

Swiss stamps-an introduction

Autor(en): **Rose, Peter**

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It will not come as any surprise that the Swiss are just as organised when it comes to stamp issues as they are about their transport and other activities. For many years sets of stamps have been issued in specific categories and only recently has there been a trend towards "flooding the market" along the lines of British and other administrations.

Swiss stamps fall into these main subjects: Definitives, Publicity, Pro Patria, Pro Juventute, and general Commemorative.

Definitives are the standard designs which exist for a number of years rather like our basic Queen's Head stamps. The earliest national issues date from 1850 and the main themes of the early years are views of Helvetia in various classical poses.



1963 Publicity Issue
Bern Lötschberg Simplon
1913-1963

These were followed from 1907 by a long lasting series showing William Tell and his son. The next main series appeared in 1936 and showed general landscapes. Following on were series depicting technology in the landscape, postmen and architecture, regional views and applied art, folk customs, landscapes with signs of the zodiac, mail transport, farm animals and most recently views from footpath seats.

Pro Patria stamps first appeared in 1938. These charity issues raise funds for cultural and social projects throughout Switzerland. There is one set each year and subject matter reflects the heritage

and cultural theme. These have included landscape, architecture, national sports, stained glass, musical instruments, traditional shop signs and applied art. The 1947 set shows views of the railway stations at Rorschach, Lügen-Castiel and Flüelen.

Pro Juventute stamps are also charitable and raise funds for children's and young persons' causes. These first appeared in 1912 with the first issue showing cantonal flags followed in the 1930s and 40s by folk costume. Since then the main subject theme has been nature including birds, flowers, butterflies, animals and roses.

Transport subjects have appeared on Commemorative issues starting with 100 years of Swiss railways in 1947 depicting steam and electric locomotives of the era. The centenary of the federal post in 1949 produced stamps showing postcoaches and postbuses. A 1962 Publicity issue has the classic TEE unit and the 50th anniversary of the Lötschbergbahn was covered in 1963.

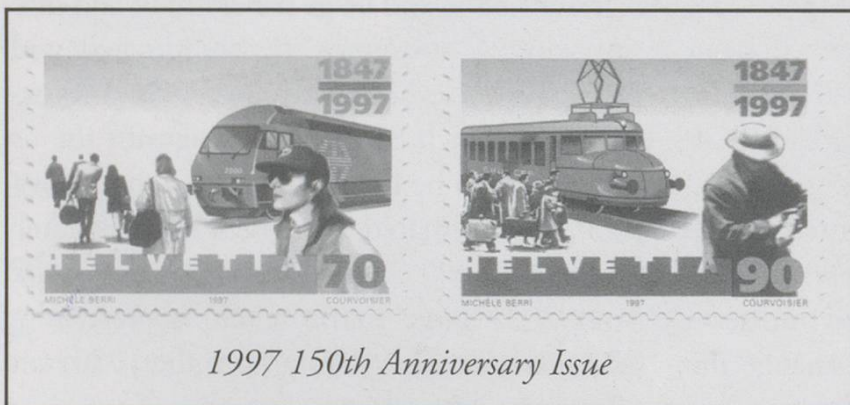


1962 Publicity Issue
Trans Europe Express

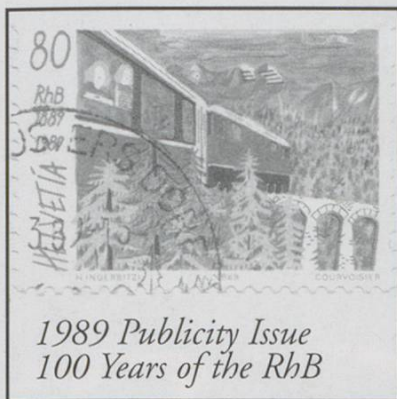


1990 Publicity Issue
Zürich S-Bahn

Subjects have also included Zürich trams and S-Bahn, 100 years of the RhB and, of course, the 150 year celebrations of 1997 which depicted trains over the years with passengers in period dress.



1997 150th Anniversary Issue



1989 Publicity Issue
100 Years of the RhB

In addition there have been air-mail series, stamps issued for use by soldiers on active service, and stamps given to charitable institutions and hospitals. Beyond that there are issues by United Nations and other Swiss based organisations. Special issues for use by mobile post offices in the 40s and 50s show postbuses of the era.



1982 100 Years of the
Gotthard Bahn

This is, of course, only the briefest introduction to a wide-ranging and absorbing subject. Swiss Post issue a free magazine called *Focus on Stamps* which is available in English from: Die Post, Briefmarken und Philatelie Kundendienst, Ostermundigenstrasse 91, CH-3030 Bern. When in Bern a visit to the PTT museum near the Historical Museum at Helvetiastrasse is highly recommended. As well as interesting post and telecommunication exhibits including a postbus "layout" and historic telephones to play on, there is a most comprehensive Swiss and world stamp collection.

Michael Farr

MORCOTE UNIQUE IN TICKET HISTORY?

Morcote is one of several attractive tourist villages around Lake Lugano in Switzerland's Ticino region. Visitors flock to see the old buildings, the arcaded souvenir shops and market stalls and the church above the village. It is not served by rail and so to reach Morcote you have to catch either one of the boats operated by Societa Navigazione del Lago di Lugano (SNL) or take a post-bus from Lugano. The SNL and their larger boats now machines capable of issuing format. This model is used transport operators and by tres. On boats without the sy paper tickets to passengers

Three piers are staffed for Gandria, Campione d'Italia rounded by Swiss soil) and

these three offices all retained a (very) limited stock of Edmondsons for the more popular journeys. All issuing points (including those with KVG) have card tickets for group travel, yellow ones for full fare and striped white and yellow for half fare.

Not only is Mr Edmondson's invention available from the small SNL ticket office adjoining the tourist bureau at Morcote but the Post Office also sells his tickets for the single journey to Lugano Paradiso or Lugano Piazza Rezzonica, although most passengers pay their fare to the driver. Surprisingly both of the examples I bought were numbered 00143; I wondered if about 140 other collectors had been there before me! (In Switzerland tickets numbered 00000 are held as specimens and not issued to passengers.)

I suggest that Morcote is the last place in the world where Edmondson cards are available from two different offices and for two different modes of transport—and, surprisingly, neither is for rail journeys. Unless, of course, you know better!



landing stages at Lugano have Autelca KVG ticket tickets in standard Swiss extensively by the smaller tourist information cen-KVG the purser sells flim-joining at unstaffed piers. at least part of the day: (an Italian enclave sur-Morcote. In autumn 2000