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Bosnia Herzegovina's Landscape Series of 1906

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The impelling force that motivates stamp collectors may spring from one or a combination of factors such as interest in history, geography, other cultures, any number of sciences or topics. My own interest came through these first three, and it grows each time I find a stamp I haven't seen or learn a new fact about a familiar issue. I have also found some issues unusually attractive from the standpoint of their design, their content, their execution and their context. I would commend to you one issue that hits on all these cylinders—that of Bosnia Herzegovina, the 'Landscape' or 'Pictorial' Issue of 1906.



Two stamps from the Landscape Issue of 1906. Fig. 1. Top, Sc43, The Carsija at Sarajevo.

Fig. 2. Bottom, Sc40, Mail wagon. Complete set shown on page 3.

The 'Landscape' before 1906.

In a real sense these stamps are occupation stamps, issued by Austro-Hungary for its occupation of Bosnia Herzegovina. Austro-Hungary, Russia, Germany, Great Britain and the Ottomans met in 1878 as the Congress of Berlin. The bloodshed of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878, only the most recent in a long line, led these continental powers to reach an accord, the Treaty of Berlin in 1878, to establish 'spheres of influence' within the areas undergoing change and revolt as Ottoman power dwindled. Austro-Hungary was the consensus power to bring order to the area

encompassing Bosnia and Herzegovina. Not least of Austro-Hungary's concerns was stemming the flood (and the drain on Imperial coffers) of migrants fleeing Ottoman ethnic and religious strife across the Sava River into Austria.

Well over 100,000 Austro-Hungarian troops crossed the border in late July 1878 and needed the bulk of the rest of the year to gradually pacify the mountainous country of around 1.1 million inhabitants. About the size of our Vermont and New Hampshire (19,000 square miles), Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1878 was largely illiterate and had minimal internal infrastructure, including no external rail links.

With the pacifying armies came embedded FeldPost facilities for use of Austro-Hungarian soldiers. By January of 1879, this Feldpost system was well along in transition from a military service into a service for the entire country. Limited handling of non-soldier mail and packages began in January 1879. The system also was moved from military control to control by Imperial financial officials.

In 1879, Austro-Hungary issued its first stamps for use in Bosnia Herzegovina with the only hint of origin being the Austro-Hungarian coat of arms (fig. 3). These stamps, or similar with changes in currency and



Fig. 3. Sc16. Coat of Arms, issued 1900. Compound perforation 12½x10½.

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Graphics Philately Association

The Graphics Philately Association (GPA) is an unincorporated, nonprofit study group interested in printing, books, and the graphic arts as they apply to postage stamps and other philatelic items. The GPA's primary means of communication is the quarterly, *Philately-Graphics*, published in January, April, July, and October. The GPA is an affiliate of the American Philatelic Society and a study unit of the American Topical Association.

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From the Editor / Webmaster

Joseph Sullivan

The April issue of *P-G* will feature “Graphic Philately Favorites”—special items from members’ collections. SO, pick your favorite and write a paragraph or two of description. Let’s see what really interests you. And don’t assume there is no need for you to submit. If you do, there may be no April issue.

Another of my responsibilities is maintenance of our website. This is a difficult task, because any changes have to be made using coding. My hope is to convert the site to a user-friendly platform—WordPress. In preparation I have been learning WP using a practice blog/website I created: stampsite.org. Check it out.

cont. from pg 1.

location of the denomination from bottom to top of the design, were used 27 years from 1879 to 1906. They were typographed or lithographed at the State Printing House (‘Staatsdruckerei’) of Vienna. Their relative ‘neutrality’ perhaps had some bearing on focusing whatever benefits began to accrue by virtue of the occupation, investment, infrastructure (railways), without further highlighting the presence of a foreign power to make it happen.

The ‘Landscape’ in Vienna

We owe the fine ‘Landscape’ stamps (fig. 7, facing page) to their designer, Koloman Moser (1868-1918), and their engraver, Ferdinand Schirnbock (1859-1930). We perhaps owe the collaboration of these two talents to the ongoing fostering of the arts by the Austro-Hungarian crown.

Schirnbock (fig. 4) was born in 1859 near Vienna. He trained in art and engraving between the ages of 19 and 27, and began his career as an engraver for the South American Banknote Company in Buenos Aires. He returned to Vienna to stay in 1893, via a short period of work in Portugal. His early work included stamps for the 400th anniversary of Columbus’ discovery of the new world, Argentina Scott #90 (fig. 5) and 91, intaglio, issued October 12, 1892. In addition to banknote engraving work, he engraved a masterwork, completing a copper engraving of DeFregger’s painting “Delivery of Imperialistic Gifts to Andreas Hofer in the Palace at Innsbruck” in 1895 which brought his talent to the attention of the court and others in Vienna, including the Staatsdruckerei.

Koloman Moser (fig. 6) was born in Vienna in 1868, and

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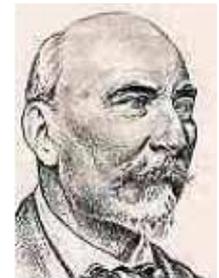


Fig. 4. Engraving of Ferdinand Schirnbock.



Above. Fig. 5. Argentina, 1892. Discovery of America. [Sc90]
Below. Fig. 6. Austria, 1968. Koloman Moser. [Sc818]





Fig.7. Bosnia Herzegovina, 1906. Listed from top to bottom in columns starting at top left: Sc30 View of Deboj, Sc31 View of Mostar, Sc32 Pliva Gate, Jajce, Sc33 Narenta Pass and Prenj River, Sc34 Rama Valley, Sc35 Vrbas Valley, Sc36 Old Bridge, Mostar, Sc37 Bey's Mosque, Sarajevo, Sc38 Donkey post, Sc39 Jezero and tourists' pavilion, Sc40 Mail wagon, Sc41 Bazaar at Sarajevo, Sc42 Postal car, Sc43 Carsija at Sarajevo, Sc44 St. Luke's Campanile, Jajce, Sc45 Emperor Franz Josef.

began his formal training at age 17 in 1885, which lasted to 1895. His skill developed across multiple media, including paint, glass, ceramics, metalwork, fashion, and graphic design and seemed to carry an emphasis on clean-lined, repetitive motifs reminiscent of classical graphics. His work moved into 'industrial' work, which I think we would now call industrial design—art applied to design of 'everyday' things.

The literature seems to point to Schirnbock seeking out Moser for design work on behalf of the Staatsdruckerei. Among the first of these projects was the Landscape Series.

The year 1906 marked the 27th year of use of the Coat of Arms issue. Bosnia Herzegovina was a somewhat different place. Rail infrastructure, along with communications, trade and literacy were spreading. Currency values also were evolving, costs changing and mail volume continuing to grow. In early 1906, a new series of stamps was decreed for issue in Bosnia Herzegovina on November 1 of that year. No evidence I have found indicates any direction as to content dictated by the court. It appears that the size, design and image selection were left to Moser and the Staatsdruckerei. Out of the collaboration of a talented artist and a sensitive and accomplished engraver came the Landscape Series of 16 denominations.

The high value of 5 kroner displays a beautifully executed image of Emperor Franz Joseph. All the other denominations are of daily scenic views of the country and its people, apparently gleaned by Moser from extant postcard and other photographic images. Moser added indigenous embroidery designs and geometric patterns in the stamp frame, and each stamp is identified as 'Bosnien Herzegowina'.

Generally, the Heller (low) values, which appear similar to a contemporaneous American commemorative, were printed in sheets of fifty, ten rows of five each. The Kroner values, comparatively square in format, were printed in five rows of ten. All were printed from copper plates, printed on unwatermarked paper, and intended for issue as perforation 12½. Plate numbers 1 through 3 exist for all denominations. The five Heller denomination goes

to plate #8, the 10 Heller to #5. Black proofs were printed as singles and as strips. Color proofs exist in a quantity of colors for at least the 5kr.

The results speak for themselves and were groundbreaking. These comprise the first engraved, recess-printed stamps of the Austro-Hungarian empire. They are also the first stamps to be identified as Bosnian. Lastly, with the possible exception of an issue of Newfoundland, these are the first stamps worldwide to focus on scenic views for their own sake, as opposed to sovereigns, political/military leaders, coats of arms or simple numerals.

The Twist

Perhaps it is inevitable that a stamp issue with such impeccable art credentials should also have notoriety related to its production and release to the public. So it is with our Landscape Series.

The literature contains differing versions of the origins of the many perforation varieties on Bosnian stamps issued by the Staatsdruckerei. The first issue of the Coat of Arms stamps was produced with at least 36 Michel-recognized perforation varieties for at least one of the denominations. These are of conventional compound arrangement—opposing sides (top/bottom or left/right) having the respective perforation which comprise the compound, and all within a tight range—perf 10½ to 13½. With especially the third coat of arms issue it would seem that requests by influential people resulted in extending the perforations to less usable extremes, such at 6½ and imperforate.

For the Landscape Series, the Staatsdruckerei Director, a fellow named Hesse, is variously described as bending to the will of the Imperial Court and other functionaries, or just doing on his own initiative for the Landscape Series what had been successfully received with the Coats of Arms issues.

Perforation varieties in the form of 6½, 9¼, 10½ and 13½, along with imperforate all on four sides, were made (fig. 8). These 'straight perforations' might be recognizable as production 'experiments' to assess suitability of perforations in actual service.

However, these five perforation types were also combined in a truly extensive way to create, as



Left. Fig. 8. Enlarged. Bosnia Herzegovina, perf 6½. [Sc38b]

subsequently estimated, over 2,200 perforation/denomination combinations (fig. 9). Perforations of two or even three types, independent of which side, can exist on one stamp. The *Scott Classic Specialized Catalogue* covers the major groupings, but large numbers of varieties exist within each of the minor Scott numbers.

These were produced alongside the planned issue perforation of 12½ in Vienna, with intent to release these varieties to their new ‘owners’ in Vienna on November 1—the same day the regular issue was to go on sale in Sarajevo. However, the shipment of the perf 12½ issue to Sarajevo was delayed en route. The postal authorities in Sarajevo got word to Vienna of the non-arrival of the shipment, which left a decision. Vienna, rather than try to untangle the problem at that time, wrapped up all (or at least most) of the perf varieties and imperf sheets and sent them to Sarajevo to meet the Imperial Decree issue date of November 1. So when customers stepped to the counter for stamps, these oddly perforated stamps were sold over the counter for use, thus achieving legitimate postal status.

The perf 12½ issue shipment was subsequently traced to the Sava River frontier station at Bosanski Brod. Whether it was a customs technicality (Bosnia Herzegovina was still nominally Ottoman) or a miscommunication is not known, but they were eventually found and sent on their way. The compound versions were never withdrawn from service and were sold alongside the intended perf 12½ until all were demonetized on December 3, 1912.

Changing Landscapes

The Moser-Schirnbock Landscape designs were acclaimed at the time for the beautiful stamps that they were, furthering the local and worldwide reputation of both men. The design was reprised in 1910 with an additional date banner below the vignette for



Right. Fig. 9. Enlarged. Bosnia Herzegovina, Three-sided Compound Perf. [Sc38d]

Franz Josephs’ 80th birthday. A subsequent issue in 1912 of three additional values used the same frame arrangements with differing vignette views. Subsequent Bosnian stamps reverted to images of Franz Joseph, and later Karl I during World War I. But after the war, the newly created Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes issued overprinted versions of many of the perf 12½ Landscape series (fig. 10) for their own use, until superseded by their own stamps in 1921.



Fig. 10. Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. [Sc1LB6]

Stamp design was only one of Moser’s interests, and he remained in the Vienna art scene until his death at age 50 in 1918. Ferdinand Schirnbock continued engraving stamp and bank note images right up to his death in 1930. All in all, during his career Schirnbock engraved more than 150 dies that were used in 650 stamps worldwide.

Both these gentlemen also collaborated on designs for charity labels, currency, and postal cards.

For Bosnia Herzegovina and Austro-Hungary, things did not go as well. Existing treaties began to break down, and regimes changed in Russia and Serbia, with the result that Austro-Hungary formally annexed Bosnia Herzegovina on October 6, 1908, the day after Bulgaria announced its independence from the Ottomans. The ‘Bosnia Crisis’ was full on. Although the antagonists Russia and Serbia eventually backed down, the matter poisoned relations between Austro-Hungary and Serbia especially. The assassination of Arch Duke Franz Ferdinand and his wife, Sophie, after their chauffeur took a wrong turn in Sarajevo in June 1914, can be directly traced to this ill will.

The rest, as they say, is history.