit—but they have no place in a catalogue of regularly issued postage stamps. [Scott no longer lists them and now states they "come from proof sheets and were never placed in use." JFD.]

The stamps became obsolete on Jan. 1, 1868, and a short time later the remainders were offered for sale. They were purchased by M. Moens of Brussels, for the sum of 1,000 francs (approximately \$200) and among them were about 39,000 1/2sch, 26,000 1sch, 68,000 1-1/2sch, 43,000 3sch and 50,000 4sch.

There was only one printing of each denomination and this was due to the fact that only one lithographic stone was purchased. Consequently as soon as the supply of one denomination was printed the stone was cleaned and made ready for another value. Obviously, therefore, there can be no reprinting of these stamps in the regularly accepted sense of this term and the so-called reprints listed at some length in the catalogue are nothing better than imitations printed from new stones, though the original drawings certainly were used.



The reprints in descending order, 4sch to 1/2sch. Scott describes these in detail, with a value of \$1 each.

When M. Moens purchased the remainders the original "die stone" also became his property and he had new stones made from which printings were made on at least four different occasions. These things are, of course, of little interest except to a specialist and have had the result of making Bergedorf stamps very unpopular with the average collector. Moens also possessed the original obliterating stamp so that he was able to oblige with "used" imitations on request. In 1895 this obliterating stamp and the "die stone" were sold to the Post Office Museum of Berlin.