

Reflecting the Rise of Tourism During La Belle Epoque

Hotel Schweizerhof, Luzern: 1871-1914

Purpose

The exhibit illustrates the social history of postal communication to and from the Hotel Schweizerhof, Luzern, Switzerland, during the period known as La Belle Epoque, 1871 to 1914.

This forty-three year period, free of European war and characterized by economic prosperity and optimism, saw a burst of cultural, scientific, and technological innovation, which all led to a boom in tourism.

Industrialization of the late 19th Century created wealth, and the *nouveau riche*, along with traditional aristocrats, chose to tour Europe with their families and servants. The expansion of railways during this period facilitated faster travel to more destinations. In ten European countries, track mileage increased 530% from 47,980 miles in 1860 to 257,750 miles in 1900. Tourists took advantage of this improved transportation system for Grand Tours in a Grand Style.

The Hauser Brothers, owners of the Schweizerhof and many other hotels, catered to the high-end traveller by providing luxury services. Their advertising emphasized the convenience of the hotel's central location in Europe along with the dazzling view of Lake Luzern from its shores to the summits of Pilatus and Rigi. One of the most important services the hotel provided was processing incoming and outgoing correspondence for both guests and hotel business. The mail room was the nerve center of the hotel just as the internet is to travelers today.

The Hotel

The hotel was built in 1844 by Xaver and Josef Plazidus, with a major expansion in 1855 prior to the purchase by three Hauser Brothers in 1861. In 1865 the Luzernerhof Hotel was built adjacent to the Schweizerhof, totalling 600 rooms combined under Hauser management in Luzern. In the decades that followed the Hausers upgraded guest and public rooms, and extended the outdoor gardens. The last major renovations were completed in 2013-14 under the direction of the present owners Michael and Patrick Hauser, who continue the family business.

Scope

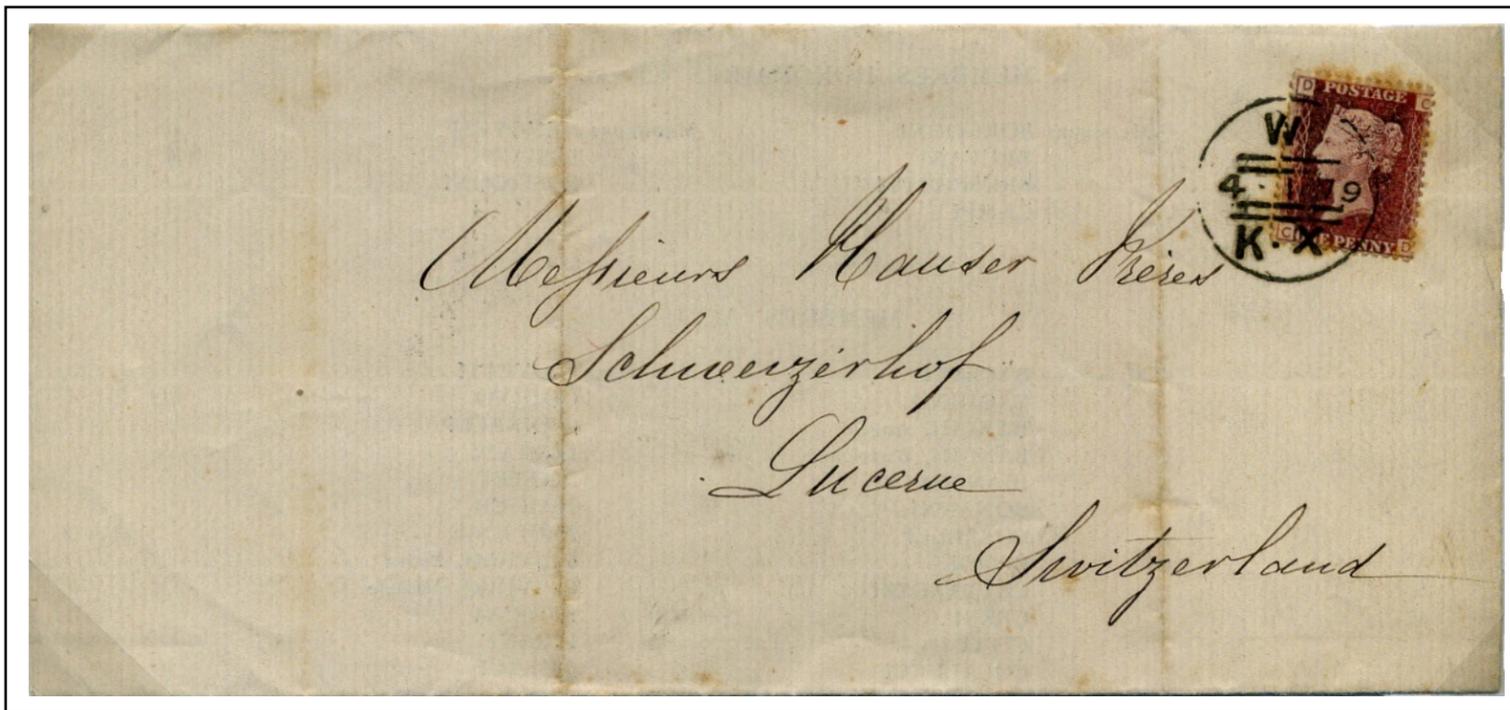
Examples of personal and business communications are shown which transited the mail room of this luxury Swiss hotel. Postal items originating from, or addressed to, the following countries are exhibited: Argentina, Austria, Baden, Bavaria, Belgium, Canada, Canary Islands, Denmark, Egypt, El Salvador, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, Monaco, Japan, Serbia, Sweden, and the United States.

Types of international and domestic communication include: 1st class letters, registered letters, value letters, printed matter, letter cards, postal cards, picture postcards, postage due, forwarded, returned, and unclaimed mail.



Early letter prior to hotel purchase by the Hauser Brothers and the start of the Franco-Prussian War.

16 September 1856
from Paris, France.
To Post Restante, Bern,
received 18 September,
forwarded to Hotel Schweizerhof,
Luzern 19 September,
reforwarded to Hotel Baur au Lac,
Zürich, received 20 September.
Pre-UPU international letter.



4 January 1879 from London.
International printed matter.

Advertisement for services
hotel guests might require.

Membership list of the Société Des Courriers Italiens, 38 Golden Square, London
"The nobility and gentry are respectfully informed that they will always find at the above office Experienced and Respectable COURIERS and TRAVELLING SERVANTS, possessing the highest testimonials. Letters addressed to the Secretary, J. Fondatori shall be immediately attended to." London Morning Post, 26 February 1862.

Exhibit Organization

Frame 1 - 1856-1887
Early markings by Swiss hotels.
Expansion of the European rail system
First hotel date stamp (rectangular)
First hotel corner card.
Second hotel date stamp (oval)
Forwarded guest mail

Frame 2 - 1888-1895
First circular hotel date stamp
Not claimed, forwarded, registered mail
Self advertising
Variety of destinations and origins
Incoming postage due

Frame 3 - 1895-1901
Destinations and origins
Modified circular hotel date stamp
UPU 25th Anniversary issue
Officially sealed

Frame 4 - 1901-1913
Second circular hotel date stamp
Destinations
Hotel postcards
Forwarded and returned mail
Third circular hotel date stamp
Conclusion

Hauser Owned Hotels

The Hauser family was a major player in the hotel industry and controlled properties offering over 3000 beds to travelers.

- Luzern - Schweizerhof 400 Beds
- Luzernerhof 200
- Mount Rigi - Rigi Scheideck 280
- Bern - Schweizerhof 120
- Gurnigel Bad 560
- Weissenburg Bad 460
- Oberland - Hotel Giessbach 400
- Grand Hotel - Mürren 360
- Chur - Hotel Steinbock 150
- Ospedaletti, Italy - Hotel de la Reine 200
- Spezia - Grand Hotel Spezia 100
- Naples - Grand Hotel 200