

Fabulous Firsts: **Lombardy-Venetia** (June 1, 1850)

Lombardy-Venetia Sc. 1, 3-6 (there is no Sc. 2) and a scarce combination usage of Austria 4 and Lombardy-Venetia 4



We open our study of the First Issue of Lombardy-Venetia with excerpts from a World of Stamps article by Geir Sør-Reime:

The first Italian area that issued stamps, 152 years ago, was an area under foreign rule. The Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia was a part of the Austrian empire, with a resident viceroy.

This kingdom was established after the collapse of Napoleon, and united the former duchy of Milan and the former republic of Venice into the Lombardo-Venetian kingdom. It was in fact a kind of compensation for the Austrian loss of the Austrian Netherlands.

In 1859, after the Austrian defeat at the battle of Solferino, Austria ceded most of its Lombardo-Venetian kingdom to Sardinia. Venetia was added in 1866 with Prussian help.

The first stamps of Lombardy-Venetia were not issued primarily to give special recognition to the Italian-speaking

parts of the Austrian empire. On the contrary, the only reason was that these areas used a currency differing from the rest of Austria. The first stamps were therefore identical to the issues for the rest of the empire issued simultaneously, except for the currency designations, and were first put on sale June 1, 1850.

The stamps of Lombardy-Venetia were valid throughout the Austrian empire, whereas only the local stamps were valid in Lombardy-Venetia.

After most of Lombardy was ceded to Sardinia, Lombardo-Venetian stamps continued in use in Venetia and the remaining parts of Lombardy until these areas were incorporated into Italy in 1866.

The first stamps featured the Austrian eagle and were denominated in Italian centesimi. These stamps were initially printed on hand-made paper, but from 1854 onwards, they were issued on machine-made paper. Whereas the hand-made papers featured a large sheet watermark, the machine paper was without watermark.

And from B. W. H. Poole, who wrote extensively on First Issues for Mekeel's in the first half of the 20th Century, we offer excerpts from our Fabulous Firsts study of Austria, from the July 2012 Stamp News Online. Keeping in mind, as we will see, that the First Issue of Lombardy-Venetia are closely connected to those of Austria, in these excerpts you can substitute "Lombardy-Venetia" for "Austria".

One of the true treasure chests of philatelic study are the issues of Austria....In the official postal gazette, the stamps [of Austria] were announced on April 27, 1850. Despite the short time for production and the changes in value, they were at the counters and sold on the scheduled date of June 1, 1850....

Dr. Johannes Jakob Herz, Postal Inspector in Lower Austria, was one of the key people in the introduction of the first Austrian stamps. Following a suggestion by Postal Director Viertaler, he went on a tour to study the experiences in countries where stamps were already in use. Basing his wide-ranging postal reform suggestions on findings in England, Belgium and France, Herz suggested

that the stamps bear the state coat of arms or a portrait of the emperor....

Among the other reforms, the rate system was changed to enable the more efficient handling of the rising volume of letters. The English postal service charged a fixed penny rate, but Herz proposed a multi-zone system with lower rates for local letters and printed matter.

To increase efficiency, he also recommended canceling the stamps by the town postmark instead of stamping the letters with a town postmark and a canceller.

On September 14, 1849, the Minister of Commerce, Baron von Bruck, submitted the proposals to the Emperor, and on September 25, 1849, Emperor Franz Joseph signed the decree, annotating: "received these applications for the reform of the rates for the transportation of letters and mail coach. My authorisation. Schonbrunn, September 25, 1849."

A decree issued on October 1, 1849, commissioned Dr. Herz to establish the essays, features, use, cancellation, retail and clearing of proceeds from the sale of stamps. The print order was given on February 5, 1850.

There were five denominations—1 kreuzer yellow, 2kr black, 3kr red, 6kr brown, and 9kr blue (Scott 1-5)—all exactly alike in design. The values originally were fixed at 1, 2, 3, 6 and 12 kreuzer, the idea being that one postage stamp would be available to pay each of the postage rates for ordinary letters.

The Lombardy-Venetia First Issue

In addition to these stamps, values in Italian currency (5, 10, 15, 30 and 60 centesimi) were required for the Upper Italian areas (Lombardy-Venetia Scott 1, 3-6). One of the reasons for issuing the centesimi stamps was the fact that the Italians would have benefitted from the difference in the exchange rate. The official exchange rate for the Italian currency was 20 kreuzer for one lira (which equalled 100 centesimi, so that 5 centesimi equalled 1 kreuzer, 10 centesimi equalled 2 kreuzer, and so on.

The memorandum of association signed between the Austrian and the German postal services on April 6, 1850,



Lombardy-Venetia 1850 5c orange and 10c black, tied by Milano 30/6 cds on outer folded letter to Cremona.

stipulated uniform rates, and fixed the postage for ordinary letters up to a weight of half an ounce for more than 20 miles at 9 instead of the envisaged 12 kreuzer. For this reason, when the first stamps had been distributed, but before they were issued, the maximum values had to be lowered from 12 to 9 kreuzer and from 60 to 45 centesimi, respectively—and almost one million kreuzer stamps and half a million centesimi stamps had to be burnt....

The coat of arms was given preference over other motifs. In the restless era after the revolutions, it seemed more neutral than the Emperor's portrait....

For production details other than the few essentials repeated here, we refer you to the July 2012 Austria "Fabulous Firsts" article.

...The stamps were printed using the typography method in full sheets that consisted of four counter sheets.

Each counter sheet had eight strips of eight fields, consisting of eight rows by eight columns, with one row having four stamps and the remaining four positions filled with a St. Andrew's Cross. Thus, every counter sheet had 60 stamps....

The paper at first used was hand-made and like all hand-made papers it varies considerably in thickness. In fact it is easy to differentiate this paper into two main classes which may best be described as thick and thin. Both the thick and thin varieties were watermarked in the sheet with large open letters "K K H M" meaning "Kaiserlich-Konigliches Handels-Ministerium", or Imperial and Royal Ministry of Commerce.

Portions of these letters show on some stamps in each sheet. They are comparatively scarce and are well worth looking for....

Because of dissatisfaction with the original design before it even went to print, the stamps were considered a provisional and work on a final version got under way soon after they were issued. Essays were made with heads of Mercury in different sizes for the various values (similar to bank notes), with the currencies to be indicated in the beard of the messenger of the gods. Other essays showed various portraits of the Emperor.

Although considered a provisional issue from the start, the first Austrian stamps were in use until 1858. They might have been in use even longer, but when the currency changed on November 1, 1858, new stamps had to be issued....Some of the essays that had already been proposed as substitutes for the first issue were taken for the new issue, and the 1858-59 issue with portraits of the Emperor Franz Josef replaced the Coat of Arms issue.