

Profile of German Philatelic Forgeries From an Amateur's Point of View

German Philatelic Forgeries exist in many areas of collecting such as:

1. early German stamp issues
2. Hitler head issues
3. local issues especially at the end of WWII
4. Marshall Island overprints

The most famous and prolific forgery expert of German, German States, and German Possession stamps was Francios Fournier (1846-1917)

Modern German Forgeries

Below are some examples of know early issue forgeries:

These are the genuine postal issues



The corners are symetrical and the perfs meet at the corners. Issued in 1949.

10f Scott 665

20f Scott 666 or 667 depending on color and watermark

30f Scott 668

These are forgeries



The perfs are basically simple straight lines on the edges. The corners are asymmetrical, and the letters are slightly larger and not as sharp as the genuine stamps.

A more modern philatelic issue that saw a rash of forgeries is Scott 9N61-63 which are Berlin issues.

This is the genuine stamp:



The watermarks are legitimate.

These are forgeries:



If there is a watermark, it is not legal. The paper has a slight yellow tint and some of the forgeries have faux or fake lettering at the bottom of the stamp.

Hitler Head Forgeries

The following information, pertaining to Operation Cornflake, is available without much research effort, but is best illustrated by Henry Gitner Philatelists, Inc. Henry Gitner's company specializes in German stamps, authentic and forged. I have editorialized the content for clarity and removal of sales/marketing pitches.

What was Operation Cornflake?

The Hitler Head stamps used in Operation Cornflake were the key part of a high level clandestine plan to undermine the morale of the average German citizen. The Allies felt that if many German people started receiving Anti-Nazi propaganda in their morning mail delivered punctually at breakfast time by the

mailman, they would feel that their "German Empire" was falling apart from within.

Catalogued by Michel, #15-17 Never Hinged complete set of three, the 6pf and 12pf of Hitler heads as well as the infamous Adolf Hitler grinning "Death Head" stamp inscribed "FUTSCHES REICH" (Ruined Empire).

How were these stamps created?

General "Wild Bill" Donovan, head of the OSS (Office of Strategic Services) the U.S. espionage agency during World War II (that later became the CIA) ordered the stamps printed by OSS operations in Switzerland. The standard 6pf and 12pf Hitler Head stamps were forged in sheets of 50 instead of the sheets of 100 of the originals. The main differences lie in the paper (chalky coated paper for the originals, dull for the forgeries) and the perforations (14x14 1/2 for the originals, 11 1/2 to 13x12 1/2 for the forgeries-- note the graphic below). Also, an additional forgery of the 12pf was made, but the inscription was altered to read "Futsches Reich" meaning "Ruined Empire" and revealed a partial skeleton of Hitler.



The photo above is in error in that the Michel #510 and 511B are really Scott numbers for the real stamps. Scott does not catalog the OSS forgeries. These forgeries are easy to identify by the fact that they are not perf 14 x 14½.

How were these propaganda forgeries used?

The OSS decided that the best way to smuggle the mail into the regular German postal system was to bomb mail trains. In addition to bombs possibly destroying the trains, they dropped sacks of mail containing Anti-Nazi propaganda at the bomb site. During the confusion of cleaning up the wreck, the false mail sacks were mixed with the damaged German mail. The OSS re-created all aspects of the German Postal system from real business return addresses to many

thousands of names and addresses pulled from the telephone directories. They even replicated the mail bags, postal markings and every other detail of the postal system. Every letter was franked with a 12pf stamp or two 6pf stamps. On opening the letter, the citizens would find their mail filled with anti-Nazi propaganda including the 12pf "Futsches Reich" stamp.

Why should I buy these stamps?

If you collect US stamps, then these are legitimate US stamps printed by the US government. If you collect German stamps these represent an important historical addition to any 3rd Reich collection!

Fournier Marshall Island Eagle Forgeries

These photos are from the Dirk H.R. Spennemann research collection in Australia.



The forgery is on the left



The forgery is on the left

Fournier not only forged the Eagle Issue stamps of the Marshall Islands, he provided an unlimited amount of cancellations for various illegal operations.



The 3, 10 and 40 pfennig stamps are marked FAUX for identification purposes. These forgeries are most easily identified by their color variations and the fact that the ship drawing in the forgeries is thin and incomplete compared to the genuine stamp.

The following is a sample from the catalog Fournier compiled for anyone who wanted to purchase his known forgeries postage and cancels. Fournier's area of expertise was in obsolete Revenue and Tax stamps and cancels designed to circumvent taxes. Ironically, his activity was not illegal but he was considered the scourge of philately for his time.



German Local Forgeries

After the end of World War II, while the Allies were establishing zone controls between the French, British, Russian and US military commands, and before the establishment of the Federal Republic in 1948, local post was very dominant. While there were many legitimate uses for local stamps forgeries abound in record numbers. The most common trademark with these forgeries is either the postmark or overprint.

The city most notorious for forgeries on local issues was Federsdorf near Berlin. In 1945 and for eighteen months after, local street fighting in many of the cities and towns disrupted any attempt at a unified national postal service. Many towns organized local postal delivery using mostly the stamps that were in their vaults and weren't destroyed by the allied bombing. Many towns used their supply of Hitler head stamps and used a local cancel or overprint. The Michel Deutschland Catalogue details all local issues and any associated forgeries from 1945 to 1948.

Bibliography

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Compiled by Dr. Mike Francis from the works of those mentioned herein. Not to be used for commercial purposes.