



"Helvetia"

SOCIETY FOR COLLECTORS OF SWITZERLAND

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Helvetia Calendar

April 20 -- Monthly meeting, Fair Lawn Arts Center, 12-56 River Road, Fair Lawn, N. J., 8 p.m. Program: A.P.S. slide program "Why Topical Collecting." Guests welcome.

Helvetia Wins BEPEX Club Awards

"I don't expect we'll ever see any other name on this?"

So said the master of ceremonies when he announced that the Helvetia Philatelic Society had won the new Reggio Skinner BEPEX Memorial Plaque, awarded to the member club that accumulated the most points for the displays of its individual members at the annual exhibit of the Association of Bergen County Philatelists last month.

His assumption was based on BEPEX's experience with its traditional club award for the best two-frame exhibit submitted by a member club. Helvetia also won this award last month--for the fifth year in a row.

Contributing to the capture of the Reggio Skinner Plaque were eight Helvetia exhibitors. They were Albert Adams, Henry and Caroline Blum, Edward Hochuli, Walter Reimann, Harlan Stone, George Wettach and Benjamin Wood. Every five years BEPEX will award permanent possession of this plaque to the club that wins it the most times during this period.

Harlan Stone won the Helvetia award, a wooden plate decorated with the 22 Swiss cantonal shields around the rim, for the best Swiss exhibit, Sitting Helvetia Specialized including proofs, color varieties and covers. Within the novice class this exhibit also won the first place medal. His second exhibit, Helvetic Republic Covers 1798-1803, won the best in section award.

Other Swiss or Liechtenstein exhibitors, all in the General Foreign Including Airmails Section of the Open Class, were:

Caroline Blum, Selected Pages From a Liechtenstein Collection,
first place medal

Albert Adams, 1939 Swiss National Exposition Issues, also Swiss
Landmarks 1934-38

Henry Blum, Selected Pages from a Swiss Collection

Edward Hochuli, Souvenir Sheets of Switzerland

Walter Reimann, Swiss Airmails and Selected Flight Covers

Among the Helvetia members who showed exhibits representing other countries in the same section, were:

Henry Blum, Sweden Specialized, best in section award

George Wettach, Dodecanese Stamps and Covers

Benjamin Wood, Denmark 1851-1938

In all, eight Helvetia members plus the society as a unit entered 12 exhibits totaling 50 out of the show's 183 frames.

Nominations Are in Order

A nominating committee, to be appointed at the April meeting, will submit nominations at the May meeting for any offices it deems necessary. The present elected offices are president, vice president, secretary, treasurer and librarian. The annual elections will take place at the June meeting. The president for 1971-72 will appoint committee chairman as needed.

At last count the society has 22 active members (those who have attended at least one meeting since last September). This number is barely enough to carry the workload associated with the society's expanding activities. Next year's projects include an open meeting at NOJEX, possibly another program at the Collectors Club of New York, club competition at BEPEX, and perhaps increased involvement with the Swiss American Stamp Society in New York. The nominating committee will consider all members, old and new, interested in running for office.

New Member

Carl G. Meiners, 201 Jefferson Ave., Staten Island, N. Y. 10306.

A Touch of Trivia

by Steve Pomex

The 30 cts. stamp of the latest Swiss release depicts a Basilisk (which, by the way, was an ancient dragon who had such phenomenally bad breath that when he opened his mouth, his enemies would drop dead--if he had only known about "Listerine!"), holding a Rayon II (10 Rp). The stamp is a miniature replica of the original Plate #23.



FORGERY DETECTION

Part I

by Steve Pomex

Over the past few years, expertization has become one of the most debated fields in philately.

There are two main categories of forgeries:

1) those items that are real to begin with, but have faked additions or subtractions. (Take, for example, the 1850 2½ Rp. Poste Locale. With the cross around the frame, this item catalogs about \$250. Whereas, if no frame encloses the cross, the item lists for about \$5,000.)

2) and those items that are total, outright fakes.

Who should make the final decision on an item? If a committee of experts comes to anything but a unanimous vote on the authenticity of a piece, should it be considered real?

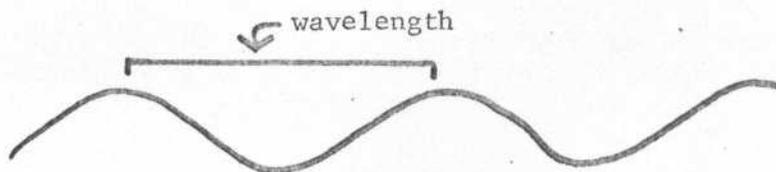
What should be done? Who can we turn to in this our time of need? Science!

Using science, several highly sophisticated techniques for forgery detection can be employed (radio-isotope and infrared photography, microscope and comparascope analysis, ultra-violet, graphic computer programs, etc.).

In this issue I shall be describing and discussing UV (ultra-violet) as being one of the foremost methods in detecting forged stamps.

Light is a form of energy (probably electromagnetic) and it travels in waves. Wave motion of any kind, in its simplest form, is defined by three quantities:

- a) Velocity of travel (V).
- b) The wavelength (λ), which is the difference between two crests (or troughs) of a wave.



- c) The frequency (n), or the number of vibrations of the wave per second.

A moment's consideration will show that these are related by the simple formula

$$V=n\lambda$$

Although the velocity of light is a constant, the wavelengths of constituent rays may vary considerably. The term "light" in fact must be regarded in a very broad sense as including not only what is apparent to our eyes, but all energy radiated in the form of electromagnetic vibrations. Without complicating matters unnecessarily, it may then be said that such vibrations are usually defined by their wavelengths.

There are four categories of light which are of interest to us at the present. Each type of light has a particular wavelength which is measured in terms of Angstroms (1 Angstrom = 10^{-8} cm.), millimeters, centimeters or meters.

1) The region of molecular and atomic dimensions - This class includes cosmic rays, gamma rays and x-rays, and it ranges between 0 (in reality, slightly greater than 0) and 140 Angstroms.

2) The ultra-violet region - UV overlaps the previous class slightly, and its range is 136-4,000 Angstroms.

3) The solar and visible region - These regions fall between .0003 and .03 millimeters. The visible region constitutes what is known as "white light," which of course is the resultant effect on the eye of the colors of the visible spectrum, violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange, and red (in order of increasing wavelength).

4) The infra-red (and heat ray) region - This extends up to about .05 centimeters.

Luminescence - UV rays have a very interesting property, in that certain substances absorb them (the rays) and can re-emit them. The UV lamp is merely a measuring device for these re-emitted rays. Each substance by virtue of its different composition emits a characteristic wavelength of light.

From the following discussion of light, the application of UV in the detection of forged stamps should be readily seen.

An outright fake item can easily be compared to a genuine piece, in that the wavelengths of the paper and inks used for the fake can never exactly match those of the original.

In the case of additions or subtractions (i.e., cancellations, repairs, regumming, etc.), the foreign products used in cleaning stamps (magnesia, chlorine-sodium, ethyl solutions, etc.) also register with very different wavelengths. Note Figures A & B.

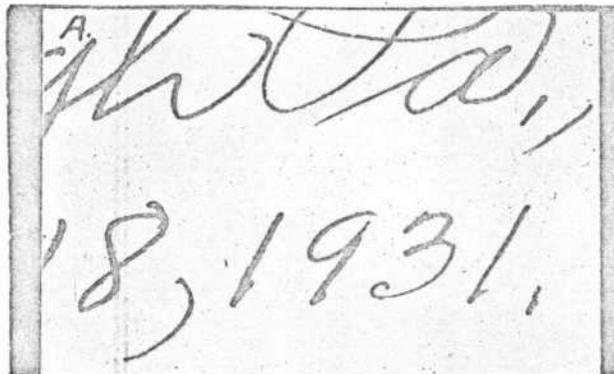


Fig. A shows an enlarged portion of a cover under ordinary light (visible spectrum)

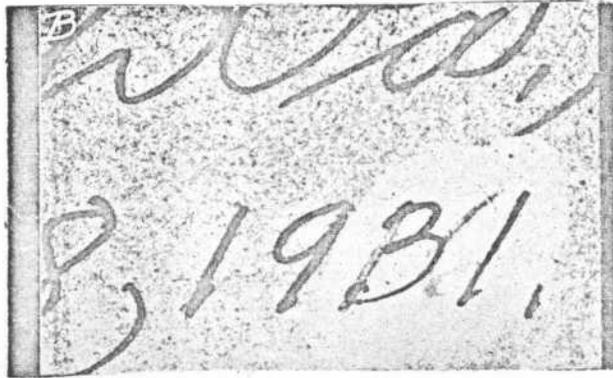


Fig. B shows the same enlargement under UV light. Note how the original date (16) has been removed and replaced by 31.

Most commercial UV lamps are by no means sureshot indicators of forgeries. Often if the addition of a mark is relatively small (such as the frame around the cross) and the wavelength of the material used to make the addition is in close approximation to the wavelength of the original ink, no variation can be detected. And so a more sophisticated UV lamp must be employed.

Fortunately, the greater forgers of the past paid little attention to the properties of light, wavelengths, etc.

But what of the modern forger? He has access to chemicals which can, to a very high degree, duplicate the inks and papers of the originals.

Well, in Part II of this series we shall explore another scientific method for forgery detection.

And if our modern forger can wheedle his fakes through this method, we shall try to catch him in Part III, and then once again in Part IV. If he manages to squeeze by all of these methods, all I can say is that he deserves every penny he gets for selling his material. (Think about how much his mother must have spent on his education.)