Fabulous Firsts:
Baden (May 1, 1851

Baden 1851 1kr black on buff First Printing (Sc. 1a)

(As with many of our Fabulous Firsts features, this article is based on an article by B. W. H. Poole, this one from the July 12, 1937 edition of Mekeel's Weekly. JFD.)

Baden 1851 1 kr black on buff and 9kr black on lilac rose First Printing (Sc. 1a, 4a) tied to folded letter by "87" numeral in rings cancels, cover with "Mannheim 1. Mai.51 (May 1, 1851) straightline handstamp, the first day of issue.

The former grand-duchy of Baden is a comparatively small territory having an area of 5,821 square miles and a population of about two and a half millions. Until the early part of the 19th century it played an insignificant part in European politics, but when Austria and Prussia were at war it made the mistake of siding with the former. The results were disastrous for, when the tide of battle turned in favor of Prussia, it found itself burdened with a huge war indemnity. The duchy was forced to remodel its army on Prussian lines and join the North German Confederation, and in due time it became a part of the new German Empire and is now incorporated in the German Republic. One of its towns, Baden-Baden, is world famous for its mineral waters and baths. Although the healing powers of its waters were known to the Romans, it first came into repute as a health resort about a century ago and, prior to the World War, many famous people took the "cure" there every year much to the financial benefit of the inhabitants of this little town of some 20,000 population.

The postal administration of the grandduchy of Baden was in the hands of the house of Thurn and Taxis; but the wars of the French revolution, followed by those of the First Empire, so dislocated the service run by this princely house that Baden, in common with several of its neighbouring states, withdrew from the monopoly and established an independent postal administration.

On April 6, 1850, the governments of Austria and Prussia formed a postal convention for the interchange of correspondence at fixed rates and other German states were invited to join the Union. Among other things the Articles of this postal convention stipulated that, as a general rule, letters should be prepaid and that such prepayment should be effected by means of postage stamps as soon as practicable. Baden at once agreed to join the Union but, as the sanction of the Legislative Assembly was necessary before the grand-duchy could officially become a member, matters were delayed until the meeting of that body in the autumn of 1850. The parliament gave its consent and also sanctioned the issue of postage stamps.

In the meantime enquiries had been made as to the safest and most economical method of manufacturing stamps. As a consequence directly legal enactment was given to the recommendation to join the Union, the authorities were in a position to proceed with the manufacture of suitable postage stamps.

It was decided to issue four different denominations—1, 3, 6 and 9 kreuzers—and C. Naumann, of Frankfort, was commissioned to engrave the dies while arrangements were made to procure suitable paper from, a local manufacturer. It was decided that the most economical method of

An unaccepted essay for the Baden 1851 issue, but showing a numeral design.

The Baden 1851 1kr black on buff First Printing (Sc. 1a) in a rare strip of three.

The Baden 1851 3kr black on orange yellow First Printing (Sc. 2a) in a rare top sheet margin block of eight.

The Baden 1851 6kr black on blue green First Printing (Sc. 3a) in a rare bottom right corner sheet margin block of eight.

production would be to print all the stamps in black but use paper of a different color for each value. In his valuable book on European stamps W. A. S. Westoby states "the dies were engraved on copper in relief, and consisted of two parts: the numeral of value was in the centre on a circular ground, the pattern of which varied in each value; while the rectangular frame was the same for all the values".

At the top we find "Baden" in German capitals; at the bottom is "Freimarke", meaning free stamp; at the left is "Deutsch: Oestr: Postverein", signifying German-Austrian Postal Union; and at the right is

The Baden 1851 9kr black on rose lilac First Printing (Sc. 4a) in a rare side sheet margin block of 8.

1851 Baden 9kr black on deep rose First Printing (Sc. 4a) tied by five-ring "85", cover also with a scarce blue straightline "LUDWIGSHAFEN" pre-adhesive marking and red "BAD.Oef" transit.

"Vertrag v. 6 April 1850", meaning Convention of April 6, 1850. This date, as already explained, refers to that on which the Postal Union was established.

The dies for the four stamps were finished by Naumann, December 20, 1850, and 100 electrotypes were taken from each of the 3kr, 6kr and 9kr ones while only fifty electros were cast from the die of the 1kr. It was decided to print the 1kr in sheets of 45, in five rows of nine each, and the other denominations in sheets of 90, in ten rows of nine. The extra cliches were intended as a reserve in case any of the others should become damaged or worn and have to be replaced. The paper was machine-wove and differed in color for each value. The paper for the 1kr was buff; that for the 3kr was orange; for the 6kr it was bluish-green; while for the 9kr it was lilac-rose. The stamps were all issued imperforate.

The stamps were printed by the University printer—Mr. Hasper, of Carlsruhe—ordinary black printer's ink being employed. By the end of February, 1851, a supply considered sufficient to last for a year was ready but for some reason or other the stamps were not placed in circulation until May 1st. The authorities had woefully underestimated the probable demand for postage stamps with the result that the first supply, instead of lasting for a year, was completely exhausted in less than three months.

A second printing was made and in this the color of the paper for the 3kr and 6kr differed somewhat from that of the original supply. The paper used for the 3kr was more yellow than orange while that for the 6kr was yellow-green. For this second printing the plates differed also, for the reserve cliches were all added with the consequence that the 1kr was printed in sheets of fifty and the other denominations in sheets of one hundred.

The Baden 1851 3kr black on yellow Second Printing (Sc. 2b) in a gutter single showing portions of adjoining stamps.


The Baden 1851 6kr black on green Second Printing (Sc. 3b) in a mint pair.

The additional electrotypes were so added that the horizontal rows contained ten instead of nine stamps.

A well authenticated error of the 9 kreuzer is known printed on the bluish green paper of the 6kr. While it is presumed that one sheet of ninety was printed, so few copies exist that this error is one of the greatest rarities known. Reprints of the 1kr, 3kr and 6kr were made in 1867, and these are very difficult to distinguish from originals. The shades differ slightly, the paper for the 1kr and 3kr is slightly thicker and the gum is white and smooth instead of being brownish and crackly as in the case of originals.

Back and front of the mint error, show-ing the area where the actual blue-green shade can be seen. The stamp was dis-colored by excessive heat while being stored in a fireproof safe in Berlin during the bombings of World War II.
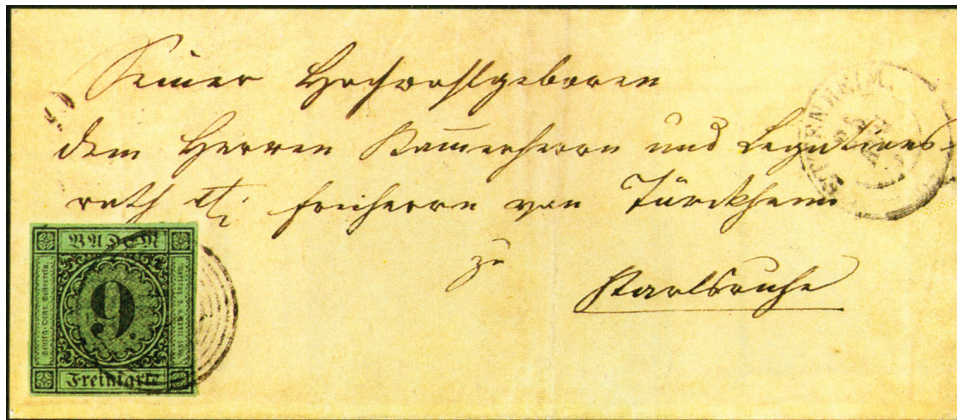
The "Caspary–Boker" cover with an error single tied by an August 25, 1851 Ettenheim postmark.

Only an expert can determine them with certainty so that it is wise to use caution in purchasing unused specimens of these stamps.

The currency of Baden at the time these stamps were issued was the florin, equal to about 40¢ in American money, which was divided into 60 kreuzers.