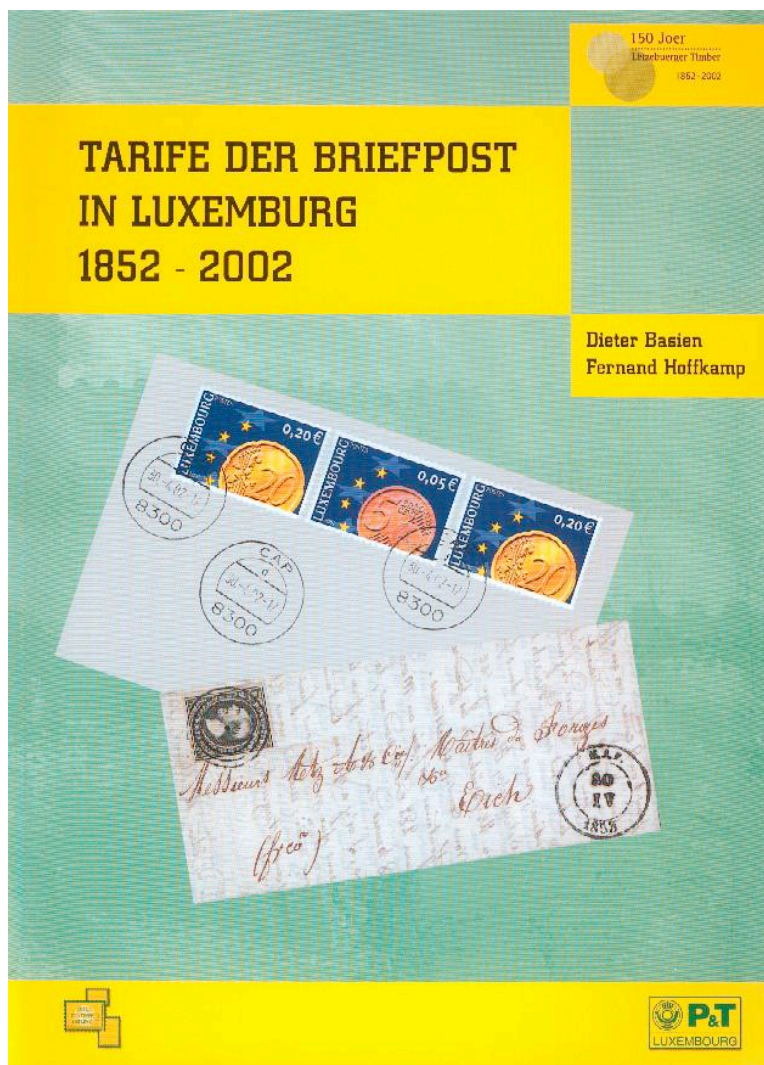# Castellum

President's Message
by Gary Little

An important new book has just been published which will thrill collectors of Luxembourg rate covers.

It is *Tarife der Briefpost in Luxemburg 1852-2002*, a comprehensive analysis of Luxembourg postal rates from the first use of postage stamps in 1852 to the present day. The book, written by Luxembourgers Dieter Basien and Fernand Hoffkamp, is 216 pages long and is written in German. An English reader will find it easy to decipher the many rate tables provided.

A book on this topic is long overdue. The Luxembourg Philatelic Study Group published Charles Rousseau's *Evolution of Postal Rates in Luxembourg* in 1953. This publication covered only the most common rate classes and not the more interesting ones — airmail, special delivery, and insurance rates, for example. The latter are all covered in *Tarife*. There is also useful information on postage due policies and international reply coupons.

Tarife is available for 22 €, postpaid, from P&T Luxembourg, Office des Timbres, L-2992 Luxembourg. Well worth the price.

Tarife der Briefpost in Luxemburg 1852-2002, by Dieter Basien & Fernand Hoffkamp

Luxemburg, Saskatchewan Postmark
by Gary Little

I recently discovered yet another Luxembourg-themed postmark to add to my collection, this one from Canada. It is for the hamlet of Luxemburg, Saskatchewan, which had its own postmark from 1906-1913 before being amalgamated with nearby Hafford. I don't have any pre-World War I population statistics, but Luxemburg, located in northern Saskatchewan between Saskatoon and North Battleford, was likely very small. I have no doubt that this is the rarest of the North American Luxembourg postmarks, far less common than the Luxemburg / Luxembourg / Luxemburgh postmarks used in the more populated American states of Michigan, Iowa, and Minnesota, as I've described in previous issues of *Castellum*.

Luxemburg, Saskatchewan (Canada) postmark dated September 6, 1912.

This style of Canadian postmark is referred to as a "split-ring" postmark. The top arc of the ring has the town name (*Luxemburg*) and the bottom arc has the abbreviation of the province name (*Sask*). In the center of the ring is the date: SP 6, for September 6, on the first line, and 12, for 1912, on the second line.

I believe I have now found all Luxembourg-themed postmarks from North America. Although three other towns named Luxemburg exist, I don't believe any of them had postmarks. They are:

- Luxemburg, Ontario (near Stratford)
- Luxemburg, Mississippi (Issaquena County)
- Luxemburg, New Jersey (now part of Wharton)

A Walk Around the Bock, Part 1

by Gary Little

In this article I describe a walking tour of the historic Bock district of old Luxembourg City, illustrated by Luxembourg's postage stamps. This is a compact tour that can be covered easily in one hour and it provides a glimpse of the most ancient parts of the city.

*The Bock as it appears today
(1963 stamp).*

*Lucilinburhuc Castle in the 10th century
(1969 stamp).*

1 The best place to begin exploring Luxembourg City is from the historic promontory of the Bock. This rugged piece of rock, easily accessible from the eastern side of the old town, is the cradle of not only the City of Luxembourg, but also of the entire Grand Duchy. Magnificent views of the vestiges of the medieval fortress of Luxembourg await you from atop this narrow finger of rock high above a tight loop of the Alzette river. They deserve a long, admiring look.

From here you can see the ancient lower towns of Pfaffenthal and the Grund far below, the stone arches of the 19th century railway bridges, and the modern European Center on the Kirchberg Plateau. Skillful highlighting of the ancient fortifications by powerful floodlights enhances the views at night.

It was on April 12, 963 A.D. that Sigefroi, a count of the Ardennes, founded Luxembourg by acquiring the Bock and surrounding lands from the St. Maximin Abbey of Trier.

At the time, the Bock was the site of an old Roman watchtower in ruins called *Lucilinburhuc,* but Sigefroi soon built a formidable new castle with the same name to protect his nearby domains. Over the centuries, the name *Lucilinburhuc* mutated into Luxembourg.

For the next 500 years, the House of Luxembourg founded by Sigefroi played an important role in the history of Europe. The descendants of Sigefroi included four Holy Roman Emperors, four Kings of Bohemia, and a King of Hungary.

By the middle of the 16th century, however, *Lucilinburhuc* had become mere rubble, the victim of too much damage caused by too many invaders and attackers over 600 years. Out of the rubble, King Philippe II of Spain built a small fort which was later expanded and strengthened from 1684-1697 by the famous French military architect

Vauban following a successful siege by the French army of Louis XIV.

The Austrians gained control of Luxembourg in 1714 and from 1737-1746 they built a vast network of underground tunnels, called *casemates*, in the Bock rock, significantly extending earlier tunnels built in the 17th century by the Spanish and French. The casemates were used to shelter soldiers, horses, kitchens, and workshops. In addition, many loopholes were built on either side of the Bock to serve as cannon placements. Since 1933, 17 km of the casemates have been open to the public and they are now a very popular tourist attraction.

The Bock in 1867 before the dismantlement of Luxembourg's fortifications (1967 stamp).

By the Congress of Vienna of 1815 the Austrians were gone and the King of The Netherlands was granted ownership of Luxembourg. Nevertheless, a Prussian garrison was permitted to manage the fortress and to continue reinforcing the Bock and area.

The stronger the Luxembourg fortress became, the more it was coveted by the great powers of Europe in the 19th century, particularly France and Prussia. France's attempt to acquire it from the King of The Netherlands in the early 1860s almost led to a war with Prussia, but the dispute was avoided by the Treaty of London of 1867.

By this treaty, the major countries of Europe confirmed the neutrality of Luxembourg but required the dismantlement of its fortifications. Most of the Bock fortifications were gone by 1875.

Vestiges of the 10th century Bock castle were discovered in the millennial year of 1963 and now form part of the Millennium Monument located on the Bock. Beneath a new observation tower is the entrance to the casemates. It includes an archaeological crypt and an audio-visual show explaining the historical significance of the Bock and illustrating its evolution from its origin to the end of the Middle Ages.

*Mélusine the Mermaid
(1997 stamp).*

Very little is known about Sigefroi beyond the details of his acquisition of the *Lucilinburhuc* site — there are no contemporary portraits of him and few mentions of his deeds; even the dates of his birth and death are uncertain. No wonder, then, that the story of his life has become the subject of myth and legend.

According to legend, Sigefroi's wife was the lovely Mélusine. Sigefroi met her one day while struggling with the thought of building his castle on the Bock. He fell in love with her instantly. They soon married and on the morning after the wedding, much to Sigefroi's delight, Mélusine magically made the powerful Bock castle appear.

One of Mélusine's conditions of marriage, however, was that she be allowed one day of absolute privacy each week. Alas, Sigefroi could not resist temptation and on one of the forbidden days he spied on her while she was in her Roman bath and discovered that she was a mermaid. When he let out a surprised cry, Mélusine caught sight of him and her bath immediately sank into the solid rock, carrying her with it.

Mélusine surfaces briefly every seven years as a beautiful woman or as a serpent, holding a small golden key in her mouth. Whoever takes the key from her will set her free and may claim her as his bride.

*Castle Bridge
(1963 stamp).*

2 The pink sandstone Castle Bridge connects the Bock rock to Rue Sigefroi and the upper City. The Austrians built it in 1735 to replace an old wooden drawbridge that was meant to isolate the Bock from the market and nearby residential areas.

3 As you leave the Bock by the Castle Bridge you will notice, on the right, a large rock dedicated to the memory of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), the famous German writer who enriched both himself and his many readers by a brief visit to Luxembourg in October of 1792.

*Johann Wolfgang von Goethe
(1977 stamp).*

*Ignace de la Fontaine, the first president
of the State Council (1956 stamp).*

Goethe was then an observer for his friend and sovereign Duke Charles-Auguste of Weimar in the campaign of the allied armies of Prussia and Austria against the French revolutionary forces. The campaign ended in disastrous defeat and Goethe retreated to Luxembourg for a little rest and relaxation.

Goethe quickly became enamored with the capital and made dozens of drawings of the fortifications and interesting areas of the old town. He expressed his fond memories some 30 years later in his book *Campagne in Frankreich* (*The French Campaign*). A brief quotation from the book on the subject of the grandeur of Luxembourg is on a plaque affixed to the memorial stone.

"Assoss", a union of Luxembourg students, placed the stone in 1936. It includes a medallion showing a relief portrait of Goethe in profile.

4 Across the Castle Bridge from the Bock is a modern building on the right that houses the *Conseil d'Etat* (State Council), an institution set up in 1856 to fulfill duties specified in the Luxembourg constitution.

The State Council is an advisory board whose members are appointed by the Grand Duke. Its primary role is to provide its opinion on proposed new legislation to the Chamber of Deputies or on any question submitted directly to it by the Grand Duke. The Chamber of Deputies can pass no legislation until the State Council has reviewed it. The State Council also plays an important judicial role because it acts as the final court of appeal for administrative disputes.

5 Across the street from the State Council is St. Michel Church, the oldest place of worship in Luxembourg City. The original building on this site was a wooden basilica built during Sigefroi's reign and it was consecrated in 987 by Archbishop Egbert of Trier.

*St. Michel Church, on the left
(1975 stamp).*

The original basilica was destroyed by a terrible fire in 1509 that also claimed 180 houses in the old town. The oldest part of the present building is from the Gothic church built in 1519 to replace it. A large western addition was constructed from 1639-1643.

In 1683-1684 the troops of Louis XIV of France laid siege to the fortress of Luxembourg. During this siege the church again suffered severe damage but it was reconstructed soon thereafter thanks to a gift of 4,000 thalers made by Louis XIV in 1687. At this time, the church was given its present exterior design that features a tall tower with a distinctive bulbous shape.

The exterior of St. Michel Church was completely restored in 1962 in time for the millennial celebration for Luxembourg City in 1963. The interior was restored in 1987 to celebrate the millennial celebration for the founding of the church itself. Of particular interest inside the church are the organ and a stained glass window illustrating scenes from the history of the St. Michel Church.

St. Michel Church (1987 stamps).

*Fish Market
(1977 stamp).*

6 A few more paces up the hill past St. Michel Church is the historic Fish Market area. Located at the crossroads of the former Roman consular roads between Reims and Trier and between Metz and Cologne, the Fish Market was a very busy center of social and economic activity through the Middle Ages.

There are several historic and interesting buildings bordering the Fish Market. One is the café *Oennert de Steiler* (Under the Arcades) on the corner at 2 Rue de la Loge. It is the oldest residence in the City, dating from around 1350. Most of it was rebuilt in late-Gothic style after it was partially destroyed in a fire in 1509.

Across and down from *Oennert de Steiler* is the stone archway of the ancient gate called *Hellepuert*. This gate marks the start of the steep Rue Large, which descends to the Grund through the *Breedewee* (Broadway) Gate.

*National Museum of History and Art
(1982 stamp).*

7 Also on the Fish Market is the National Museum of History and Art, which displays material from all periods of Luxembourg history in more than 120 exhibition rooms spread over a group of old buildings, now interconnected.

The museum's collection includes important artifacts from Roman times including the magnificent Vichten mosaic that was found in almost perfect condition in 1994. It also includes a coin and medal cabinet, a model of the fortress of Luxembourg and of the Bock as they were in 1867, and many works of art from the 13th century to modern times.

Some of the modern painters whose works on Luxembourg subjects are exhibited are C.W. Selig and Joseph Turner, as well as the Luxembourgers J.-B. Fresez and Sosthène Weis.

[to be continued in the next issue of *Castellum*]