

A 'ONE-DAY WONDER' - THE AIR-MAIL JUBILEE STAMP AND FLIGHTS OF SEPTEMBER 1944
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On 20th September 1944, in conjunction with the Post Office, Swissair operated special flights from Zürich to Geneva and return, to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of the first air-mail in Switzerland. The post office issued a commemorative stamp specifically for this purpose, to be valid for use on items of mail flown that day. The purpose of this article is to draw together the details of the operation, postal arrangements and to analyse a number of flown covers that have come to light recently.

Section 1. The Flight.

By 1944, special flights for philatelic and fund-raising purposes were nothing new. Once airmail became an established form of transit, 'Pro-Aero' flights with limited-use special stamps were organised in 1938, 1941 and 1943. The 1944 flight was arranged ostensibly to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of Swiss air-mail. A special stamp (Zumstein F40) and postal stationery were produced, valid only for the day; the flights were arranged in a series of short stages so clearly the operation was a commercially-oriented operation rather than being part of normal postal operations. The fund-raising drive was doubtless inspired by the need to raise cash and find some use for Swissair's largely dormant assets and staff.

At the time, five years into WW2, the airline owned a fleet including five Douglas DC-2 and four DC-3 aircraft. After the outbreak of war and the initial suspension of all services, the company's operations were relocated to the relative safety of Magadino (Ticino). The airline then tentatively reintroduced limited services to Munich, Berlin, Rome and Barcelona. However, all services were again suspended after allied bombing raids on Stuttgart airport in Germany resulted in the loss of a DC-2 and a subsequent near-miss in August 1944. The internal jubilee flight took place the following month but must have been planned as a fund-raising exercise for Swissair before the Stuttgart loss occurred. Evidently it was successful as the recorded net profit from the exercise was Chf 241,842.25.

The outward flight comprised three legs, Zürich-Bern-Lausanne-Geneva and the return flight was the reverse, hence there were twelve possible combinations of section for which mail could be posted. The aircraft used was a Douglas DC-2 registration HB-ITE that had been purchased by Swissair in 1934, flown by *Flugkapitan* Otto Heitmanek and radio operator Jost Guyer.

Section 2. The Special Stamp.

The special Chf1.50 stamp was issued on 1st September 1944 along with a trio of new air-mail stamps. It was designed by Robert van der Mühl and printed by Courvoisier S.A. in sheets of 25 on unwatermarked paper. Perforation was 11¾. The total number printed was 265,573. Collectors may be surprised by the fact that the Chf1.50 stamp was valid for use solely on the flights of 20th September. However, mint stamps were sold generally by post offices between 1st and 18th September.

The Zumstein Specialised catalogue shows several minor printing flaws for the stamp. The subject of the stamp design is Swissair DC-3 HB-IRI which was purchased in 1937. Note that the aircraft depicted on the stamp was not the one (or even the same type) as the one actually used for the special flights.

Section 3. Special Postal Arrangements.

Unusually, no special cancellers or cachets were manufactured for the event; cancellations were specified to be normal airmail cds including the word *Luftpost* or *Poste Aérienne* and without the time shown. However, special envelopes were printed for use on the flights, also small labels (*etiquettes*) inscribed *Jubiläums-Postflug* + one of the twelve combinations of sections. Printed on yellow paper and guillotined, these may have been in limited supply as they appear on just a minority of covers. Examples are shown on p74 of Guignard & Vuille's catalogue of Swiss postal labels.

From the twelve possible combinations of flight sections, the following totals of items mailed are listed in Zumstein Specialised catalogue (2000):

Flown from	Ordinary mail	Registered
Zürich	28,740	10,804
Bern	9,912	3,443
Lausanne	7,949	3,016
Geneva	15,170	6,716
Total	61,771	23,979
	85,750	

Allowing for the special postal rate of Chf1.50 and domestic registered surcharge of 20c, the bare minimum income from franking the items would have been Chf133,420 although Swissair's profits from the exercise were nearly double that amount.

Section 4. Interpretation of a Selection of Covers Posted Internally.

The basic postage cost for items sent on the special flight was Chf1.50 (hence the value of the commemorative stamp) which included the minimum postal rate and internal airmail surcharge. The nature of the flight meant that inevitably all items flown were of an inherently philatelic nature. However, a surprisingly large proportion of flown covers were incorrectly franked, sometimes considerably in excess of the proper rates. Accepting that these start off by being philatelic, should such incorrect franking be of any importance or significance? Some would say not - but, if the use of stamps was deliberately incorrect for postal purposes, clearly the item is something of a fabrication. Visually attractive such covers may be - but the acid test is how such items are valued by collectors. Most likely, a correctly franked cover will hold greater value, reflecting its authenticity.

In order to interpret the postage paid for the covers illustrated, it is necessary to understand the relevant postal tariffs that were in force in September 1944:

Internal mail (>10km, <20 grams)	20c
Registered mail surcharge (internal)	20c
Registered mail surcharge (foreign)	30c
Express mail surcharge	60c
Foreign mail surface rate	30c
Air mail surcharge (Europe, <20g)	20c
Air mail surcharge (USA, per 5g)	70c

One further point needs to be considered: it would appear that the instructions for use of the special stamp and postage rates did not clarify whether the stamp covered just the airmail surcharge or included the basic postal rate of 20c.

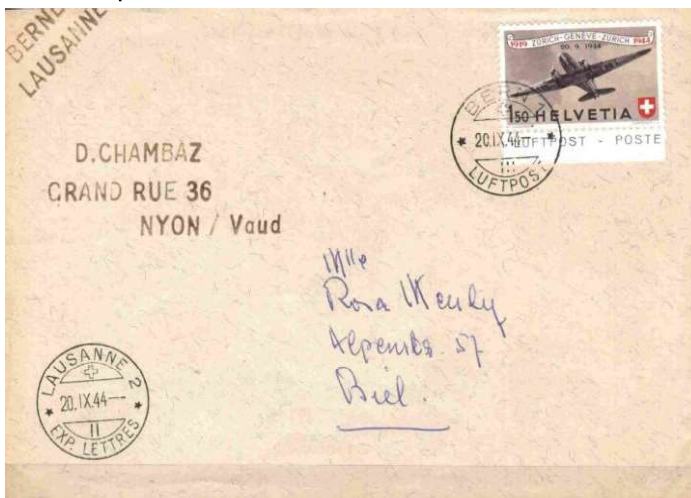


Fig. 1



Fig. 2

Figure 1: Bern to Lausanne. The basic postage for internal letters on the flight was 150 centimes so this straightforward cover was correctly franked. Flew the second leg Bern-Lausanne, then entered the surface postal system for onwards carriage (back northwards) to Biel.

Figure 2: Geneva to Zürich. Registered + express. Air-mail postage was 150 centimes, registered surcharge 20c and internal express surcharge 40c. Correctly franked.



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Fig. 3



Fig. 4

Figure 3: Geneva to Zürich. No additional service required so the basic postage of 150 centimes was over-franked by 60c, obviously for decorative/philatelic purposes.

Figure 4: Lausanne to Zürich. Registered surcharge was 20c - overpaid by 10c. Flew on the last stage of the outward flight, then forwarded from Geneva to Zürich by normal postal service.

Section 5. Interpretation of Covers Internationally.



Fig. 5

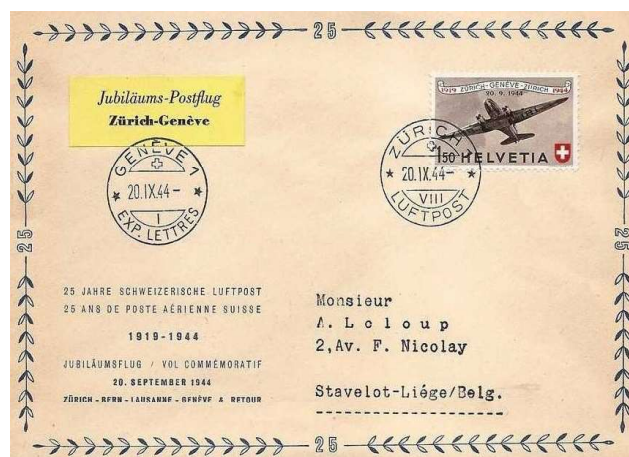


Fig. 6

Figure 5: Liechtenstein. Letter flown from Geneva to Zürich. The postal rates for Liechtenstein were the same as Switzerland. This letter is perfectly paid with 150 centimes for the special flight + 20 centimes domestic registration for a total of 170 centimes.

Figure 6: Belgium. Letter flown from Zürich to Geneva. The 150 centimes special stamp included basic letter postage for domestic mail and for surface mail to foreign countries. This cover required no special services and it is correctly paid. Air mail from Switzerland to Belgium was suspended at this time. The letter travelled by rail/bus/truck to Belgium. (The final part of this article will be published next month.)

RECENT ARTICLES IN AHPS's 'TELL'

The Editor of 'Tell', George Struble, and his colleague Robert Wightman were very busy last Summer translating three extremely interesting specialist articles. George published the translations in the November 2011 edition of the AHPS's journal. They are :

- 'The Stamps of Geneva of the Transition Period; "Vaud" and "Neuchâtel" by Jean-Pierre Vuilleumier (CphH, CEPL).
- 'Signatures, Certificates, Repairs and Falsifications' by Jean-Claude Marchand. Both these articles were first published in the SBZ in March 2011.
- 'Disinfected Mail During the Hoof and Mouth Disease Epidemic: Part 1' by Reinhard Stutz first published in the first edition of the new philatelic journal 'Post & Geschichte'.