

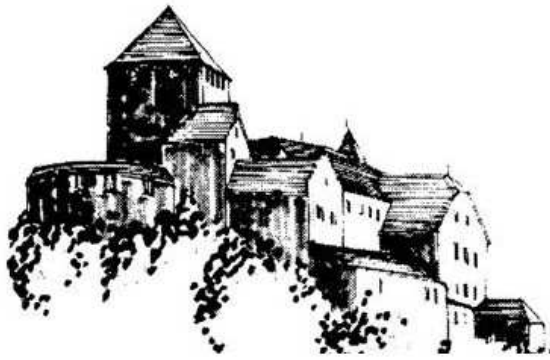
A Philatelic profile of the Principality of Liechtenstein

By Giorgio Migliavacca ©

Nestled in the heart of Europe, between Switzerland and Austria, the Principality of Liechtenstein first issued its own stamps in 1912; prior to that Liechtenstein postal arrangements were administered by Austria and Austrian stamps were used. This situation originated in 1817 when the Principality's first post office was opened at Balzers. Between 1815 and 1866 the country was a member of the German Confederation, and in 1850, when Austria issued its first postage stamps they were available in Liechtenstein too; this arrangement continued until 1912, but even then Austrian stamps continued to be used up until 1921, either alone or in conjunction with the local stamps. As special treaties with Austria-Hungary came to an end after World War I, the Austrian liaison ended in February 1920 to the possible regret of some postal history collectors who specialize in old covers.



The history of Liechtenstein goes back to 800 B.C. when the area was colonized by the Rhaetians. The Romans took a keen interest in the Alpine region after they eventually conquered the area in 15 B.C.; and in due course other external influences made their inroads in the small villages. Christianity was introduced in the 4th century. With the demise of the Roman Empire the Alemanni settled in; the area then became part of the German Dukedom and two main settlements emerged — Vaduz and Schellenberg. By 1342 Vaduz had become a County and in 1434 it then united with the Lordship of Schellenberg. This arrangement continued for quite a few centuries, but in the early 1700s Prince Eugene of Savoy managed to repulse the Turks and as a result Austria became a super power and things changed for the better. On 23 January 1719 Vaduz and Schellenberg merged and were elevated to the rank of the Imperial Principality of Liechtenstein. Seven years earlier Prince Johann Adam of Liechtenstein, in a drive to seize a seat in the government had acquired the Lordship of Schellenberg.



In 1806, with Napoleon conquering large portions of the old continent, Liechtenstein achieved sovereignty and became a member of the Rhine Confederacy. In 1815, after Bonaparte's demise, the Vienna Congress established a new order and Liechtenstein became part of the German Confederation. Then in 1866 the Confederation was dissolved and this resulted in the final separation of Liechtenstein from Germany; the local

army was dissolved in 1868 and since then the peaceful Principality has happily been without one. From a political viewpoint, the country benefitted from the 1862 granting of a constitution which provided for people's representation in the local Diet; this was followed, in 1921, by the granting of a liberal and democratic constitution that still holds good in our day and age. The Swiss Franc has been the legal currency of Liechtenstein since 1924.

During the Renaissance and after, when communications improved throughout Europe, Liechtenstein found itself on the main postal route from Milan to Lindau — the Splügen Highway. Speed was of the essence and a well organized postal network included two postal stations at Balzers and Schaan where the Guild of Fussach Couriers had a postal monopoly. The Guild was largely controlled by the powerful family and firm, Spehler and Weiss, who had been postal couriers since 1507.

The Milanese couriers ensured a regular weekly service along this vital route. Under the Austrian influx, in 1770, when a state post was sanctioned in Vorarlberg and Tyrol efforts were made by Vienna to limit the local courier activity to the Chur-Fussach segment of the postal route; but in the course of time it was recognized that it was better to reach a compromise since mail contraband was easily carried out in such a mountainous region.

As we have mentioned earlier, in 1817 an Austrian letter collecting office was established on September 1st at Balzers, a relatively small village with a population of 750, and Ferdinand Wolfinger became the first postmaster of the Imperial Posts in Liechtenstein; as a result, for two years the local postal couriers were again out of business except for conveyance of goods and travelers. The limitations on local couriers was the subject of a court litigation and eventually the Fussach couriers won the appeal and regained their rights resulting in the closure of the Austrian office on 31 August 1819. Chancellor Metternich himself was quite happy with this development since he had been opposed to any litigation with the local couriers.

The activation of new routes via Arlberg and Schollbergh over the Swiss Alps had a rather negative effect on the Splügen route, which lost most of its importance. Spehler and Weiss and the Fussach couriers surrendered their rights and the Austrian authorities reopened the Balzers postal facility on 1 January 1827; the first postmarks make their appearance around this time, and once more, Wolfinger was in charge. In 1839, Balzers was elevated from rural post office to fully-fledged Royal, Imperial post office; it must be noted that pre-adhesive letters dated between 1827 and 1839 with the Balzers postmark (italic capitals, no date) are very elusive and are priced accordingly. A similar postmark with day and month added below "Balzer" was introduced in 1839; usually struck in red ink, this postmark was struck in black during the early years of its life and as such is of the greatest rarity.



The Lindau Messenger was a courier service operated between Lindau at Lake Constance and the Italian city of Milan up to the beginning of the 19th century. The Lindau Messenger transported goods, money and letters, crossing through areas of Germany, Austria, Liechtenstein, Switzerland and Italy on his way. Each of the first four countries named is currently issuing its own stamp on this topic. The Liechtenstein stamp "Lindauer Bote" (value: CHF 1.40) shows suitable pictorial elements and gives the names of each stop. In addition, the altitude profile of the route, which reached its peak on Splügen Pass at 2113 metres above sea level, is depicted on the small 8-stamp sheet. The exact date when the Lindau Messenger started to operate is not documented. However, it is assumed that he was already travelling along the arduous route on a fairly regular basis towards the end of the 15th century. In good weather, he completed the journey in five-and-a-half days but in snow and ice the trip took quite a bit longer.

At that time, Lindau and Milan were trading centres and re-loading points at crossroads of traffic routes. They thus became the points of departure for transports across the Alps. The messenger brought home luxury goods such as silk, gold thread, textiles of all kinds, exotic fruit and weapons. In return, simpler materials such as linen and fustian as well as wool, leather, fur, saddles along with copper, tin and silver were sent to Italy. There is much to suggest that there was actually nothing that was not transported on the pack animals as long as it was possible to do so in smaller quantities.

Towards the end of the 17th and at the beginning of the 18th century, individual travellers were also allowed to accompany the messenger, the most famous of whom was Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. He used the guidance of the Lindau Messenger across the Alps in May 1788 when returning to Germany from his travels in Italy and paid 122 guilders for it. In 1826 the transport services of the Lindau Messenger were stopped for political and economic reasons. [Source: Liechtenstein Philatelic Bureau]

On 1 March 1845, a second post office was opened at Vaduz (population 950) the capital of the Principality and the seat of the Central Postal Administration since 1822. At that time the capital was still named "Vadutz", but later on the "T" was dropped. Johann Georg Rheinberger was the postmaster at Vaduz between 1845 and 1868. Mail was postmarked with a device reading VADUTZ (italic capitals, no date) struck in black ink.

In 1840 daily despatches of mail took place between Liechtenstein and Feldkirch, and two years later daily postal communications were activated between Lindau, Feldkirch, Vaduz, Balzers and Chur. Feldkirch was the obvious bureau of exchange for mail from Vaduz. Between 1827 and 1831 the Feldkirch post office postmarked such mail adding an oval postmark incised with the words FÜRSTL. LICHTENSTEIN on two lines and with the first "e" of Liechtenstein missing.

With the 1850 novelty of Austrian stamps, which were valid in the Principality, the postal traffic gradually increased and the need for new postal facilities made itself very evident. As a result, new offices were opened at Nendeln (1864), Schaan (1872), Triesen (1890), and Eschen which superseded Nendeln in 1912. Although issued on 1st June 1850, the first stamps of Austria appear not to have had immediate postal use in the Principality and the earliest letter with an Austrian stamp used in Liechtenstein is dated 1852. Meanwhile the population of the Principality had gone from 2,000 at the beginning of the 1800s to about 9,000 in 1870.

The postal arrangements with Austria came under scrutiny in 1907, when the local postmasters became vocal about a pay increase and petitioned the government to negotiate a new treaty giving the Principality the right to issue its own postage stamps to increase revenue and make increases in salaries possible. The proposal had undeniable qualities but was ignored by Chancellor Von der Maur. However, two stamp collectors, Rudolf Caspart of Innsbruck and Hugo Krotzsch of Leipzig successfully lobbied the Chancellor and in September 1910 the Leipzig firm of Giesecke & Devrient was invited to prepare essays. This was quickly accomplished, and on 26 March 1911 the essays were on the Chancellor's desk.

In May 1911 Liechtenstein submitted a new draft treaty to Vienna asking sovereignty and the right to issue its own postage stamps, but the Austrian reaction was mixed and certain conditions were ruled out. Nevertheless the proposal of issuing stamps was accepted, and it was then decided that the widely used denominations of 5, 10 and 25 heller had to be adopted and furthermore the Liechtenstein stamps had to resemble those issued by Austria. The printing job was to be given to the Vienna-based Austrian State Printing Works, and all stocks were to be under the direct control of the Austrian authorities. The arrangement envisaged that the Viennese General Post Office would market the stamps to collectors and Vaduz credited with the proceeds, less costs.

On 2 February 1912 the Principality of Liechtenstein officially issued its first stamps; as expected they consisted of three basic denominations - 5, 10 and 25 heller. The design by Koloman Moser features a portrait of Prince Johann II facing to the right enclosed by a rather elaborate frame and a ribbon inscribed with the words in German "Imperial, Royal Austrian Post - In the Principality of Liechtenstein" and at the top right corner is the Liechtenstein coat of arms. The design was finely engraved by Ferdinand Schirnböck, and the trio was printed in typography by the Austrian State Printing Works in Vienna. The source of this design is a medal engraved in 1910 by the medalist Hujer in commemoration of the Prince's 70th birthday.

Stamps were to be ready for sale on January 1st but delays caused a postponement, however some postmasters started to sell them as early as January 27th.



1917 25 heller with the larger portrait of Prince Johann II

To a great extent the design and the adopted colours (green, rose and blue) were inspired by the lower denominations of Austria's 1908 definitive series. The demand by collectors was brisk and the Philatelic Bureau in Vienna used throughout February 1912, a circular cancellation inscribed "VADUZ" and the letter "b" to produce cancelled-to-order sets. New supplies became necessary in 1915 and the reprints can be recognized because of two reasons: 1) they are on thin unsurfaced paper instead of the thick surfaced paper used in 1912 and 2) the colours are slightly different. The 25h ultramarine on thin unsurfaced paper (S.G. 6) is rather scarce and is conservatively priced by Stanley Gibbons at £300 mint and £100 used.

On 1 October 1916, Austria increased its postal rates making Liechtenstein's stamps obsolete, but the problem was remedied on 15 June 1917, when five different new denominations were issued. There were some innovations too in the design; the 3 and 5 heller featured the coat of arms of the Principality, while the higher denominations (10, 15 and 25 heller) revived the earlier design. The coat of arms was omitted, thereby allowing a larger portrait of the prince. In November 1918 a 20 heller deep green value was added to the series.

During the same year the Principality was celebrating the Diamond Jubilee of Prince Johann II who had reigned since 1858; to mark the special occasion a commemorative stamp was issued on 12 November in the same design as the 1917 series but with the dates "1858-1918" in the upper corners. Interestingly enough, this was the last stamp to appear under the Austrian arrangement.



An elaborate coat of arms adorns seven of the eight imperforate values issued in 1920

With Austria defeated and the collapse of the Habsburg monarchy, Liechtenstein decided to take care of its own postal affairs. As postal arrangements with Austria came to an end, in 1920, the rights of the Fussach couriers were seriously diminished and Spheler and Weiss was authorized to carry mail between Chur and Feldkirch.

On March 1st, 1920 Austria ceased to control the Liechtenstein postal service but Austrian stamps remained in use until 21 January 1921.

While the re-organization was underway remainders of the 1917 definitives were overprinted with an arabesque design which obliterated the pre-existing "K.K. OESTERR. POST" inscription. Three new higher denominations (40 h., 1 kr. and 2½ kr) were provided as well as properly amended lower denominations (5, 10 and 25 h.). These stamps are found with inverted overprints, double overprints, flawed letters in the overprint, shifted overprints, and overprints on the gummed side.

The 1920 issues heralded a postally independent Liechtenstein, but as expected certain "growing pains" were around the corner. The new stamps were handled by a syndicate on behalf of the local postal authorities, but this however proved unsatisfactory. The syndicate included stamp dealers and the market was soon flooded with "errors". These liberties harmed the reputation of Liechtenstein for many years, but this experience also had its positive effects as the postal authorities had learned a painful but sobering lesson. From there on the Principality's issuing policy has remained unblemished and its reputation among collectors has gone from strength to strength.

A new arrangement was reached with the Swiss government whereby Liechtenstein became an autonomous postal administration within the postal domain of Switzerland. The new agreement, a great improvement on the previous one by far, was implemented beginning on 1 February 1921, when Swiss postal rates and currency came into effect.

The designs of the 1920 definitive series were commissioned to Luigi Kasimir (a member of the syndicate) and his wife Tana Koernes. The new series consist of imperforate (8 values) and perforate stamps (15 values); the design for all the imperf denominations up to 40 heller inclusive, and the perf 5, 10, 15, 20 and 30 heller, features the elaborate coat of arms framed with a badge and shield of the golden fleece, topped by the crown. The shield incorporates the coat of arms of Friedrich von Liechtenstein in the center of the field; then clockwise from top left, the badge of the House of Silesia featuring an eagle with a cross and crescent on its breast, the badge of the House of Kuringia, the badge of the County of Eastern Friesland (Earldom of Rittberg) featuring an eagle with a crowned maiden's head, the badge of the Duchy of Jaegersdorf featuring a golden hunting horn, and the shield of the Duchy of Troppau. The 1 krone, both perf and imperf, feature a view of the Castle of Vaduz enclosed in a highly ornamented oval frame surmounted by a crown. Completing the perforate values are: a 25 h. featuring the Chapel of St. Mamertius, 40 h. Gutenberg Castle, 50 h. view of the entrance to the Vaduz Castle, 60 h. the Red House of Vaduz, 80 h. the bell tower of the St. Vincent Church at Schaan, 2 k. the Bendern Church, 5 k. Prince Johann I, 7½ k. Prince Johann II, 10 k. two cherubs holding the Principality's coat of arms. These stamps were printed in large quantities ranging from 1.5 to over 10 million, except for the 5 k. of which some 891,043 were printed. To complete the range of stamps necessary, some 12 postage due stamps were issued in July 1920. Having engraved his designs, Kasimir directly supervised the production of these stamps at the Vienna printers, Paulussen & Co.



Beginning in 1924, the stamps of Liechtenstein were also printed in Switzerland

Kasimir is also the author of the design for a three-value set featuring a Madonna and celebrating the 80th birthday of Prince Johann II.

As expected, the 1920 definitives produced an unprecedented number of varieties, some occasioned by faulty workmanship but many more purposely made to milk the stamp market. Due to post-war shortages various types of paper were used, and various batches of ink were mixed without the required consistency which resulted in numerous shades and, in many cases, in stamps that seem to be printed on a surface tinted paper.

In February 1921 the agreement with Switzerland came into being, and stamps denominated in rappen and francs were issued. The Swiss currency definitive consisted of 15 values; the lower denomination up to the 15 rappen featured the coat of arms flanked by two cherubs; the Chapel of St. Mamertius adorned the 20 rappen, 25 r. Vaduz Castle, 30 r Bendern Church, 35 r Prince Johann II, 40 r Schaan Church, 50 r Gutenberg Church, 80 r Vaduz' Red House, and the 1 franc red depicted a view of the Rhine Valley at Vaduz. These stamps were once again recess-printed at Paulussen & Co., Vienna.

The new liaison with Switzerland developed into more appreciable economic links, and a Customs Treaty was signed in 1923 which came into force in 1924 making the Swiss Franc the legal tender of the Principality. We can actually observe how the stamps of this micro-state not only reflect historic developments but they even anticipate and in a way accelerate them.

Beginning in 1924 all new issues were printed in Switzerland, mostly at the Berne Mint but also at Berne's Landestopographie and at Orell Füssli in Zürich. New printers, new designs and new designers gave the Principality's stamps a new look, a distinctive, conservative, yet more modern style.

During these years, apart from definitive stamps, the new issues commemorated the 85th and 87th birthday of the Prince, leading to the 1928 set of eight stamps saluting the 70th Anniversary of his accession. In 1929 the old Prince died and was succeeded by Franz I. His accession to the throne was greeted with a set of four stamps printed in photogravure at the Wiener Kunstdruck in Vienna which marked the revival of the collaboration with Viennese printers. The 1930 definitive, printed by the Vienna-based Rosenbaum Brothers, featured people, landmarks and panoramas of the Principality with the top denomination portraying Prince Franz I and Princess Elsa. This series comes in a variety of perforations and offers a wide scope for the specialist with some of the rare compound perforations valued at \$5,000. During the same year the Rosenbaums also printed an airmail definitive series of six values



The Vaduz Castle, so often depicted on Liechtenstein stamps, dates back to the 12th century. In 1499 the Castle was burned down by the troops of the Swiss Confederacy and later on rebuilt with two round towers added to it. The walls of these towers are at least 15 feet thick. The structure was expanded in the 16th century, and in 1905 Prince Johann II approved funds for renovation work. The castle is the signature landmark of the Principality and houses the world-famous art gallery of the Princes of Liechtenstein.

which has become a big favourite with collectors because of the subjects depicted on the stamps, such as monoplanes and biplanes flying over the Principality.

1930 also marked the opening of the Postal Museum of Liechtenstein; the project materialised when the sketches, essays, proofs, documents and other interesting material were merged with philatelic holdings of the post office together with the donation of a large philatelic estate by the International Philatelic Society. In addition, Consul Hermann E. Sieger from LorchNVurttemberg also donated a large stamp collection. It was actually impossible to display all this interesting material and only selections were exhibited, but in 1975 the Museum was refurbished providing a larger display area consisting of over 300 frames as well as state-of-the-art protection for the impressive philatelic holdings and collections.

On 1 June 1931, in connection with mail carried on the Graf Zeppelin airship the Principality issued two airmail stamps depicting the airship flying over the Alps. These two popular stamps were printed in photogravure by the Wiener Kunstdruck and are inscribed at the bottom, "ZEPPELIN POST".

1934 saw the First Liechtenstein Philatelic Exhibition which was held at Vaduz; to mark the event and in connection with the Liechtenstein Agricultural Exhibition, the top denomination of the 1933-35 definitive was re-issued in a different colour (chocolate instead of dull mauve) and in a miniature sheet format (S.G. MS144). Printed at the Austrian State Printing Works in Vienna on granite unwatermarked paper, the miniature sheet is one of the most coveted items of Liechtenstein philately,

its market value nowadays, ranges £1,000 in mint condition, and almost double in used condition. Issued on 29 September, the miniature sheet had a very short life and its postal validity ended on 15 October.

Stamp exhibitions are held from time to time in Vaduz; the fourth stamp show was celebrated with a miniature sheet marking the 25th anniversary of the postal agreement with Switzerland, 1921-1946. The sixth edition in 1956 received a philatelic tribute with a 20 rappen stamp depicting the young Prince Hans Adam. The Hereditary Prince was also the subject of a two-stamp set celebrating the 10th Liechtenstein Philatelic Exhibition (LIBA) in 1982.

The renowned Courvoisier of La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland, was first contracted by the Principality in 1933 when it produced a set of three stamps saluting Prince Franz I 80th Birthday. These stamps made a favourable impression and Courvoisier, a printing firm specializing in newspapers, was able to attract new contracts for stamps from Switzerland and Luxembourg. Eventually, stamp production became the mainstay of Courvoisier, and by the 1960s the company had produced stamps for over fifty postal administrations worldwide. It was indeed Courvoisier that produced the two 1936 Liechtenstein air mail stamps depicting the Hindenburg flying over the Schaan Church and the Graf Zeppelin over the Schaan Airport.

Prince Franz I died in 1938 and was succeeded by Franz Josef II; the following year a 5 Franc stamp portraying the new Prince was issued marking the beginning of his 51-year reign. On 7 March 1943 he married Countess Georgina von Wildczek, and the event was celebrated by a set of three stamps. The following year new 2 and 3 Francs stamps portraying Franz Josef II and Princess Georgina, respectively, were printed by Courvoisier and issued. Princess Gina, as she was affectionately known to her subjects, and Prinz Franz Josef were honoured and loved by the entire nation and their union was blessed by the birth of Hans Adam in 1945. A set of three stamps saluting the auspicious event was released on 9 April.

Princess Gina, a member of an ancient Austro-Hungarian noble family, was a graduate of the University of Vienna; she was fluent in English, French, Italian and, of course, German. Her genuine interest in many developmental and charitable endeavours gained her unconditional love from the people of the Principality.

Charity stamps were first issued in 1925 for local organisations, and then again in 1927. In 1928 a set of four stamps to help raise relief funds for the victims of the Rhine flood disaster was issued; and in 1932 three stamps had a surtax to raise funds for the Child Welfare Fund.

After World War II the popularity of thematic stamp collecting made itself felt even in Vaduz, and the post-war issues show a clear trend in this direction. Just as well, since most of the heraldic and landmark themes had been widely utilized for the issues of the first four decades. A set of 12 definitive stamps issued in 1951 depicted men, women and children engaged in various agricultural activities.

The Princes of Liechtenstein have been art collectors for centuries and their love for famous paintings and painters is easily told by the many stamps issued by the Principality. In 1951 three stamps featuring masterpieces by Cuyp, Hals and Ruysdael were released, followed in 1952 by more stamps depicting masterworks by Savoldo, Botticelli, and Andrea del Sarto. More paintings appeared on special issues of 1949, 1953, 1975, 1976, 1982 and 1985.



Pioneers of Philately were honoured by the Principality; pictured here is a 1972 stamp portraying the first professional stamp expert of Italy, Emilio Diena (1860-1941). Diena wrote definitive treatises on the stamps of Sicily, Naples and Modena. He was also instrumental in laying the foundations of organised philately in Italy.



The Yuletide atmosphere is perfectly captured by this 1992 Christmas stamp depicting the Chapel of St. Mamertius at Triesen

An eye-catching set of ten air mail stamps was issued in 1948 to highlight pioneers of flight from Leonardo da Vinci to Mongolfier and Wilbur Wright. The normal set is priced at about \$50/\$75, but the imperforate version is very scarce and runs into the thousands of dollars.

Three stamps carrying a small premium to benefit the Red Cross were issued on 27 November 1945; they depict first aid, mother and children, and nurse and invalid. The tenth anniversary of the Liechtenstein Red Cross (1945-1955) was celebrated by a set of four stamps featuring the Hereditary Prince. In later years three stamps for the Red Cross Centenary were released in 1963; and following the tradition established by his father, Prince Wenzel was featured on a 1970 stamp commemorating the 25th anniversary of the Liechtenstein Red Cross.

International ski racing has become very popular during the last decades and winter sports have grown accordingly in the Principality, so much so, that in 1974 at the Alpine Skiing World Championship in St. Moritz, Hanni Wenzel and Willi Frommelt won gold, silver and bronze medals. Again in 1978 in Garmisch, Liechtenstein won five World Championship medals. In the meantime, in 1976, the two Liechtenstein ski champions won the first olympic medals. Four years later at the American Lake Placid,

Hanni Wenzel was acclaimed as the Queen of Winter Olympics. Liechtenstein publicized the Lake Placid Winter Olympics with a set of three stamps. Cross country skiing, figure skating and other winter sports are featured on a four-stamp set issued in 1971 to salute the Sapporo, Japan, Winter Olympics. With Liechtenstein's victories in winter sports, 1975 saw another set of four stamps for the Innsbruck Winter Olympics, while in 1991 a three-stamp set publicised the Albertville Winter Olympics. In very recent times Liechtenstein issued three stamps for the Olympic Winter Games held at Nagano, Japan.

Christmas is a very special time for Liechtenstein and this is reflected by the many Yuletide issues beginning in 1957. These stamps feature festive and religious subjects including churches, monastic sculptures, glass paintings, capitals in the Chur Cathedral, stained glass, and St Nicholas.

Within one month, in the autumn of 1989, Prince Franz Josef II and Princess Gina died; both were loved by the people and the Prince was regarded as a skilled statesman and "Landesvater" (father of the nation). In their memory two special stamps were released in 1990. The 2 Francs denomination features a smiling Princess Gina, while the Prince with his perceptive look is portrayed on the 3 Francs stamp. The designs were done by Vaduz artist Hans Peter Gassner.

The 75th anniversary of the first stamps of the Principality was saluted in 1987 by a 2f. commemorative stamp featuring a portrait of Prince Alois enclosed by a frame borrowed from the design of the 1912 issue.

Since his accession in 1989, Prince Hans Adam II has been featured on a number of stamps, so has Princess Marie and Crown Prince Alois. In 1992 to salute the National Stamp Exhibition (LIBA 92) and celebrate their Silver Wedding Anniversary, Hans Adam and Marie were handsomely featured on a miniature sheet.

Liechtenstein has been in favour of European unity since the post-war years and this is reflected by the regular "Europa" stamps issued by the Principality. Presently Liechtenstein maintains permanent representation in the Council Of Europe, in Strasbourg. A mini economic giant, the country has made enormous progress in the second part of this century ; the yearly budget has recently exceeded 400 million Swiss Francs (\$300 million). In 1990 Liechtenstein was admitted to full membership to the United Nations and the historic development was recorded by a commemorative stamp issued on 4 March 1991, depicting the U.N. emblem and a dove.

Liechtenstein stamps have long been a steady source of revenue for the micro-state; because of their captivating designs combined with a sober issuing policy they enjoy tremendous popularity with collectors in neighbouring countries such as Switzerland, Austria, Italy, Germany and also with philatelists worldwide. The Vaduz Philatelic Bureau publishes a very informative and lavishly produced Bulletin two or three times every year. This publication and recent stamps can be obtained from: Postwertzeichenstelle der Regierung (Philatelic Bureau). FL-9490 Vaduz, Principality of Liechtenstein, Europe.

Collectors wishing to expand their knowledge may want to purchase the following book: "Liechtenstein Stamps and their background 1912-1973" by Marian Carne Zinsmeister.



Religious themes are an integral part of the philatelic tradition of the tiny Principality. The 1996 Christmas issue shows the symbols of the Evangelists from a very rare incunabulum of the 9th century at the St. Gall Abbey archives





1st February 2012 marked the hundredth anniversary of the appearance at the country's then five post offices (Balzers, Triesen, Vaduz, Schaan and Nendeln) of the first three Liechtenstein definitives. These three stamps, printed on chalksurfaced paper and with face values 5, 10 and 25 Heller, bore the image of the then reigning Prince Johann II of Liechtenstein (1840 – 1929). The inscription “K.K. Austrian Post in the Principality of Liechtenstein” referred to the fact that the Liechtenstein Post Office established on 1st January 1912 under an agreement made in October 1911 remained under Austrian administration. With the special issue “100 Years of Liechtenstein Stamps” Philately Liechtenstein highlights this special anniversary. The graphic designer HP Gassner charged with designing the issue was given the brief not to create a purely nostalgic stamp, but to produce a contemporary design based on a traditional approach. What came of this is a series showing the four Princes who have reigned since the appearance of the first Liechtenstein stamp, each portrayed against a differently coloured background on which the years from 1912 to 2012 appear in Roman numerals. The first Liechtenstein stamps appeared during the reign of Johann II, known as “Johann the Good” (face value CHF 1.00), whose portrait also adorned the first stamp. Johann II died in 1929 and was succeeded by his brother Franz I (face value CHF 1.40), who reigned for nine years as Regent of the small Principality. Being without issue, he was succeeded on his death by his great nephew Franz Josef II (face value CHF 2.20), to whom the discharge of governmental responsibilities had been entrusted since 1930. Franz Josef II, who as first Regent made Vaduz his principal place of residence, was the father of the present Prince Hans Adam II (face value CHF 2.80). Prince Hans Adam II assumed responsibility for the affairs of state after the death of his father in 1989, passing it in turn to his son Alois in 2004. [Source: Liechtenstein Philatelic Bureau]



Liechtenstein can look back over a long archeological tradition. Typical examples from numerous epochs are exhibited among other places in the Liechtenstein National Museum in Vaduz. Three coins are now presented as commemorative stamps.



The silver “denar” (value: CHF 0.85) discovered in Balzers and forming part of the estate of the Liechtenstein artist Egon Rheinberger, who died in 1936, dates back to Roman times (49-48 B.C.). An elephant treading on a snake is depicted on one side as well as the name Caesar. The other side depicts priestly accoutrements such as axe, ladle, holy water sprinkler and priest’s hood. In the civil war against Pompey, Caesar paid his soldiers with similar coins. The elephant signifies the fighting strength of his legions, while the priestly accoutrements symbolize

Caesar’s office as Pontifex Maximus. The “florin” (value: CHF 1.00) and the “penny” (value: CHF 1.30) are part of a hoard buried in 1360 containing 26 gold and 2408 silver coins. These came to light on a building site in Vaduz in 1957. The bracteate, a silver penny from Überlingen which is struck on only one side, depicts a crowned lion with flying mane. The coin dates from the early 14th century, as does the Fiorino d’oro, a golden florin from the Republic of Florence. The obverse side features a lily, the city symbol of Florence, while the reverse side depicts John the Baptist, the city’s patron saint. This Florentine golden florin is regarded as the archetype of one of the most important late medieval gold coins.

The commemorative stamps designed by Sven Beham show in the background, indicated on maps, the places where the coins were found. The stamps were made in an elaborate process using hot foil stamping in silver and multi-step embossing. The annotation “AR” (Augmented Reality) next to the year indicates the stamp can be scanned with an app to obtain a virtual 3D view of the images depicted on the coin from all angles. [Source: Liechtenstein Philatelic Bureau]