

I want a date but I'm fussy

Are you bored with your collection?

Is filling those empty spaces beyond your financial ability?

Want to try something new and exciting?

Try a "Date of Use" collection

This exhibit shows how to build a collection around the cancel date on a stamp or cover. Although the exhibitor has used stamps from his area of interest, Germany, the principle can be applied to any collecting area.

The date on the cancel of a stamp or cover can provide much more than just the day of use. The cancel date can provide a tie to a specific historical event in a country or even an event in the collector's life.



First Day Cover of the German Empire.

Catalogs start the German Empire with the release of stamps on January 1, 1872. However, the Empire actually became fact on May 4, 1871 and used the current North German Confederation stamps for the rest of the year.

Finding specific dates can be a challenge. The early postal system handled mail every day of the year. Cut backs have reduced service making some 20th century dates very hard to locate.

Some stamp issues were in use for long periods of time and have various color shades. The date of use can often provide a clue to the stamp's color shade. Changes in color can also be studied.

Usage dates can sometimes provide a visible picture of economic or political conditions. Some stamps were in use for a very short time. Finding "genuine" cancels for these is a challenge. In some cases, the cancel date creates an entirely new stamp issue by proving that the stamp was used on a specific date.

A complete 100 year date collection would contain 36,525 stamps. Completing such a collection will challenge the average collector. The "compulsive" space filler could attempt to complete a collection, showing the dates of valid use for every issue. This would certainly be a collection of over 2,000,000 examples.

Dates, the impossible dream

Letters were mailed on July 21, 1873. Where are they today? In some dealer's stock book? In some sales circuit? In some collector's album? What value would the compulsive collector place on a relatively inexpensive stamp bearing this date? The search goes on for an example.

July, 1873



























Sunday Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday

						
						
						
	21					
						

By mid twentieth century, postal operations in most countries reduced holiday and Sunday services. Sunday cancels are few and far between. They are usually found only from larger post offices. This example of August 1948 shows two of the five Sundays in the month.

August, 1948

Sunday Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday

1						
						
15						
22						
						

Dates can tie historical or personal events to the stamp.

The German Empire was formed on May 4, 1871. Stamps of the North German Confederation were used until the first "Reichs Post" stamps were issued on January 1, 1872. Stamps used during this 8 month period are considered to be forerunners of the German Empire.

May, 1871

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				First day of the Empire 4		
						13

The first official issue of the new German Empire occurred on January 1, 1872.



1.1.72

The exhibitor was born on November 5, 1935. Here are the days around this event and the first days of life.

November, 1935

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						
						
						

April 20, 1889, the birth of German leader and dictator, Adolph Hitler.



October 14, 1894, the birth of Heinrich Lübke, 2nd President of postwar Germany.



July 23, 1899, the birth of Dr. Gustav W. Heinemann, 3rd President of postwar Germany.



Dates can help identify color shades

Different color shades for some issues are related to distinct time periods. A clear cancel can often be used to identify the proper color shade (all stamps shown here have been color expertized).



violet-purple
(1875-80)



lilac-purple
(1880-84)



dull rose-lilac
(1884-89)



dull violet-purple
(1889-90)



brown-purple
(1890-99)



lilac-carmine
(1899-1900)

One can carry this concept further, collecting year dates for each shade.

dull rose-lilac



1885



1886



1887



1888



1889

brown-purple



1890



1891



1892



1893



1894



1895



1896



1897



1898



1899



1900



1890 carmine-rose

Some color changes, made over a long period of time, are not obvious. They can be seen best by inspecting examples from different periods.



1894 brownish red



1899 dark carmine

Here is an example of a color shade transition. This 60 Pfennig stamp was printed in a dull brownish red shade from March 1946 to February 1948. During the month of February, stamps began to appear in a reddish brown shade. By the end of the month, most stocks of the earlier shade had been consumed.



brownish red



reddish brown

February 1948

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

1						
8						
15						
22						

Dates can illustrate events well - The Great Inflation

A few examples of the postage in use can illustrate events much better than words. Here, we see the postage stamp values in use at the end of the year. There were 8 rate changes after the war through 1922.

December, 1920 - 5 to 40 Pfennigs.



December, 1921 - 10 Pfennigs to 3 Marks.



December, 1922 - 1 to 10 Marks.



The great inflation was brought to an end on November 30, 1923. In the 4 months, between August 1 and November 30 of that year, there were 12 rate increases.

August, 1923 - 100 to 20,000 Marks.



September, 1923 - 50,000 to 100,000 Marks.



October, 1923 - 2,000,000 to 10,000,000 Marks.



November, 1923 - 1,000,000,000 to 50,000,000,000 Marks.



Dates can create new stamps.

A stamp used on or after a certain date can acquire a new franking value. Changes in the currency of the country or a devaluation turn what would appear to just be a normal stamp into something much more interesting and desirable.

On December 31, 1874, two currencies were in use in the German Empire. The next day, they were consolidated into the new German Mark. This was done to promote easier business transactions.



December 31, 1874

1 Groschen



January 1, 1875

10 pfennige

Last day of the old currency.

Five of the Groschen stamp values could be used until the end of 1875 at the exchange rate of approximately 10 Silver Groschen = 1 Mark.



as 5 pfennige



as 10 pfennige



as 20 pfennige



as 25 pfennige



as 50 pfennige

On November 26, 1923, all stamps in Germany were sold and used at four times their face value. Stamps with dates from November 26th to the 30th are actually different stamps.

November 26 - 30, 1923

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday



Sold and used as a face value of 80,000,000,000 Marks.

On December 1, 1923, the old stamps could be used at their value in the new currency.



1/2 pfennig



1 pfennig



2 pfennig

On June 21, 1948, the Allied Occupation Government reduced the value of all currency and stamps to 1/10 of their original value.



Saturday, June 19th
worth 1 Mark.



Monday, June 21st
worth 10 pfennig.

Dates can prove valid use

Most countries have stamps which were in use for short periods of time. In Germany, the inflation period stamps are examples. Many exist in unused condition, few really saw valid postal use. All stamps shown here are expertized.

November, 1923

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
11						
	26	27	28	29	30	

A 10,000,000,000 Mark stamp was issued on November 12th, 1923. The stamp was only used for 14 days at its face value.

From **November 26 - 30** this value was sold and used as at 4 times its face value.



Used with a postal value of 40,000,000,000 Mark

In **December**, a few were still used, now with a converted new rate of 1 pfennig franking value.



2				6	7	8
---	--	--	--	---	---	---

Dates can prove invalid use

The postal issues of many countries are only valid for a specific time period.



Nothing wrong here, the 3 Mark postage has been fully paid. The old 1947 "Dove" is only a label.

In this example, only 1.70 Marks of the postage are valid. All of the 15 through 40 pfennig values were invalid after 1968. The Post Office was cheated out of 1.30 Marks.



This one is worse, the Post Office was defrauded out of the entire 3 Marks of postage. All stamps inscribed "Berlin" were invalid after December 31, 1991.

Sometimes the cancel date is not enough

One must look a little further

Two domestic post cards, both mailed on August 1, 1927 from Kiel. **The mystery?** One is franked with 5 pfennig, the other with 8 pfennig, yet both are correct.



The solution: The domestic post card rate increased on August 1 from 5 to 8 pfennig. Postal regulations permitted the old rate on mail taken from the first mail box pick-up of the morning. The cancel on the top card reads 10-11 V (forenoon), the bottom card reads 8-9 N (afternoon).

The 100 year, basic Collection: an example

This is an example of a complete month's use. It shows a stamp that was used on each of the specific days in the month. A collection, showing dates and covering 100 years, would contain over 36,500 stamps.

October, 1922

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday



