

# Refused Mail of Switzerland

## Purpose of Exhibit

This exhibit traces Refusé markings on Swiss mail before and after the 1891 agreement by the Universal Postal Union to standardize official markings on returned mail.

## Organization of Exhibit

The evolution of marking refused mail in Switzerland can be divided into these periods:

### 1850's - 1880 [Frame 1]

Hand stamp on refused letter.  
Handwritten *refusé*, or German equivalent.  
1873 signatures required to confirm refusal.

### 1865 - 1890 [Frame 2]

Pre-UPU international return handstamps and labels.  
1887 Swiss follow German proposal and test bilingual green labels on returned mail.

### 1891 - 1908 [Frame 3]

1891 UPU adopts regulations regarding returned international mail.  
Swiss formally adopts UPU protocols.  
Uses rouletted bilingual green labels on domestic and international mail.

### 1909 - 1923 [Frame 4]

Trilingual green labels introduced.  
1918 black ink for trilingual labels.

### 1924 - 1933 [Frame 5]

Black labels perforated and format changed.

### 1930's - 1985 [Frame 6]

Retour hand stamps used.  
1937 sans-serif font introduced.  
Mid-20th century changes, rouletted labels.

### Special Situations [Frame 7]

Right of Refusal of unsolicited publications.  
Zürich carriers sign labels.

Items of special interest are outlined in red.  
Explanatory notes accompany the item descriptions.

## Types of Items Most Frequently Refused

Nachnahme – Most common were demands for cash. Many businesses mailed bills to customers and the mail carrier collected the amounts due. An accounting system tracked the collection of this money. If the addressee refused to pay, the sender was informed by the return of the 'refused' correspondence, which was tracked by postal employees.

Postage Due – Many pieces were commercial cards and letters from companies advertising services and products. Why would a business pay to receive advertising (junk mail) in which they had no interest?

The forwarding of foreign mail to Switzerland often created postage due items. After the addressee refused to pay the tax and penalties, these items were marked and returned to the country of origin.

Registered and Official Letters – Refused items in this category were often the result of the addressee being party to a legal dispute, or not being available to receive the registered letter. Money was also collected by registered mail.

Subscriptions, Advertising, and Memberships – Within this category one sees requests for publication subscriptions, or payments due for printed advertising within a publication. Also, organizations collected dues in this manner. These items are most often post cards or wrappers.

International – Incoming examples of foreign mail refused in Switzerland are shown with return labels applied in compliance to the 1891 UPU regulations. The exhibit shows some outgoing Swiss mail refused in the receiving country and returned to Switzerland. These items demonstrate how other countries interpreted returned mail guidelines.

Publications for Review – In 1884 publishers were allowed to send publication samples to people for review. The review period was four days, at which point the publication could be returned post free to the sender. There were special labels created for this specific service. Very few exist today.