"Helvetia"

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Helvetia Calendar

May 18 -- Monthly meeting, Fair Lawn Arts Center, 12-56 River Road, Fair Lawn, N. J., 8 p.m. Program: Helvetic Republic Covers 1798-1803 by Harlan Stone.

Nominating Committee to Announce Slate

Steve Pomex, Walter Reimann and Lou Weinhofer were appointed to a nominating committee last month to select a slate of Helvetia officers for 1971-72. They will announce nominations at the May 18 meeting for all elective offices. The elections will be held at the June meeting. The successful candidates will take office at once so they can use the summer months to prepare for the next year of activities.

News Briefs

Two Helvetia members served as judges last month, Henry Blum at Bloompex in Bloomfield and Ben Wood at Wespex in Westfield, both local New Jersey club exhibits.

Herbert Du Russel, founder of the Swiss American Stamp Society, expects to announce soon the reorganization of a New York Chapter with meetings at the Sloan House YMCA in Manhattan.

A recent analysis of the collecting interests of American Philatelic Society members, according to the most recent membership directory, places Switzerland 12th on the list with 320 collectors interested in this country.

A Touch of Trivia by Steve Pomex

Speaking of Topicals (ugh!) as we did at the April meeting, Switzerland was the first country to make a stamp with a religious motto. Pictured here is the left half of a "Double Geneva." Notice the letters "JHS" directly above the middle of the scroll. They stand for "Jesus Hominum Salvator" or "Jesus Saviour of Mankind." The scroll itself bears the words "Post Tenebras Lux" or "After darkness light." So don't forget to remind all your friends who collect religion as a topic that their collections are not complete without an unused copy of the Double Geneva.

Forgery Detection
Part II

by Steve Pomex

In this issue I shall be discussing the micrometer and comparator and their application in detecting forged stamps.

The micrometer is a device which can be used to measure paper thickness. It takes quite a bit of experience before one can use this instrument properly. The area displaced by an item between the two barrels is read on the gauge.

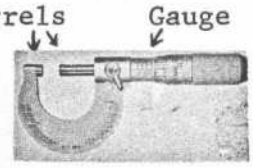

Fig. 1

The micrometers that I am using are accurate to 1/10,000th of an inch. If you are planning to buy a micrometer, be sure to get one with a millimeter scale (inches are a hassle). The micrometer can be used to classify stamps where the design is partially blocked by a heavy cancellation. For many of the Swiss classics I have an average range thickness reading (see Table I). If for example I measure a classic and its reading is far different from my average readings, it can be assumed that the item might be fake. Thickness determinations can also be used to separate different printings of some forged items. (For instance, a copy was printed in 1922, and a second printing, using the same plates, was made in 1930. On the basis of the assumption that different paper stocks were used, I would be able to classify the two copies by their thickness.)

This method is obviously open to much speculation and criticism, but I find it quite satisfactory as a preliminary step.

Table I

Average thickness readings for a few classics (in mm.). To be used only as an informal guide.

Thin = .04-.06
Medium = .06-.08
Thick = .08-.10

Neuchatel = Thin
Winterthur = Thick
2½ Rp. = Thin
Rayon I = thin-medium
Rayon II = thin-medium
Rayon III = thick

The comparator is a short magnifying tube with a triplet lense.

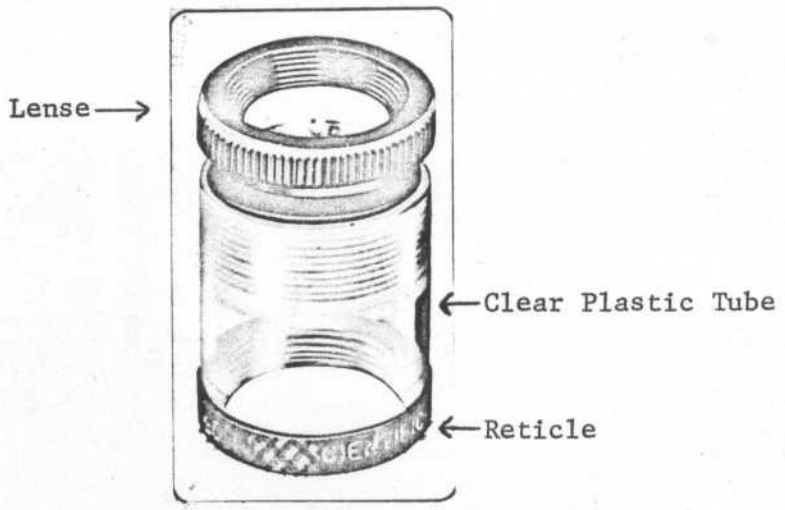

Fig. 2

The barrel is clear plastic in order to let the light come in. The comparator is used in conjunction with a reticle.

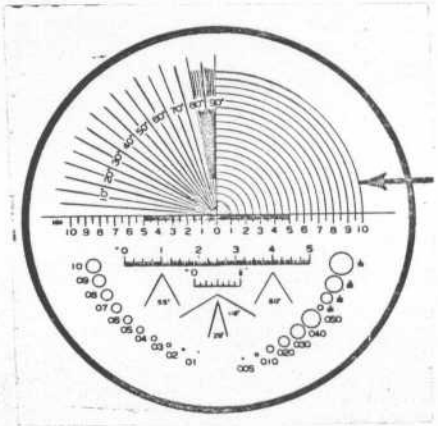

Fig. 3

The reticle is a circular glass disc with measuring fields etched into it, and it attaches to the bottom of the comparator. The reticle is made up of several scales for easy measuring. The one shown above has a mm. scale ranging from 10-0 and 0-10 in halves and tenths of mm. It also has circumference, ray and angle scales.

The use of the comparator and reticle should be quite obvious, but I think that a quick example is in order.

Using a Rayon II stamp for an example, I have a series of different measurements for each of the 40 different stamps on a plate, besides basic length and width readings. I rely quite heavily on relationship readings. Here (see Fig. 4) is an enlarged section of the Rayon II plate position #40, with angle determinations of the relative position of the numeral 10. Note how the 10 falls between 20 and 50 degrees, using the lower left corner as the reference point.

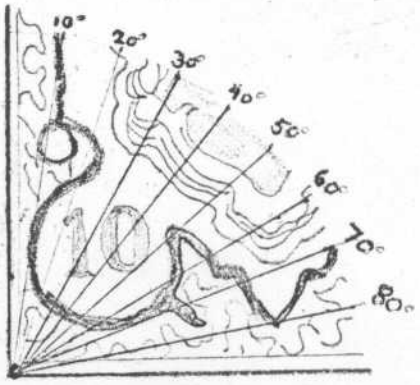

Fig. 4

Part III will include the microscope and polarized light and their application for forgery detection.