

Richard Schäfer: Swiss cantonal stamps 1 March 1843 to 30 September 1854 Frankings - Rarities

Richard Schäfer, the eminent collector of Switzerland and author of many works on Swiss postal history, deals in his latest book with frankings and rarities of Swiss cantonal stamps from 1 March 1843 to 30 September 1854. The book is published in collaboration with the Corinphila Auktionen AG, Zurich auction house, which in its own right has an exhaustive list of these issues.

The author has been studying Swiss postal history for decades and he focuses on the area of cantonal stamps with data (the number of surviving covers) and all the stamps known to this day, tariffs and rare frankings. He has long been interested in the question of how many covers survive in relation to the known print figures.

His work "Postal History of Geneva" appeared in 2006. In addition to the section dealing with the pre-philatelic period from the mid-17th century until the issue of the first Geneva stamps, the author also predominantly studied its cantonal post and the first federal stamps. He noted that the print figures could, in part, not be correct. He collected all the covers known at this time and gave an overview of their usage and postmarks. Thereby the possibility arose of rarities that so far had not been recorded, or which had been too vaguely studied, as well as mixed frankings, covers from or to other cantons, or abroad. Likewise he studied and recorded particular types of mail (printed matter, registered, cash on delivery, weight steps, surcharges, etc.) and particular postmarks, with the intention to make this available as a source of information for interested collectors, dealers and experts. The work was very well received, but one criticism was that the rarest covers and frankings were listed only as numbers, without details of the dates, origins/destinations, rates etc. Another criticism was that the author did not deal thoroughly with valuing the covers, as he had done earlier with the pre-philatelic period.

He also had a desire to take the study further, and to extend it to the cantonal stamps of Zurich and Basle, as well as the first federal stamps. All of these desires and suggestions have now been met with the "Handbuch über Frankaturen – Seltenheiten der Schweizer Kantonalmarken" (Handbook of Frankings - Rarities of Swiss Cantonal Stamps) which is now available. Volume II dealing with the subject of the first federal stamps and Volume III dealing with international frankings 1843-1854 are in course of preparation.

The present book comprises three main chapters on the cantonal posts of Switzerland, that is, the cantonal posts of Zurich, Geneva and Basle. In addition to a comprehensive introduction with a glossary, the reader is presented with a detailed review of the various types of franking such as single stamps on cover, pairs and larger blocks, mixed frankings, overseas frankings and other rarities. These are presented with approximately 300 illustrations showing a selection of the rarest covers and combinations of stamps. At the end is an Appendix with valuation tables, a bibliography and a listing of the most prominent collectors of Swiss cantonal stamps.

Each individual cantonal stamp issue, beginning with the Zurich 4 and Zurich 6 up to the "Basle dove" is uniformly and systematically documented according to the following scheme: the reason for the stamp issue and its historical background, its commonness (types of usage), rates, colour illustrations of all the postmarks used, rare covers including valuations. The collector-researcher finds a wealth of information on each issue, with regard to the print figures and also the postage rates, which at that time were, in part, very complex, causing headaches in regard to their interpretation. In view of this the author has tried, in the light of his own experience and also the Corinphila data, to create an assessment system so that the collector can have an idea of how to classify a particular issue in regard to its value.

The work is not only a "must" for "Old Switzerland" specialists and collectors, but also for a wider circle of interested collectors, because they will find a wealth of information that also relates to other collecting areas.

Neither Richard Schäfer as the author, nor Corinphila as publisher of the book make any claim that it is complete, but the work is intended to give the collector an overview of the frankings and rarities. The tables in this guide are therefore purposefully designed so that your own notes and additions are possible. The book should therefore be a guide and a tool in the truest sense of the word!

Source: Corinphila Auktionen AG, Wiesenstrasse 8, 8034 Zurich; Info@corinphila.ch; CHF 139.00 incl. VAT plus postage & packing.