CASTELLUM

President's Message
by Gary Little

Other countries continue to release postage stamps relating to the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

On the left you will find a particularly stunning example: a souvenir sheet of four stamps issued by France a few years ago as part of a series to honor European capitals.

The sheet highlights many tourist attractions in Luxembourg City including the statue of William II, the Grand Ducal Palace, the Adolphe Bridge, the Notre Dame Cathedral, the St. Esprit Citadel, and the Golden Lady atop the war memorial in Constitution Place.

A Philatelic Tour of the "Ville Basse" of Luxembourg City
by Gary Little

As the fortress town of Luxembourg rapidly developed in the early Middle Ages, three small towns sprang up beneath its walls. These lower towns — the Grund, Clausen, and Pfaffenthal — formed the "Ville Basse" and were home to common peasants, laborers, tradesmen, and their families. Initially unprotected, most areas of the Grund and Pfaffenthal were eventually surrounded by strong walls and fortifications, portions of which are still visible today.

St. Quirin Chapel (1989 stamp).

1 The tour of the lower towns begins with the unusual St. Quirin Chapel, hewn into the rock of the south face of the Pétrusse valley, across from the St. Esprit Citadel high above.

This chapel is the oldest place of worship in the country. Its origins date to the 4th century when a pagan cult formed here to worship the goddesses of springs and waters who were said to be responsible for the healing powers in connection with eye diseases of a nearby rock spring.

After Christianity had come to Luxembourg, the chapel was used to worship the Roman martyr Quirin (d. 189) who was appointed guardian of the spring. Quirin was also the patron saint of Luxembourg until 1666.

The Knights of the Teutonic Order built the facade of the chapel, featuring narrow Gothic windows, in 1355. Two natural caverns in the rock face, which house the choir and the nave, form the interior of the chapel.

A classic view of the Grund (1931 stamp).

2 If you now follow the Pétrusse about 200 meters downstream to near the point where it merges with the Alzette, you will come to a narrow stone footbridge, part of the old Bisserweg Gate, that crosses the Alzette beneath the arches of the railroad viaduct.

If you're feeling energetic, you should climb the steep, twisting path that starts just before the footbridge and leads to a viewpoint on Boulevard d'Avranches at the very top of the cliff overlooking the valley. The spectacular view from here deserves a long look because it is a classic panorama that has been a popular subject for artists and photographers for years.

From this vantage point, the view includes the stone bridge and old buildings of the Grund huddled beneath the sheer rock face of the upper town; St. Jean Church of the Grund; the St. Esprit Citadel; and the distinctive silhouette formed by the buildings lined up along Chemin de la Corniche to the Bock rock in the distance.

3 Return to the valley floor, then cross the Alzette by taking the footbridge across the Bisserweg Gate. The footbridge leads to a street called Bisserweg, which runs, along the right bank of the Alzette.

A few meters downstream along Bisserweg, affixed to the perpendicular rock face of the Rham Plateau on the right, is a small gray plaque honoring musicians Jean Antoine Zinnen (1827-1898) and Auguste Fischer (1818-1889). They were the founders of a musical society called the Royal Grand Ducal Fanfare of Lëtzebuerg-Gronn-Fetschenhaff-Zens-Polvermillen.

Zinnen, also honored with a plaque in Place Guillaume II and a mausoleum in the Notre Dame Cemetery, is most famous for being the composer of the Luxembourg national anthem, *Ons Hémecht*, which was first performed in 1864.

St. Jean Church (1990 stamp).

4 The next stop is St. Jean Church of the Grund. To reach it, continue along Bisserweg past the Grund bridge, and then bear left along Rue Munster. The church is located at the end of Rue Munster.

The present St. Jean Church was built between 1688 and 1715 and was designed by engineer Hubert Laloir of Liège, a protégé of the Marquis de Vauban.

Inside are magnificent baroque furnishings, large oil paintings, a distinctive pulpit, and a majestic organ in a gallery at the back.

Black Virgin in
St. Jean Church
(1963 stamp).

5 Perhaps the most famous treasure housed in the church is the "Black Virgin" — a 14th century statue carved in walnut of the Virgin Mary and Child in blackface from the Pierre Parler workshop in Cologne, Germany. It is on display in a side chapel off the main hall of the church.

The original St. Jean Church was built on this same site in 1309 under the auspices of Henri VII, Count of Luxembourg and Holy Roman Emperor. It was destroyed by fire when a warfaring Louis XIV of France took control of Luxembourg by force after a successful siege of the capital in 1684.

In the late 14th century, the Grund and the Rham Plateau above it were completely surrounded by an 8-10 meter high protective wall that effectively incorporated these areas into the main town. This wall is now referred to as the Wenceslas Wall in honor of Holy Roman Emperor Wenceslas II (1361-1419), Duke of Luxembourg, who ordered its construction during his reign.

A few interesting vestiges of the original Wenceslas Wall and its lookout towers and gates are still visible today.

Stierchen Bridge (2003 stamp).

Jacob Tower (2000 stamp).

*Towers on the Rham Plateau
(1963 stamp).*

6 One particularly well-preserved vestige is Jacob Tower. To get to it from St. Jean Church, go back along Rue Munster to the steep Rue de Trèves, and then climb Rue de Trèves up to Rue du Rham. Along the way up, take a look down to the river for a view of the 14th century Stierchen Bridge over the Alzette.

Jacob Tower is at the top of Rue du Rham and was the primary gate of entry to the Grund in the late 14th century. Today it houses a small museum, which includes a video presentation on the development and importance of urban walls in the Middle Ages. Jacob Tower is unusual in that it has three strong double doors. The likely reason for such a high number is that there was no protective drawbridge on the outside of the gate.

Jacob Tower remained the main gate into the Grund until the end of the 16th century when the Trèves Gate (now destroyed) was built within 100 meters of it.

Another name commonly used for Jacob Tower is *Dinselpuert* (Dinsel Gate), Dinsel being the name, long ago, of the surrounding area. Jacob was the name of the last guardian of the tower during the Prussian occupation (1815-1867) when it was used as a jail.

7 Another notable remaining portion of the 600-year-old Wenceslas Wall is the group of four crumbling fortified towers aligned in a straight line higher up on the Rham Plateau, above the Jacob Tower. These 12-meter high towers once formed part of the eastern wall of the Grund.

Most of the ancient fortifications were destroyed during the French sieges of 1683-1684 led by Créqui and the Marquis de Vauban in the name of Louis XIV. Others were torn down after the Treaty of London in 1867.

The railroad viaduct in Clausen (1931 stamp).

Malakoff Tower (1986 stamp).

Schuman House (1997 stamp).

In the mid-1990s, the wall adjacent to the Jacob Tower and the wall perpendicular to it leading to the Stierchen Bridge and the Bock were rebuilt to resemble their original appearance. They are now part of the Wenzel Tour, an historic path through the old fortress designed by the Council of Europe.

8 Malakoff Tower, the last defensive fortification tower built in Luxembourg, is in the town of Clausen to the east of the Bock rock. To get to it from Jacob Tower, go down Rue de la Tour Jacob under the railroad viaduct, turn left on Rue Malakoff (where there is a monument to those killed in a 1918 aerial bombardment) and continue along it until you reach Rue Jules Wilhelm. Malakoff Tower is located a few dozen paces up the steep Rue Jules Wilhelm.

Malakoff Tower was built in 1861 under the authority of the last Prussian military commander of the fortress of Luxembourg. The architectural styling of the tower is similar to that of the three towers of Fort Thüngen on the Kirchberg, which was built by the same Prussians a few years earlier.

Today, Malakoff Tower is used for meetings of the Boy Scouts organization. A small scout insignia can be seen on the front of the tower.

9 Back down the hill from Malakoff Tower, straight ahead on Rue Jules Wilhelm, is the grand Schuman House. This is the birthplace of European leader Robert Schuman, the "Father of Modern Europe", who was born on June 29, 1886 and died on September 4, 1963.

Schuman, a lawyer, held many senior political offices in France, including premier, party leader, and Foreign Minister. He was the author of the famous 1950 Schuman Plan that served as the blueprint for the creation of the European Coal & Steel Community, a first major step in the creation of a unified Europe. It is fitting, indeed, that the skyscraper of the European Center on the

Kirchberg Plateau towers protectively over Schuman's birthplace.

Schuman House is now the home of the Center for European Studies and Research.

10 Continue along Rue Jules Wilhelm to Allée Pierre de Mansfeld running along the Alzette. The next landmark is the Luxembourg youth hostel which is located a little further downstream, on the left bank of the Alzette. It is on the other side of the small bridge that appears on the left after you pass underneath the railroad viaduct.

Luxembourg has been a member for many years of the International Youth Hostel Federation, which provides low-cost housing to young travelers around the world.
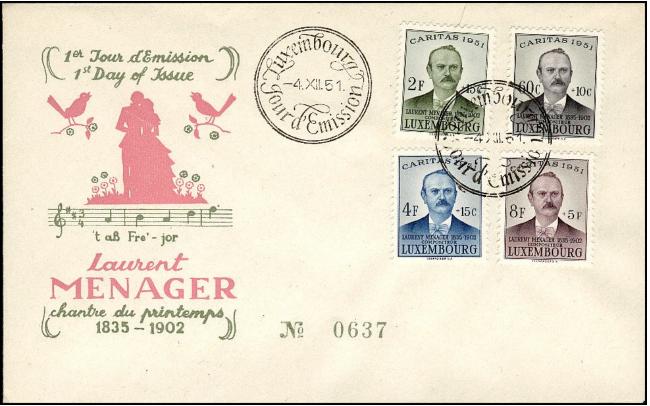

Luxembourg Youth Hostel
(1982 stamp).

11 The continuation of Allée Pierre de Mansfeld is Rue Vauban, which goes through the town of Pfaffenthal. Follow it along the Alzette until you reach Rue des Trois Glands. On this corner is an old stone building that houses the Sang & Klang Royal Grand Ducal Choral Society. National composer Laurent Menager (1835-1902) founded this organization in 1857 and a plaque in honor of Menager is affixed to the face of the building.

Menager was born in Pfaffenthal and was a very popular professor at the Luxembourg Music School. He also taught music and singing at the Athenée and he directed several choral societies. A friend of the poets Dicks and Lentz, he collaborated with them on several compositions. Menager's death in 1902 was mourned by the entire nation; over 6,000 people, including representatives of 45 societies, attended his funeral.

View of Pfaffenthal
(1921 stamp).

Laurent Menager (1951 stamps).

Porte des Bons-Malades (1986 stamp).

12 The last stop in the lower towns is at the Vauban Towers in Pfaffenthal, further along the Alzette and just before the point where the massive red Grand Duchess Charlotte Bridge passes overhead.

There are two Vauban Towers, one on each bank of the Alzette. They were built by the French in 1684-5, yet another project of Vauban. They are easily recognizable by their distinctive pyramidal roofs.

The tower on the left bank is called the *Porte d'Eich* (Eich Gate) and the other is called the *Porte des Bons-Malades* (Invalids Gate). A long, narrow footbridge that spans the Alzette connects the two towers.