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# Castellum

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## President's Message

by Gary Little

Another significant Luxembourg picture postcard came my way this month. At first glance it looks like nothing special — a wrinkled, water-stained wretch with a small edge tear. But it is postmarked in September, 1896, making it one of earliest known examples of a Luxembourg postcard bearing a printed photographic image. In fact, this postcard, made by photographer and pioneering postcard publisher J.M. Bellwald, includes five small photographic vignettes of the Müllerthal region near Echternach.

Bellwald historian Solange Coussement in Luxembourg has written a brief biography of Bellwald for this issue of *Castellum*. I also highly recommend a visit to her Web site at [www.oldpostcards.lu](http://www.oldpostcards.lu) to view the hundreds of Bellwald postcards she has accumulated over the years.





*Very early use of a J.M. Bellwald postcard from Luxembourg. It was postmarked September 4, 1896 in Echternach and a St. Trond (Belgium) arrival postmark was applied the next day. The picture side is titled Gruss aus dem Müllerthal (Greetings from Müllerthal) and includes small photos of Wolfsschlucht, the Beaufort castle ruins, the Schiessentümpel waterfall, Kohlscheuer, and Hohlay.*

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## **J.M. Bellwald, Luxembourg Postcard Publishing Pioneer** by Solange Coussement ([www.oldpostcards.lu](http://www.oldpostcards.lu))

Jacques Marie Bellwald was born in 1871 in Bech, a small village in the south of the Grand Duchy. After his marriage in 1895, he moved to Echternach where he soon started a photo studio store in a house next to the Denzelt on the central market square.

As a young man, Bellwald had discovered and mastered the secrets of photography in the city of light, Paris, the center of the plastic arts universe at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

To hone his knowledge and freshly acquired photographic skills, he served as an apprentice to Charles Bernhoeft in Luxembourg-Ville. At the time, Bernhoeft was about to become an official photographer of the court and, like Bellwald, a very successful publisher of postcards.

Settling down in Echternach, an area rapidly developing to serve the tourist trade, Bellwald immediately anticipated the enormous commercial potential of photography. Although photography had progressed considerably since the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was initially a quite expensive proposition, only reserved for the happy few. When photographic techniques got simpler and simpler, this relatively new form of art got more and more democratic. Every family soon could afford to have a portrait made, and memories of a wedding, funeral, or baptism were supported by a nice set of photos.

No wonder, then, that Bellwald traveled extensively around the country to photograph almost everything important in a person's life. Most of those private pictures got delivered to the customer and were never exposed to a broader audience.

The term 'tourism' was quite new at the end of the 19th century. Visitors were then called travelers rather than tourists. More importantly, these people had money to spend on souvenirs. Around 1896/97 the print industry perfected the process of reproducing pictures in printed form on normal paper. As very few tourists were taking pictures themselves at the time — no one wanted to carry around tons of heavy equipment — the postcard soon became the most convenient collectible souvenir bought by visitors to Luxembourg. People considered them as visual reminders of what they had experienced during their holidays. This meant that they collected and sent a lot of different cards and were excited when they could buy postcards from lesser known villages or obscure monuments they had visited during their excursions.

Bellwald understood immediately that he had to offer on postcards about everything that could possibly be visited by tourists because a visit meant a possible sale of his work. No wonder that in a few years time, roughly from 1897 to 1914, Bellwald published his finest work including hundreds of different postcards from the 'Petit Suisse', Mondorf-les-Bains, Luxembourg Ville and many, many other villages in the country. As of 1920/30 his output got smaller, often restricting himself to reprinting from existing negatives. His total portfolio is believed to include between 1,500 and 2,000 postcards or real photo cards. In his heyday, Bellwald traveled a lot to shoot new material, often accompanied by his wife and two children, all of whom are featured on many postcards. He also documented the occupation of Echternach by the Germans during World War I and the quartering of the allied, mainly American, troops in 1919. Those soldiers could enjoy many of the first cinema-performances in Echternach, brought to them by J.M. Bellwald who started showing movies as early as 1896. In fact, the first presentation of cinematography in the country was made by Bellwald on October 18, 1896 in the famous Hotel de la Cerf (Straus) in Echternach. A few days later (October 22) he placed his movable Edison's Ideal Cinematograph at the Villa Louvigny in Luxembourg City where he ran four shows per day.

Bellwald also wrote, illustrated and published tourist guides about Echternach and surroundings, the first one in 1898 (*Album Guide, La Petite Suisse Luxembourgeoise*), now a much sought after booklet which is still considered to be an excellent reference work. Other published works by Bellwald are *La Moselle Luxembourgeoise et Mondorf-les-Bains* and *St. Willibrord und die Springprozession*, a *vademecum* for pilgrims, tourists, and spectators, published in 1902.

Bellwald must have been deeply fascinated by the local history and geography of Echternach and its surrounding area. This is the only way to explain his conscientious visual archiving of unique towns, villages, people, houses and views, the only way for us to reconstruct a past we have never experienced in all its dimensions. His own style and specific approach put him without any doubt in line with the very best European rural photographers.

His complete works are not (yet) included in a prestigious, glossy book. Of course this is a shame, which should be corrected in the future, as nothing would honor the Petit Suisse more. On the other hand, nothing can beat the challenge of completing the puzzle of his amazing inheritance piece by piece by collecting his postcards.

Bellwald died at the age of 73 on April 25, 1945 in Echternach.



*J.M. Bellwald with his mobile photo studio.  
 (Source: Letzeburger Illustr'e'ert, May 19, 1962)*



*Another early Bellwald postcard, this one showing the small village of Obercorn (used in 1905).*

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## More About Luxembourg's 42-Rpf. Registered Letter Frankings: 1940-1944

by Allan F. Wichelman

The June 2006 issue of *Castellum* did not include anticipated revisions to my article on the World War II 42-Rpf. registered letter frankings — these revisions were inadvertently devoured by our esteemed editor's aggressive spam filter before they even reached his computer! Thankfully, the filter is no longer misbehaving, and Gary has received this update, so please allow me to make these additional observations:

- (1) Although Luxembourg was occupied by the Nazis on May 10, 1940, it was not annexed as Gau Moselland until August 1942 — prior to that, it was administered as part of the Coblenz-Trier district.
- (2) A potential additional source of 42-Rpf. frankings is WWII meter mail, as some of the postal meter machines in use before the occupation were refitted to make impressions in Reichpfennings. For example, we know that the Timbrographe franking machine used by the Ideal Tannerie in Wiltz was refitted to make impressions of 3, 5, 6, 8, 12, 15, 25, 30 and 40 Reichpfennings. If you have an example of 42-Rpf. registered meter mail in your collection, I'd be pleased to receive a scan or photocopy of it.
- (3) Despite my skepticism, sole frankings with a 42-Rpf. German Brown Ribbon semi-postal stamp indeed do exist — as the 1943 example shown below demonstrates:



Figure 1—Domestic registered letter franked with the 42-Rpf.+108-Rpf. German 1943 Brown Ribbon semi-postal stamp. Sent from Luxembourg, August 9, 1943, to Esch-Alzig, backstamped August 10, 1943.

- (4) Hindenburg overprints were also released in the Alsace (overprinted "Elsaß") on August 15, 1940, and in the Lorraine (overprinted "Lothringen") on August 21, 1940. Beginning April 1, 1941, the Alsace and Lorraine overprints and those for Luxembourg could be used interchangeably, and also with German stamps, until January 1, 1942, when use of German stamps became mandatory. Figure 2 shows one example of the multitude of possibilities for mixed frankings during this nine-month period!



Figure 2—A registered cover from Luxemburg to Celle, Germany, with four-way mixed franking [10-Rpf. Luxemburg Hindenburg; 15-Rpf. Lothringen and Elsaß Hindenburgs; and a pair of the 1-Rpf. German Hitler head definitive] used on the last day of validity of the Hindenburg overprints.

(5) Last, I recently acquired a seven-stamp combination franking consisting entirely of the 1940 Winter Relief semi-postal stamps, which is shown in Figure 3 below:



Figure 3—Registered letter from Luxemburg-Bahnhof, March 17, 1941, received at Oberau (Loisach), March 18, 1941, with the 42-Rpf. rate paid with six different denominations of the Winter Relief semi-postals.

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## Two Uncommon World War I Auxiliary Marks

by Allan F. Wichelman

Postal services use *auxiliary marks* to require the sender, recipient, or intermediaries to take specific actions. An unusual auxiliary mark can turn an otherwise mundane card or cover into a philatelic gem. Here are two examples used during the World War I German occupation of Luxembourg, when the German occupiers closely monitored and censored the Grand Ducal mails:

### Zurück wegen Kriegszustand



Figure 1

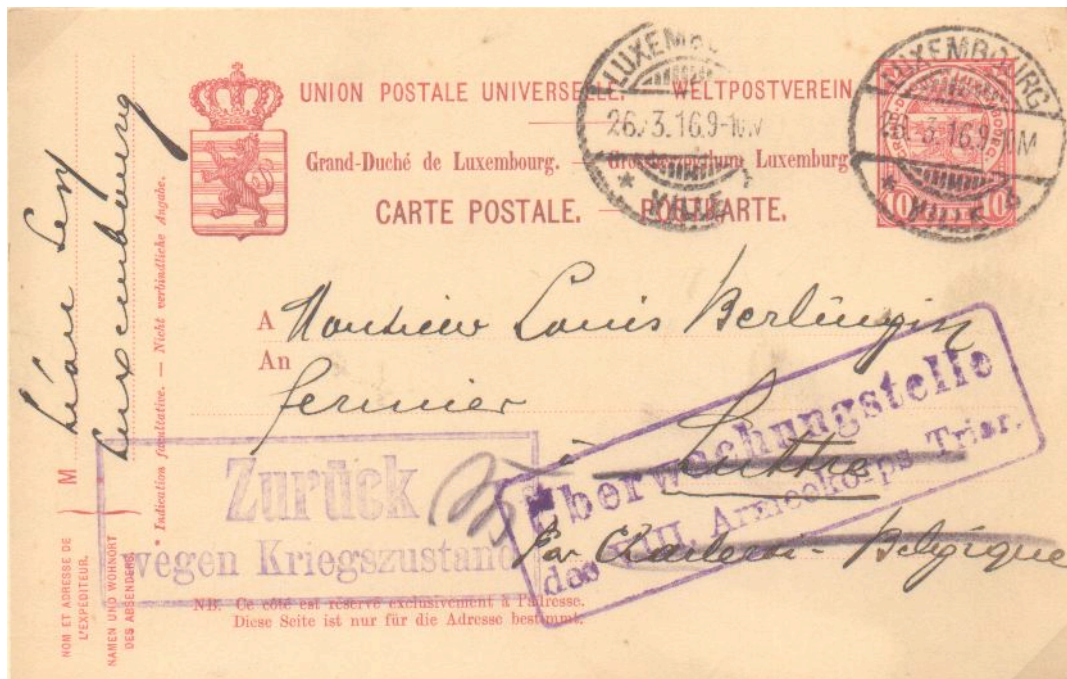


Figure 2

Figure 2 shows a ten-centime Écusson postal card posted from Luxembourg-Ville, March 26, 1916, to Luttre near Charleroi, Belgium, that was censored by the German 8<sup>th</sup> Army Corps at Trier, Germany. To the left of the German army censor mark is an auxiliary mark directing that the card be returned (*Zurück*) to the Luxembourg sender because of hostilities (*wegen Kriegszustand*). (Figure 1.) ‘Service suspended’ mail is generally scarce. This is the first example of such mail that I have seen from Luxembourg during the World War I occupation.

## Kriegsgefangenen- Sendung Geprüft.



Figure 3



Figure 4

Figure 4 shows a five-centime Écusson postal card uprated with a ten-centime Marie-Adélaïde definitive posted from Luxembourg-Ville, October 26, 1914, to Stuttgart, Germany. The auxiliary mark indicates that the card was sent to a prisoner of war (*Kriegsgefangenen-Sendung*) and has been examined (*Geprüft*). (Figure 3.) The message, written in French, is from the brothers and sisters of the addressee — a Frenchman, one Lucien Boubier — who apparently was being held as a prisoner of war in Germany. As the postal card rate to Germany was ten centimes, I am unsure why the card is overfranked, although convenience is probably the reason. Or was prisoner of war mail subject to an additional charge?

Of the hundreds of common five-centime and ten-centime Écusson cards that I have seen, this is the first example I have discovered with this auxiliary mark. Was it used on incoming prisoner of war mail from other countries to Germany as well? Was the recipient in a prison or being held at some other type of facility?

I would welcome comments from our readers about these two auxiliary marks as well as examples of other unusual auxiliary marks they have seen on Luxembourg postal history cards and covers.