

The Cover Story

What is Hiding in Your Philatelic Treasure Chest?

by Phil Fettig

Over the years I have had the pleasure of writing many articles. Do not for one second think I am an organized writer. With the exception of -- the series on philatelic purchases, almost everything else has been the result of the editor calling me for help and I find something. I usually find it in a box or pile of items I kept meaning to work up. I know I am not the only one with unknown treasures hiding somewhere. Admit it – you probably have things you forgot or do not even know what they are.

When invited into a collector's home to view a potential purchase many times such a box is proudly and/or hopefully presented in the belief philatelic treasures are contained within! Alas, most times that is not the case. Two years ago, I made a trip into northern Orange County to look at what was described as two boxes of a late family member's really nice stamp collection. Sadly, that was not the case. I made two piles and advised them to donate one to a thrift shop of a worthy organization and deposit the rest in the trash. Oh, wait a minute – I forgot to mention the 9"x 11" sized envelope at the bottom that had some things in it. That is where I found the treasures – not a tremendous grouping, but I paid them enough maybe for a tank of gas or a trip to buy groceries.

I am not a student of German States Philately so I will need forgiveness from those who are! Like most parts of Germany, the Frankfurt Rhine-Main area has a rich history of changes in name and forms of governing authority. For the purpose of this article, we are looking at the Grand Duchy of Hesse during 1912. Also, please note that 1912 was in the very early years of aviation development.

In 1912, the infant mortality rate was 15% in the State of Hessen. The Hessen Royal Family organized a charity drive with Her Royal Highness Grand Duchess Eleanor von Hessen [**Figure A1 on front cover**] serving as the driving force. She, and Grand Duke Ernst made a guarantee of 50,000 marks to start the fund, with more to be raised by a Postcard Week. The additional funds were raised by preparing stamps and postcards to be flown during the fund raiser on the airship 'Schwaben' or the airplane 'Gelber Hun'. **Figure A2 (on front cover)** shows a flown postcard with one of the 10pf stamps in the middle. The card is titled "Official Postcard" and "Postcard Week of the Grand Duchess".

This event, from June 10–23, 1912, is considered by many to be one of the first official airmail related events ever held. There are also two noteworthy footnotes to this story. If you know your U.S. History, you are aware that Great Britain used soldiers during the Revolutionary War who were called "Hessians". Those troops came from this part of Germany. Also, while an early airplane aided the Duchess in her charity efforts, one also led to her death in a 1937 crash. A third, not so noteworthy event, was the birth of my Paternal Grandfather, further up the Rhine River on July 6, 1876.

The second item from this group is a postcard with a story behind it. In 1917, a German publisher by the name of Paul Koch went into a partnership and started a company to print supplies for stamp collectors. You may have owned, or at least seen their 1st product – Springback Binders. The product line was soon expanded to include stamp albums with the brand name of "KA-BE". You can still find that name although the company title changed again much later and is now called "Leuchtturm". You will probably recognize it easier as "Lighthouse"!

German postal authorities did not issue a stamp to commemorate the October 1, 1937 Day of the Stamp event. However, the KA-BE album printers purchased 3,000 sheets of a 3pf Hindenburg Head stamp. They coated every other stamp with a white coating and printed two different advertising labels alternated between the

official stamps. They used these labels to mail the advertising card shown in **Figure A3**. I am sorry to say, both for myself and the couple I purchased this material from, this particular card does not have the advertising label used with the postage. It does however have the image of one of the labels printed in the upper left corner as seen in **Figure A4**. Needless to say, this advertising effort did not please the German Post Office and laws were soon written to put an end to such efforts.

Figure A3



So, even though this card did not end up being what I hoped, it was still fun doing the research and the real point confirmed is that it is fun digging through philatelic mishmash as you never know where you will end!

I have enjoyed writing for this newsletter and, while in no way did I work as hard as the editor, I am ready to put it to rest for a while.

[Editor's note: It is with profound gratitude that I thank Phil for all his contributions over the years. He has been the one person that I have been able to count on to always produce an article as needed for this newsletter. Without his dedication this publication would have been a much thinner and less interesting read every month. It is my sincere wish that Phil and others will continue to support this effort as it moves to a quarterly schedule starting in July.]

