

Fabulous Firsts: **Saxony** (July 1, 1850)



(As with many of our Fabulous Firsts features, this article is based on an article by B. W. H. Poole, this one from a German States booklet published by Mekeel's. JFD.)

* * * * *

Saxony is a kingdom of Germany, being fifth in area and third in population among the states of the empire. It is surrounded by Bohemia, Silesia, Prussian Saxony, and the minor Saxon States and has a total area of 5,787 square miles.

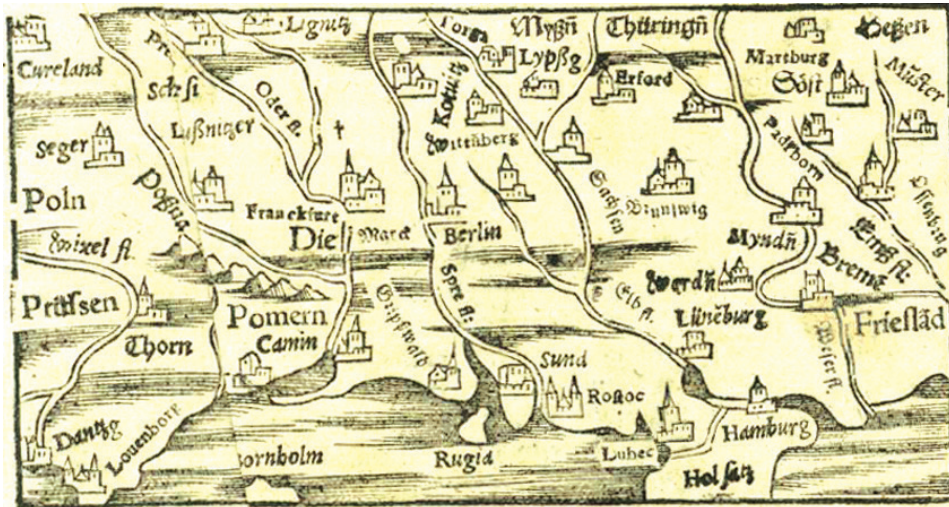
The population grows fast and had nearly quadrupled in the period 1815-1900. At the present time it has nearly reached the five million mark and is the most densely peopled country in Europe.

The River Elbe divides the kingdom into two almost equal parts, both hilly and both well watered. The predominating geographical feature of the western half is the Erzgebirge (2,500 feet) separating it from Bohemia; of the eastern half, offsets of the Riesengebirge, and the sandstone formation, above Dresden, known as the Saxon Switzerland.

Agriculture is highly developed, though most of the farms are small. Saxony's chief interests are, however, manufacturing and mining. Coal, iron, cobalt, tin, copper, lead and silver are all found, the latter having been mined at Freiberg since the 12th century.

The people are in part of Slav descent, but Germanised. Amongst them are between 50,000 and 60,000 Wends (pure Slavs). Education stands at a high level, the university at Leipzig, for instance, being one of the most important educational centres of the empire. The capital is Dresden, while the three largest towns are Dresden, Leipzig and Chemnitz.

Saxony is a constitutional, hereditary monarchy, with a parliament of two chambers. It sends four members to



Circa 1600 woodcut map of Saxony

the Imperial Council and twenty-three representatives to the Reichstag.

The name of Saxony formerly designated a very large tract in north Germany, extending from the Weser to the frontiers of Poland. At the peace of 1495 the Emperor Maximilian I, divided Germany into two circles, of which the extensive tract of country hitherto called Saxony formed three, viz:—Westphalia, Lower Saxony and Upper Saxony. The last of these comprised the electorates of Braddenburg and Saxony, the duchy of Pomerania, and several small principalities.

The kingdom of Saxony was formed out of the electorate of the same name. The duchy of Saxony, to which the electoral dignity and the office of hereditary marshall of the empire were attached, was, however, no part of the ancient German duchy of that name (which was composed of Lauenberg and a tract on the other side of the Elbe), but a Wend or Vandal province, which Albert the Bear, margrave of Salzwedel, of the house of Ascania, had conquered and left to his son Bernhard. This Bernhard received from the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa the dignity of Duke of Saxony, to which were attached a part of Engern and Westphalia, extending from the Weser, which separated it from Eastphalia, westward to the Rhine. But Bernhard not being powerful enough to maintain his rights, most of the Saxon allodial proprietors became immediate estates

of the empire by which the duchy was dissolved, and its name transferred to the country inherited by Bernhard from his father, to which from that time the ducal dignity was attached.



*Frederick I,
Frederick the Warlike*

The house of Ascania becoming extinct on the death of Albert III (1422), the Emperor Sigismund invested Frederick the Warlike, margrave of Meissen, with the electoral title and the duchy of Saxony. He was succeed-



*Frederick II,
Frederick the Mild*

ed in the electoral dominions by his son, Frederick the Mild, who reigned from 1428 to 1464. On his death his dominions were divided between his two sons, Albert and Ernest, who were the founders of the Albertine and Ernestine lines, the former of which still reigns in the kingdom of Saxony, and the latter is divided into four branches of Saxe-Altenburg, Coburg-Gotha, Meiningen and Weimar.

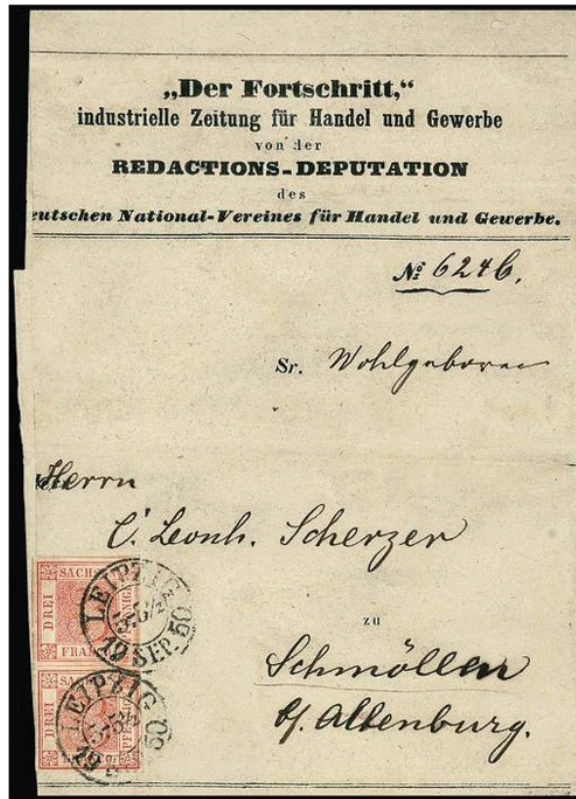
In the war with France (1793) Saxony furnished only a small contingent and took no decided part; but in 1806 the elector sent all his troops to support the king of Prussia. The ruin of the Prussian power at the battle of Jena enabled Napoleon to gain the Saxons to his cause. Prussian Poland was added to the dominions of Saxony under the title of the grand-duchy of Warsaw, and the title of elector was changed to that of king. After the overthrow of Napoleon at Leipzig (1813), the king was for a time a prisoner in the hands of the allies, and the Congress of Vienna deprived him of more than half his dominions, or a territory of 7,880 square miles which was handed over to Prussia. Saxony took the side of Austria in the Seven Weeks' War (1866), shared in the defeat of Sadowa and was compelled to join the North German Confederation. In 1871 Saxony became a member of the new German empire.

Philatelic History

The German-Austrian Postal Union was formed on April 6th, 1850, and as Saxony at once decided to join, it was necessary to take measures for providing postage stamps. The kingdom of Bavaria had issued stamps in the previous year and the Government of Saxony therefore applied to that kingdom for information. In response to this appeal the Bavarians sent copies of all their acts and decrees relating to the issue of stamps, together with specimens of the postage stamps which had been issued.

As the question of deciding upon an entire issue required some deliberation, it was determined to make a start by providing a stamp of small value for prepaying the rate of postage on journals and printed matter. This stamp was the now famous 3 pfennige red the design of which, it will be noticed, is a palpable copy of the 1 kreuzer Bavaria.

On June 22d, 1850, a notice appeared stating that from July 1st following, articles under wrapper destined for any place within the circuit of the royal post of Saxony or for Austria, Prussia, Bavaria, the Mecklenburgs, Anhalt - Schwarzburg, Waldeck, or Hamburg, must be prepaid with stamps of three pfennige for every loth (about 1/2 oz.) in weight, and that the post-office had prepared such stamps, the sale of which would commence on June 29th, though they were not to be used until July 1st.



3 pfge brick red, Sc. 1, vertical pair tied by Leipzig Sept. 19, 1850 to a wrapper of the newspaper "Progress".



Sc. 2

For the definitive issue of August 1st, 1851, more elaborate designs were selected. Various methods of production were considered and numerous essays were submitted by J. B. Hirschfeld, who printed the 3pf red. Hirschfeld could, apparently, only produce stamps by the typographic process and while this was considered suitable enough for the lowest value, used for printed matter, it was

hardly considered good enough for the higher denominations. Consequently Hirschfeld only obtained the contract for printing the 3 pfennig stamps, in a design showing the Arms of the kingdom, while the contract for manufacturing the higher values was awarded to C. C. Meinhold & Sons, of Dresden, a firm well-known for the production of engravings by the glyphographic process. There were four values in all—1/2, 1, 2, and 3 neugroschen—showing a profile portrait of Frederic Augustus II.

King Frederic died on August 9, 1854, and was succeeded by his brother John. Steps were at once taken to provide new stamps and though these were ready by the end of the year they were not issued until June 1st, 1855. The numismatic rule of setting the profile of a reigning sovereign the reverse way to that in which it was placed on the coins etc., of his predecessor was followed.



Essay for the 1851 issue

With the exception of the portrait the design was altered as little as possible; the values were the same and the same



1851-52 Issue: Sc. 3 (1/2ng black on gray), 5 (1ng black on rose), 6 (2ng black on pale blue), 8 (black on yellow) and 7 (black on dark blue, issued in 1852). There is no Scott 4 listing.

colors were used. No change was made in the 3pf value, as it bore the coat-of-arms, and this denomination continued to be printed by Hirschfeld. It was found desirable to have higher values than 3ngr for use on letters sent beyond the confines of the German-Austrian postal union and on April 24th, 1856, 5 and 10ngr stamps were issued. In design these were similar to the lower values but they were printed in color on white paper instead of in black on colored papers as was the case with all previously issued neugroschen stamps.



10ngr, Sc. 14

In March, 1861, the head of the Prussian Post-office called attention to the confusion that was created by so many states of the German-Austrian Postal Union using stamps of corresponding values in different colors, and suggested that all stamps of similar value, whether expressed in schilling, grote, groschen, or kreuzer, should be printed in the same color, and that the same rule should be applied to the stamped envelopes, which should have the stamp in the right upper angle, and the adhesives placed in the same position; and he advised new issues to be made to carry out these suggestions.

These proposals met with general approval, and Saxony immediately prepared for a new issue. Various firms were invited to submit designs, but only four did so and the contract was eventually awarded to Giesecke and Devrient, of Leipzig. The new stamps had the arms of Saxony in colorless embossing in the centre, and they are certainly inferior in appearance to their predecessors.

With this issue perforation was introduced for the first time. The values were the same as before except that the 10 neugroschen was dropped. The demand for this value was found to be exceedingly small and at the time the new series appeared, July 1st, 1863, quite a large proportion of the original supply of the 10ngr of 1856 still remained on hand.

Saxony, as we have already shown, was compelled to join the North German Confederation and on the appearance of the Confederation stamps on January 1st, 1868, its separate stamps were suppressed.

The currency of Saxony was the thaler, worth about 72c, which was divided into 30 neugroschen. One neugroschen was equivalent in value to a silbergroschen, but was divided into ten instead of twelve pfennige.

The First Issue

Among all the stamps issued by the various German States none is more popular than the first stamp issued in Saxony—the 3 pfennige red. It is not a very



Saxony and Bavaria 1

handsome stamp, or even one of original design, but it is merely a somewhat crude copy of the 1kr stamp issued by Bavaria in 1849, as we have already pointed out.

This particular stamp seems always to have been in demand from the earliest days of stamp collecting, the real reason of its popularity being that it was one of the most difficult stamps to obtain as well as one of the first used in the German Empire. This stamp was produced in a hurry and did not receive the careful consideration accorded to the other postage stamps issued by Saxony in the following year. The reason for its hurried manufacture lies in the fact that it was intended for use on newspapers and printed matter which, under the newly formed postal Convention between Austria and various German States, had to be prepaid. If not prepaid, the packages were charged full letter rate. Not only had these packages to be prepaid but the Saxon Government insisted that stamps must be used and payment in cash was not allowed.

The design consists of a large open “3” covered with a mazework pattern on a ground composed of fragments of wavy lines within a frame 18-1/2 mm. square. The frame is about 3-1/4 mm. wide and is inscribed “SACHSEN” at top, “FRANCO” at base, “DREI” at left, and “PFENNIGE” at right. In each of the angles is a small ornament with a star-like centre.

The stamps were manufactured at the printing establishment of J. B. Hirschfeld, a printer and lithographer of

Leipzig. The original die was engraved in relief on metal and from this moulds were taken in plaster, or some similar material, from which Arnold, the stereotyper in Hirschfeld's works, took casts in type-metal. The stamps are not all of equal size the variations being due to unequal shrinkage of the plaster moulds in drying. It is also probable, as Mr. Westoby points out, that Arnold, to save time, used some of his to produce moulds for others.

It is probable only twenty moulds were made, for the stamps were printed in sheets of twenty in four horizontal rows of five. It has been suggested that there was another plate used for some of the later printings but no satisfactory proof of this has been produced. Lines of printer's rule were placed between the casts and in referring to these Mr. Westoby says they ran "vertically down the sheet uninterruptedly; but the horizontal lines



This superb used block of four shows the horizontal lines as broken and the vertical lines as continuous. See also page 10.

were broken and did not touch the vertical lines." Unless, however, a second plate was used, or a resetting of the casts made, this statement must be inaccurate for in a superb mint block of four illustrated in a German paper some little time ago the horizontal lines are distinctly continuous and it is the vertical ones which are broken. The stamps were printed on ordinary white wove paper and they are, of course, not perforated. The gum is of a distinctly yellow hue.

The first lot of stamps consisting of 120,000 (6,000 sheets) was delivered by the end of June and the public's appreciation of them may be gauged from the fact that only 19,000 remained by the 20th of August. Two days

later another supply of 60,000 was delivered. Both these lots were ordered orally but after that it was decreed that future orders must be made in writing from the office of the Main Postal Treasury. Six further lots were ordered and delivered as follows:-

	Stamps	Sheets
October 8th, 1851	40,000	2,000
November 4th, 1850	60,000	3,000
December 1st, 1850	60,000	3,000
February 22nd, 1851.....	40,000	2,000
April 3rd, 1851.....	80,000	4,000
June 17th, 1851.....	40,000	2,000

Altogether, therefore, 500,000 of these stamps were printed and delivered. One sheet of twenty stamps was sent to the Finance Ministry at Dresden as a sample, 463,058 stamps were sold, and the remaining 36,922 were burnt on December 10th, 1851. In the early nineties the sheet sent to the Treasury was apparently cut up and the stamps sold singly at a dollar or so apiece.

That this stamp was only intended as a temporary issue is shown by a remark contained in the official notification of June 22nd, 1850, viz:—"This form is, however, only provisional, and will be altered when postage stamps for correspondence (letters) are introduced." This stamp was replaced by the 3pf green label, in the Arms type, on August 1st, 1851, and it was then decreed that no more of the red stamps were to be sold at the post-offices. At the same time the public were informed they could use any of the red stamps they possessed but that under no circumstances would they be exchanged for the new green ones.

Writing in the *Monthly Journal* for December, 1900, Mr. G. B. Duerst says: "This is the reason why the 3 pfennig, red, is so rare with the lozenge obliteration, which was only introduced in March, 1852. The usual postmark is the name and date stamp, but the earliest obliteration was in pen and ink."

The stamp exists in a number of shades, doubtless owing to the many printings, but according to the catalogue quotations there is little to choose between them in point of rarity.

The stamp is rare and its scarcity is accounted for by the fact that the vast majority of the 463,058 stamps sold were used on newspaper packages and were destroyed in the removal of the wrapper.

Unused this stamp has always been considered scarcer than used but owing to the larger demand for used specimens of recent years there is now little to choose between used and unused so far as market value is concerned. We believe the largest block known in mint condition, with original gum, is a block of four from the right lower corner of a sheet. An entire sheet is, or was, in existence, however. This was described in the *Monthly Journal* in 1896 as follows:—"Mr. Castle secured, for a sum of about \$1,500.00, an unsevered and unused sheet of 20 Saxony 3pf red. This is believed to be the only sheet known, and is the one formerly in the Friedl Museum of Vienna. Mr. Friedl got it from a Castle in Saxony, where it was found pasted on a fire-screen and varnished over! Naturally it is not in the most brilliant condition, but it is a unique piece, and well worth the price paid."

The unique 1850 "Dreier Sachsen" complete unused sheet of 20. It owes its survival to having been pasted to a fire-screen in a castle at Eibenstock on the banks of the Elbe. By 1876 it was in the holdings of Vienna stamp dealer Siegmund Friedl, a featured attraction of his "Friedl'schen Mu-



seum". In 1897, it was sold to Ferrary, whose holdings were seized and auctioned by the French government as "reparations" for German participation in World War One. From those auctions it passed in 1923 into the collection of Maurice Burrus, the Swiss tobacco tycoon. Continuing the page 8 discussion and block of four image, note that the horizontal printer's rule lines are broken and the vertical lines are continuous.

This 3pf stamp is one that has consistently shown an appreciation in value and of recent years It has jumped upwards in price at an astonishing rate. In 1864 it was worth about 35c in used condition; in 1884 it was quoted 75c; in 1894 its value had increased to \$22, in 1908 it stood at \$37.

There is a suspicion in some quarters that some one is attempting a corner in this stamp—a not impossible proceeding in view of the limited number available—and should such a “corner” be successful there is no knowing to what price this variety may yet be forced.

Few stamps have been so extensively counterfeited as this 3 pfennige, one writer alone admitting the possession of no less than twenty-five different counterfeits. Mr. Westoby mentions several points which should be of value in detecting counterfeits, viz.:—

In the ornament in the corners, which is in the shape of a quatrefoil, the interior design is in the shape of a four-rayed star, or rather a round uncolored centre to a St. Andrew's Cross.

In the left upper corner ornament there is a curved line opposite to each extremity of the cross. This curved line is wanting opposite the left upper extremity of the cross in all the other corner ornaments, and also opposite the upper right extremity of the cross in the right upper ornament, and this right extremity is long, while the left one is very short, as also is the upper right one in the right lower ornament.

In the inscriptions the S and A in SACHSEN almost join, as also do the R and E in DRIE. There is a break in the inner line of the frame opposite the I of DRIE.



A counterfeit block of four. See also page 12. Use your pdf magnifier tool for a closer look.



Counterfeit singles. See also page 12.

These are the principal tests given by Messrs. Collin and Calman, and in their catalogue enlarged engravings are given of the corner ornaments. In the genuine stamps there is a full stop after FRANCO which, curiously enough, is absent in most of the imitations.”