
CASTELLUM



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President's Message by Gary Little

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

E schéine Chrëschttag an e glécklecht neit Joer!

Letter Rates to France Between World Wars I and II (1919-1939), Part 2 by Gary Little

[continued from the September 2008 issue of *Castellum*]



21.11.1928 Luxembourg-Ville to Strasbourg

310c = 100c (letter, 1st weight class) + 60c (overweight) + 150c (registration fee)



03.03.1936 Junglinster to Strasbourg
125c (letter, 1st weight class)

[conclusion of series]

A Philatelic Tour Around the Kirchberg Plateau

by Gary Little

1 The still futuristic Grand Duchess Charlotte Bridge, a massive pathway of steel connecting the upper city of Luxembourg to the Kirchberg Plateau over the lower town of Pfaffenthal, stands in stark contrast to the many nearby stone arch bridges that better complement the medieval look of old Luxembourg. But its unusual bright red coloring and sleek angular design are understandable when you consider its role as the gateway to the heart of modern Luxembourg — the European Center and the other architectural wonders of the Kirchberg.



The Grand Duchess Charlotte Bridge (1966 stamp).

The bridge is named for the beloved sovereign who ruled the Grand Duchy from 1919 until her abdication in 1964 in favor of her son, the present Grand Duke Jean. Charlotte died in 1985 at the age of 89.

Construction of the Grand Duchess Charlotte Bridge began on August 20, 1962 and it opened to traffic just over four years later on October 24, 1966. It is 74 m high, 25 m wide, and 355 m long — the highest, widest, and longest bridge in the city. It was designed by the winner of an international design competition — a consortium formed by Rheinstahl Union Brückenbau (of Dortmund, Germany), Socol (of Belgium), and J. Think (of Luxembourg).



Fort Thüngen (1986 stamp).

2 Ironically, the first major building you encounter on the Kirchberg side of the Grand Duchess Charlotte Bridge, in the woods below the European Center, is not one of the numerous modern buildings, but 250-year-old Fort Thüngen. Just follow the signs on the right to the *Trois Glands* in order to reach it. The Austrians constructed this interesting fortification beginning in 1732. The Austrians had wrested control of Luxembourg from the French in 1715 and were determined to make the capital the center of their defensive fortifications in the Austrian Netherlands. To this end, between 1726 and 1766 they built several forts around the town to shore up weak areas of the existing fortress; one of these forts was Fort Thüngen, named after the commander-in-chief of the fortress, Baron von Thüngen.

The Austrians brought in Tyrolean miners to build hundreds of meters of underground tunnels to allow rapid movement between the network of forts and to provide shelter from bombing raids. (Similar tunnels, called *casemates*, were built beneath the Bock and in the rock above the Pétrusse and are open to the public.)

Fort Thüngen is often referred to as the *Trois Glands* (Three Acorns) because of the distinctive nutshell appearance of the roofs of its three towers. These towers, for holding gunpowder, were actually not constructed by the Austrians, but rather by the Prussians in 1838. A Prussian garrison occupied Luxembourg from 1815 to 1867, as permitted by the Congress of Vienna of 1815, which carved the Grand Duchy out of post-Napoleonic Europe.



View from Fort Thüngen (1923 stamp).

Major restoration and archaeological works have recently been completed at Fort Thüngen. These works have exposed redoubts and fortifications behind the fort as well as underground tunnels extending from the fort to near the cliff overlooking the Pfaffenthal valley. Another recent improvement to the area is the sleek building housing the Grand Duke Jean Museum of Modern Art. It was designed by architect I.M. Pei and opened in 2006.

Near the lower end of the area in front of Fort Thüngen, on the left, is a lookout that provides a classic panoramic view of old Luxembourg across the broad Pfaffenthal valley. From this vantage point you can see the north side of the Bock rock, the Gate of Three Towers, the railroad bridges, the steeples of the Cathedral and St. Michel Church, and the buildings on the rim of the old town.



Tower Building (1967 stamp).

3 The other interesting buildings on the Kirchberg Plateau are all quite modern and have been built since 1966. Just behind the Three Acorns and the Museum of Modern Art, for example, are the buildings of the European Center, featuring the 22-storey Tower Building and the European Hemicycle.

The Tower Building, completed in 1966, testifies to the important role Luxembourg plays in promoting and supporting a united Europe in the name of what is now called the European Union.

The building, which is 82 m high, provides office space for several pan-European organizations, including the Secretariat of the European Parliament. The Council of Ministers of the European Union also holds its April, June, and October sessions here.

Luxembourg's leadership in the European unification movement goes back to 1950 and the famous Schuman Declaration, which led to the formation of the European Coal & Steel Community, the forerunner of today's European Union.

Schuman himself, the French Foreign Minister, was born in Luxembourg. Furthermore, the European Coal & Steel Community had its headquarters in Luxembourg when it was formed in 1952. Today, almost a dozen European organizations are located on the Kirchberg, employing over 7,500 civil servants.



European Hemicycle (1981 stamp).

4 Behind the Tower Building is the European Hemicycle, a unique hexagonal building designed by Luxembourg architect Pierre Bohler.

The Hemicycle serves as a state-of-the-art conference center with a main room that has space for almost 900 attendees, including press facilities.

Across Avenue John F. Kennedy from the European Center are several other interesting buildings. The easiest way to get to the other side is to follow the sidewalk from the front of the Tower Building to the underpass a few hundred meters north. This brings you to the *Kiem* pedestrian and cycling path.

The *Kiem* path follows the route of an ancient Roman road all the way up to the Gréngewald forest behind the International Exhibition and Congress Center.



*European Court of Auditors
(2002 stamp).*



*National Swimming Sports Center
(1987 stamp).*



*Higher Technology Institute
(1992 stamp).*

5 The first stop of interest along the *Kiem* is the European Court of Auditors, located near Rue Erasme. The Court was established in Luxembourg in 1977 and is tasked with auditing the accounts and monitoring the budget of the European Union. Its goals are to improve financial management and to provide reports to the citizens of Europe on the use made of public funds by the authorities responsible for their management.

The Court of Auditors is independent of other EU institutions, thus guaranteeing the objectivity of its audit work.

6 Across Rue Erasme from the European Court of Auditors is the National Swimming Sports Center with its distinctive roof made up of four triangular sections arranged in the shape of a mollusk shell. It is the work of French architect Roger Taillibert (who also designed Montreal's Olympic Stadium) and was opened in 1982.

The National Swimming Center is ideal for competitive events since it includes an Olympic size swimming pool and a grandstand for spectators. But it is also open to the general public for recreational swimming, diving, and sauna bathing.

7 The next major building along the *Kiem*, on Rue Coudenhove-Kalergi, houses the *Institut Supérieur de Technologie* (Higher Technology Institute). This educational institution was established in 1979 although predecessor organizations date back to 1916.

The Institute is known for its advanced curriculum in mathematics, the sciences, and technology, but with a practical approach that includes laboratory work and joint projects with industry. It has four departments: civil engineering, electrical engineering, applied computer studies, and mechanical engineering.



*New Congress and Conference Center
(1992 stamp).*



*Henri VII and the
International Exhibition & Fair Center
(1998 stamp).*



Eurocontrol Institute (1988 stamp).

8 The *Kiem* path eventually reaches Circuit de la Foire at the far end of the Kirchberg. This street loops around the international exhibition and congress center of *Société des Foires Internationales de Luxembourg* (FIL), which occupies a land area of 150,000 square meters.

FIL, which was formed in 1949 to promote trade shows and business conferences in Luxembourg, moved to this location on the Kirchberg in 1974. Its old headquarters were in the district of Limpertsberg in the northern part of Luxembourg City.

The exhibition center is enormous and includes eight large halls with a total floor space of over 37,500 square meters. A new congress and conference center, which opened in 1991, provides supplemental facilities, including two main presentation theaters and several smaller meeting rooms.

Commercial trade fairs have been a tradition in Luxembourg since 1298 when Holy Roman Emperor Henri VII of Luxembourg first granted the right to hold annual fairs.

9 About half way back to the Grand Duchess Charlotte Bridge, along Boulevard Konrad Adenauer at the corner of Rue Erasme, is the rather plain headquarters building of the Eurocontrol Aerial Navigation Institute. The European Organization for Aerial Navigation Safety founded this institute in 1967.

The mandate of Eurocontrol is to improve air traffic safety throughout much of Europe by developing high quality training materials for controllers and standardizing training seminars throughout Europe.



European Court of Justice (1972 stamp).



Henry Moore statues (1987 stamp).



European Investment Bank (1988 stamp).

10 A little further along Boulevard Konrad Adenauer, on the left, is the European Court of Justice. The central portion of this complex of buildings opened in 1973 but the other buildings are much more recent. The European Court of Justice is the final court of appeal for issues relating to European Union law.

Jean-Paul Conzemius of Luxembourg and the Belgians Francis Jamagne and Michel Van der Elst jointly designed the original building of the Court. They were the joint winners of an international design competition.

The building is particularly interesting in that its external framework is made of Corox steel, an alloy produced by the ARBED steelworks of Luxembourg. It forms a pleasing bronze-copper corrosion-resistant layer after one to three years of use.

The Court of Justice building is surrounded by a tiled plaza around which are located modern sculptures by Englishman Henry Moore and local favorite Lucien Wercollier of Luxembourg.

11 The last stop on this tour of the Kirchberg Plateau, closing the loop back to the Grand Duchess Charlotte Bridge, is the European Investment Bank. This unusual multi-terraced building was completed in 1980 to the plans of the architectural firm Dennis Lasdun & Co. of London.

The European Investment Bank was formed in 1958 by the Treaty of Rome to promote the economic development of the European community and its citizens. It is a source of funds and loan guarantees for projects that foster the balanced development of the European Union and attainment of its economic goals. Most of its financing is directed to the least developed regions of the EU or in areas requiring economic reconstruction.