Castellum

President's Message
by Gary Little

In this issue of *Castellum* you will find a brief article on Vauban, the famous French military engineer who left his imprint on the fortress of Luxembourg over 300 years ago. It may interest you to know that earlier this year the Luxembourg City Tourist Office inaugurated a new tour called "The Vauban Circular walk." It guides a visitor through many historic sites in Luxembourg City and vicinity, including those with a connection to Vauban. Visit the LCTO web site at **www.luxembourg-city.lu/touristinfo/** to find a printable tour brochure and map.

For those interested in more recent history, I note that September 10 marks the 55th anniversary of the liberation of Luxembourg from the Nazis during World War II. Related to this topic is this interesting commemorative card used in 1954 to mark the 10th anniversary of the liberation:
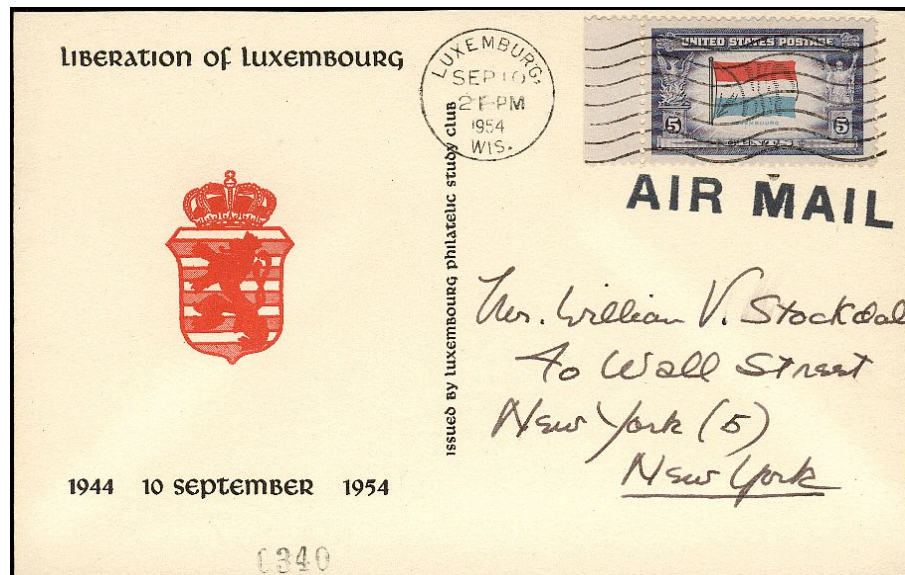
Note that this card is franked with the Luxembourg flag stamp of 1943 and was postmarked on September 10, 1954 in Luxemburg, Wisconsin. It was a creation of the old Luxembourg Philatelic Study Club which published a journal called *Luxembourg Philatelist* from 1950 to 1965. This journal is a valuable source of Luxembourg philatelic information in the English language. The American Philatelic Research Library (**www.stamps.org**) has a complete set that its members may borrow.

World's First Postmark to Honor a Sporting Event
by Gary Little

In 1909 an international gymnastic competition was held in Luxembourg-Ville. To publicize the competition, a unique special event postmark was created and used by the Luxembourg post office. The postmark reads as follows:

<div align="center">

Luxembourg-Ville
IVe Tournoi
International de Gymnastique
1er Août 1909

</div>

Recently, I was fortunate enough to acquire a copy of this rare postmark on a picture postcard franked with the 2c coat of arms definitive of the era. Here is an image of the stamp and postmark:

The postmark has popular thematic appeal, but what makes it particularly interesting is that it is apparently the first cancellation *in the world* used to promote a sporting event.

Use of this cancellation is yet another philatelic first for Luxembourg to go along with the use of money collection envelopes in 1877 and the issuance of the world's first souvenir sheet. [Luxembourg's 1923 sheet of one stamp (Scott 151, Prifix Bloc 1A) usually takes this latter honor although a better choice would seem to be the 1891 miniature sheets of 25 of the 10c and 25c Grand Duke Adolphe definitives (Scott 60a/Prifix 59b, Scott 63a/Prifix 62a). Regardless of the choice, Luxembourg places first.]

References:

Almanach Centilux (1952), p. 10.
From the Winged Heels of Mercury by Zaven M. Seron, M.D. (1984), pp. 173-4.

Luxembourg Money Collection Envelopes
by Leon G. Stadtherr

In May 1877 the Luxembourg Post Office was authorized to collect money for party "A" (sender) from party "B" (addressee) to settle an indebtedness. For this purpose Money Collection Envelopes were issued. From 1877 to 1882 these envelopes were imprinted with a red 30 centimes Coat-of-Arms stamp in the upper right corner. The imprinted stamp was of the same design as the imperforate, rouletted, and perforated 30 centimes Coat-of-Arms postage stamps of the era.
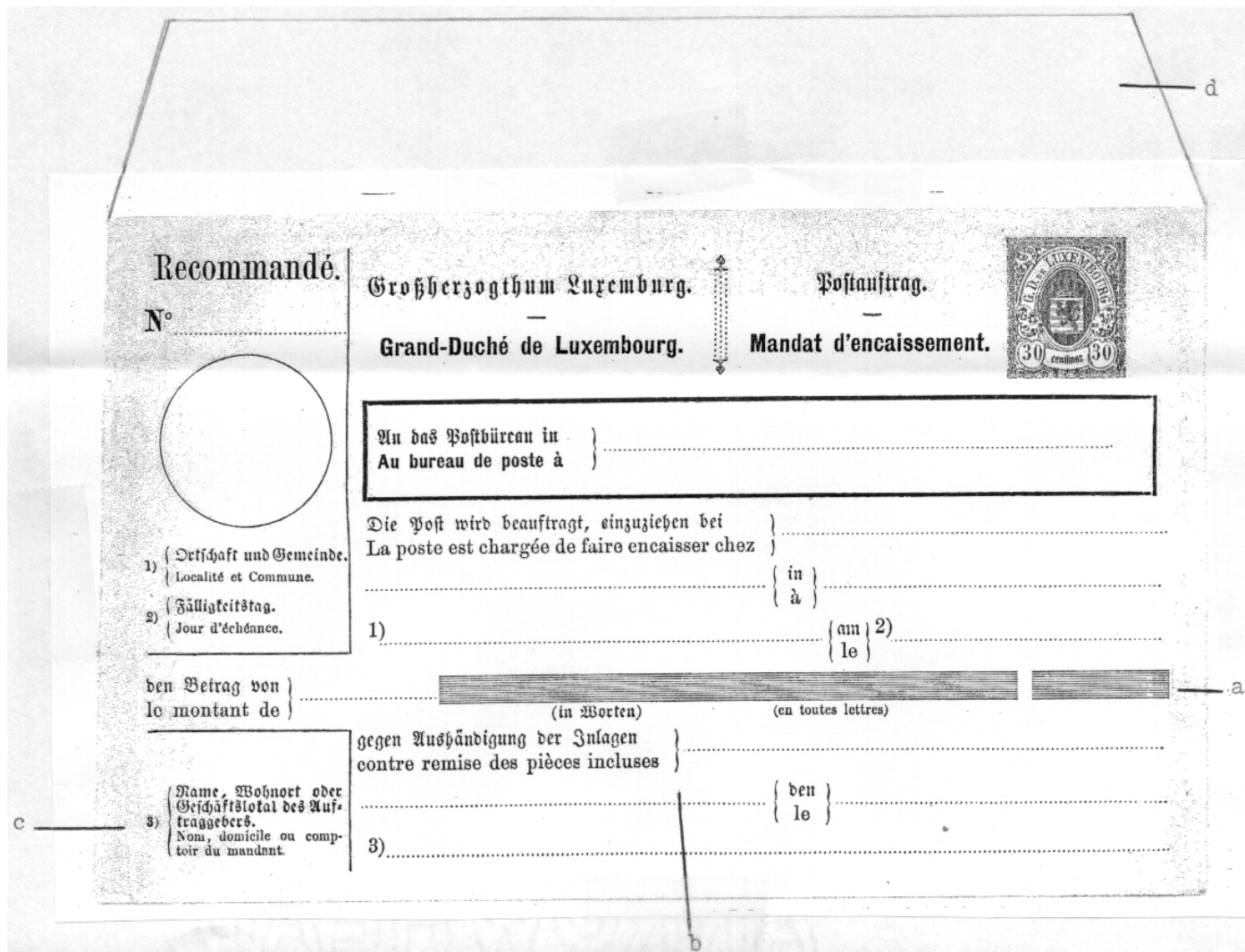
*A Luxembourg money collection envelope. The features marked with **a**, **b**, **c**, and **d** can be used to distinguish between printing varieties (see text).*

Seven printings of these envelopes are known. The various printings can be easily distinguished:

10 raster lines (a):
- brace missing after *Inlagen* (b) — first printing
- 3 lines indented in instruction 3 (c) — third printing
- lines not indented (c); with brace (b) — second printing

8 raster lines (a):   fourth printing

12 raster lines (a):
- large first "a" in *mandant*, instruction 3 — fifth printing
- large second "a"; backflap 150 mm long (d) — sixth printing
- large second "a"; backflap 133 mm long (d) — seventh printing

Close examination of the various printings shows that they fall into three main groups of type settings. The first, with 10 raster lines, has very thick braces. The second, with 8 raster lines, has thinner braces than the first. Also, some braces and lines of type are moved relative to the first setting, the length of "Grand-Duché de Luxembourg" at the top of the form is 42 mm, the two lines of text in the box are different lengths, and the "P" of "Post" in the box is capitalized. And the third, with 12 raster lines, has thinner braces than the second. Again, some braces and lines of

type are moved relative to the first and the second settings, the length of "Grand-Duché…" is 47 mm, the two lines of text in the box are the same length, the style of digits 1 and 2 differ between the instruction and the text, and the word *comptoir* in instruction 3 is hyphenated.

All seven printings are found on both horizontal and vertical striated paper (*papier vergé*). The striations appear as parallel lines when the envelope is held up to a light source, much like a watermark in appearance. Printing proofs are known for the first (see Reference 3) and fifth printings. They are on unstriated paper without flaps, folds, or gum.

Very few unused envelopes have survived and even fewer printing proofs. If the addressee did pay the postman the amount requested by the sender, the postal service retained the envelope. Later these envelopes were destroyed. Therefore, most of the money collection envelopes found in collections today are those refused by the addressee or returned to the sender for some other reason.

The following table lists the published dates of issue of each printing and the earliest and latest dates of use I have seen for each printing. Please let the editor know if you have any earlier or later dates of use in your collection.

Printing	Date of Issue	Earliest Use	Latest Use
First	3 Oct 1877	13 Jul 1878*	5 Oct 1880
Second	30 Jan 1878 and 7 Mar 1878	6 Dec 1877+	21 Sep 1878+
Third	19 Feb 1879	13 May 1879+	26 Jun 1880*
Fourth	20 Feb 1880	26 Jun 1880+	4 Nov 1881
Fifth	30 Nov 1880	11 Feb 1881+	8 Sep 1883+
Sixth	22 Feb 1881	18 Jun 1881#	18 Dec 1883
Seventh	20 Jan 1882	24 Oct 1881	14 Nov 1883+

    * - in the Ed Jarvis collection   + - in the Allan Wichelman collection
    # - in the Gary Little collection   (Others are in the Leon Stadtherr collection.)

Thanks to fellow LCC member Allan F. Wichelman for the envelope illustration used herein and the use of his envelopes to aid in compiling the data shown in the table. Thanks also to Ed Jarvis for sharing information on envelopes in his collection.

References:

• Association des Collectionneurs d'Entiers Postaux, *Catalogue des entiers postaux de Luxembourg*. French Postal History Society ACEP (Paris), 19??, pp. 48-53 (in French).

• *Higgins & Gage Priced Catalogue of Postal Stationery of the World*, edited by Edward Fladung, First edition 1966, p. 11 of Luxembourg section (in English).

• J.B. Moens, *Timbres du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg*, Second edition 1879, pp. 103-6 (in French).

The Story of the "Un Pranc" Error of 1879
by Robert C. Danzer

*Luxembourg "Un Franc" issue of 1879
(Scott 39, Prifix 36, Michel 36).*

During a period of austerity in 1875, the Luxembourg Post Office reached an all-time low when it awarded a contract to a local printer named Bruck to print the Armoiries issue, this time with perforations. He made new plates from the worn plates of the rouletted issue. For the next five years stamps were produced from corroded plates with defective perforations and poor centering on cheap paper.

Bruck was instructed to reprint the obsolete 37 1/2c stamp so that it could be surcharged "Un Franc" to save the cost of making a new plate for a much needed higher denomination value. Due to sloppy typesetting of the surcharge, two stamps in each sheet of 100, at positions #27 and #77, were erroneously surcharged "Un Pranc".

The stamps were put on sale and a few days later the errors were discovered, but not before some had been sold. The Post Office immediately recalled all the unsold sheets and proceeded to remove the errors from each sheet by hand. Thus "Un Pranc" became Luxembourg's rarest stamp.

*Luxembourg "Un Pranc" error
(Scott 39a; Prifix 36a; Michel 36a).
This specimen is in the collection of the
Luxembourg P&T Museum.*

It was not long before forgers got hold of some of the elusive 37 1/2c stamps and proceeded to surcharge them with "Un Pranc" using the exact same type face.

But there is a sure fire way to detect the fakes. The plates of the 37 1/2c stamps were so badly corroded, that each stamp in the sheet can be plated. Unless the surcharge is printed on stamp #27 or #77 in the sheet it is obviously a fake.

When I presented my badly thinned Un Pranc stamp to Herbert Bloch many years ago, he went directly to the Philatelic Foundation files, pulled out the two genuine copies of #27 and #77 and compared mine to them using a strong magnifier. My copy was identical to #77 in the sheet.

Since I discovered my copy in a beat up old collection I bought for $10, I was delighted to know that I had the real thing, even a badly thinned one.

Luxembourg's Earliest Known First Day Cover
by Robert C. Danzer

The earliest known first day cover from Luxembourg is a 5c Allegory postcard franked with the complete set of Adolphe profile stamps (1c, 2c, 4c, 5c, 10c) issued on May 4, 1895 (Scott 70-4; Prifix 69-73). I spotted this item in a Swiss auction over 20 years ago and was the successful bidder at $USA 500. I submitted it to André Ungeheuer of Banque du Timbre in Luxembourg who listed it in the next Prifix catalog where it now has a valuation of LUF 20,000.

After all these years this cover seems to be unique. It really wasn't until 1921 and the advent of special semi-postal sets that first day covers were commonly created by collectors.

Luxembourg's earliest known first day cover. It is franked with the five
Adolphe profile issues of May 4, 1895 (Scott 70-4; Prifix 69-73; Michel 67-71).

Editor's Note: I have in my collection a 1915 first day cover for two of the William IV surcharged values (Scott 95-6; Prifix 87-8). I found it in a Scandinavian dealer's bargain box at Pacific 97. Here it is:

FDC for the William IV surcharges of 24-April-1915. (Photo reduced.)

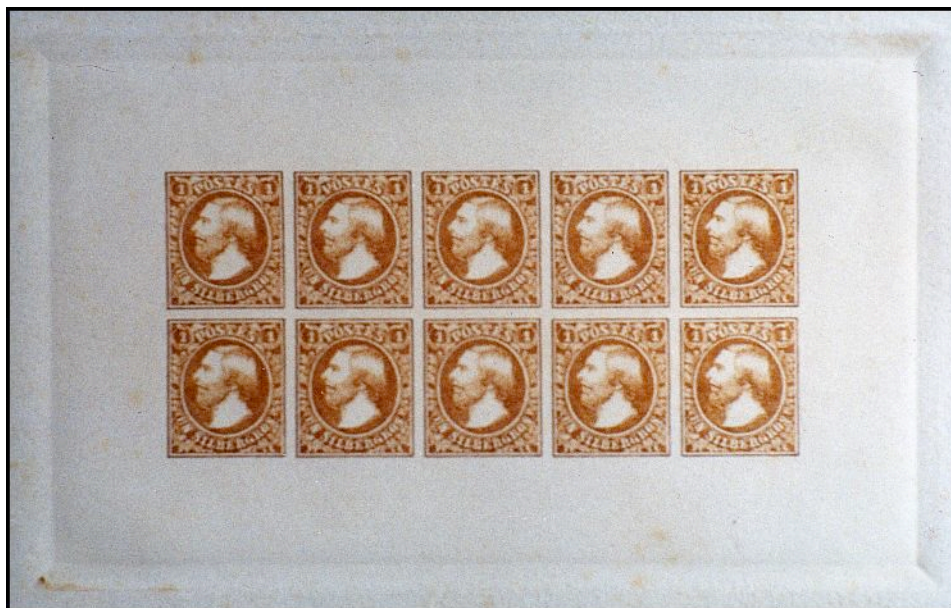# Luxembourg #2: The 1906 Sheetlet of 10 Reprint
by Robert C. Danzer

The last official printing of Luxembourg's first two postage stamps of 1852, the 10 centimes and one silbergros values featuring a portrait of William III, took place in 1858. These stamps were superceded the following year by the coat-of-arms or *Armoiries* stamp. In 1863, the Post Office sold the four original steel printing plates (two plates of 50 for each value), after hastily defacing them, to a photographer in Diekirch for 480 francs. These plates were acquired over 40 years later, in early 1906, by a business agent named F.G. Majerus who had also managed to acquire the remaining stock of original watermarked paper used for printing the 1852 stamps.

The enterprising Majerus was able to clean up the rusted and defaced plates to the extent that 13 of the 10 centimes values and three of the one silbergros values could be printed with clear impressions. He printed approximately 6,004 copies of the 10 centimes value and 3,574 copies of the one silbergros value in early 1906 and advertised the reprints for sale at the price of 7.50 francs for the pair. The reprints are quite deceptive, of course, since they use the same watermarked paper as the originals and come from the original plates.

Majerus also created sheetlets of 10 of the one silbergros stamp at the same time as his 1906 reprints. This story goes beyond Luxembourg because he was also reproducing rare stamps from other countries in the same format.

Majerus was a skilled artistic printer who may have produced these attractive sheetlets for his own pleasure or perhaps to please prestigious clients. Few dealers are aware of the existence of these little gems. According to Raymond Goebel of Soluphil, sheetlets are also known for the 10 centimes value (Luxembourg #1). All of the sheetlets are extremely scarce.

Here is how the sheetlets were presumably made. The ingenious Majerus selected one cliché in each plate of 200 that showed the least damage and wear. After cleaning it, carefully removing most of the defects, he then used it to engrave the die sunk sheetlet of 10. Thus all stamps are identical and all show the same almost invisible plate defects.

Majerus' sheetlet of 10 of Luxembourg #2, the Un Silbergros portrait of William III.
This sheetlet was created in 1906 from a cliché taken from the original printing plates. (Photo reduced.)

Vauban and the Fortress of Luxembourg
## by Gary Little

Sébastien Le Prestre de Vauban (1633-1707).

In the late 17th century, King Louis XIV of France, the famous Sun King, was eager to expand his territories and reinforce his fortresses, particularly in the northeast region where natural defenses were weakest. Louis had coveted the important fortress of Luxembourg for many years, but sieges in 1682 and again in 1683 had to be abandoned. In the spring of 1684, however, yet another siege — this one directed by his master military engineer Sébastien Le Prestre de Vauban — was successful and the town surrendered to Marshal Créqui of the French army on June 4.

Vauban (1633-1707) was a brilliant innovator who became a royal engineer at age 22 and quickly made his name as an expert on how to design fortresses to defend against attack. By the end of his 50-year career he had been involved in about 300 fortress projects. His skills also provided the French army with valuable insight on how to successfully lay siege to fortresses such as Luxembourg.

Between 1685 and 1688, using the services of thousands of French laborers, Vauban began reinforcing the captured Luxembourg fortress by constructing additional forts and redoubts, particularly in the defensively weak areas of the Pfaffenthal valley. The results of some of his projects are still visible today, having survived the partial dismantling of the fortifications ordered by the Treaty of London in 1867.
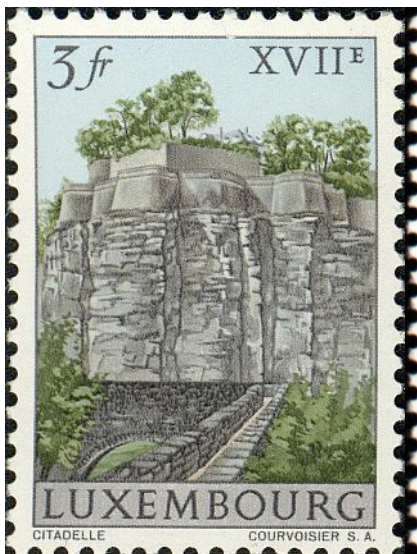
Holy Ghost Citadel (1963 stamp).

Vauban tower in Pfaffenthal (1986 stamp).

One example is the Holy Ghost Citadel, located atop the southeast cliff of the upper town, which is today a park. Another is the pair of towers, with distinctive pyramidal roofs, connected by a long footbridge which crosses the Alzette River in Pfaffenthal near the point where the massive Grand Duchess Charlotte Bridge passes overhead.

Barracks built by Vauban near the Holy Ghost Citadel and on the Rham Plateau in the Grund also still exist. The four identical barracks buildings in the Grund today serve as the State Home for Retired People.

This first French domination of Luxembourg was a brief one. A nine year war between France and the Grand Alliance ended in 1697 with the Treaty of Rijswijk. One of the terms of the treaty was that France was to return Luxembourg to Spain and she complied by evacuating the fortress on January 28, 1698. But even though the French were in control for less than 14 years, Vauban's projects serve as a lasting reminder of this traumatic period in Luxembourg history.