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## The Schaumburg-Lippe ‘Frei lt. Avers.’ labels

*On page 272 of the November 2021 issue of Germania, the author introduced readers to the labels used by the Principality of Schaumburg-Lippe under contract number 8. He has provided me with enough information for me to construct this article. Ed.*

Individual state administrations and other official bodies could contract with the Reichspost to provide them with franking privileges. The contracts, which regulated the bulk payment of postage, were serially numbered starting with no. 1. The administration in Schaumburg-Lippe (today part of Lower Saxony) signed the eighth such contract, effective from 1 July 1871.

Unique amongst all the contracting parties, Schaumburg-Lippe ordered labels (*Aversionalmarken*) from the Prussian State Printing House (which became the Reichsdruckerei) for affixing to mail. Their civil service always used these labels, never rubber stamps or similar as was common practice with other contracting parties.

This must be seen against the principality’s historic background. It is one of the smallest states to retain its sovereignty, having survived the Napoleonic occupation (1803–13), the decisions of the Vienna Congress (1815) and the territorial reform after Prussian occupation of all of northern Germany (after 1866). It had to yield some of its sovereignty to Prussia but this did not include the administration. The more Prussia applied pressure, the more the principality wanted to, and needed to, demonstrate its sovereignty.

The labels were printed on the same printing and perforating machines as were the contemporary postage stamps, so they are the same size (albeit horizontal). Over the course of their use there were five different wordings. The first three all used ‘**Frei lt. Avers.**’ (loosely translated as ‘paid by indemnity’). From the fourth issue this became ‘**Frei durch Ablösung**’ (‘paid by exemption’) on a 1904 ruling of the *Oberpostdirektion* (OPD) in Minden, though the new labels were used only from April 1907. This ‘German’ formulation was binding on all contracts from 1912. With each issue there were various colour shades of the paper.

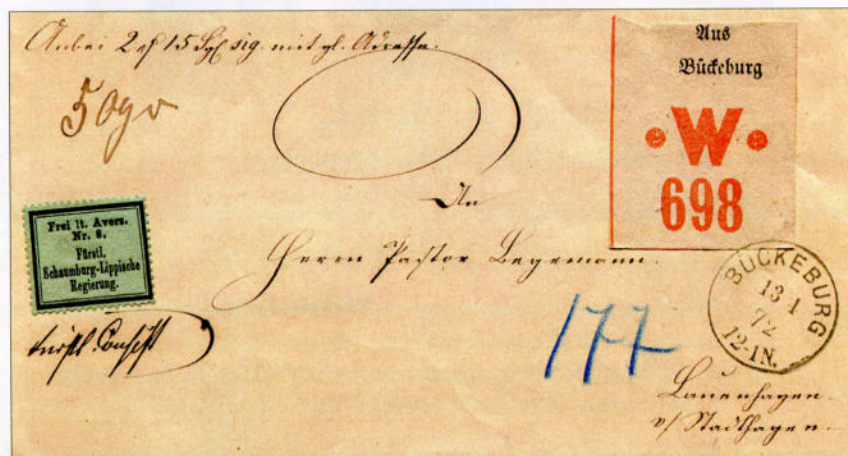
The first issue is for the ‘**Fürstl. Schaumburg-Lippische Regierung**’ (Princel[y]. S-L government). In 1885 the highest level of administration was renamed ‘**Landesregierung**’ (state government) and the wording on the second issue reflected this. In 1893 it was further renamed ‘**Ministerium**’ (ministry) – the third and fourth issues reflect this.



The five wordings, from left to right, top to bottom.

At the end of the First World War the political situation throughout Germany was fraught. Although there were workers' and soldiers' councils in Schaumburg-Lippe, the overwhelming majority remained loyal to the prince. Pressure from outside obliged Prince Adolf II to abdicate on 15 November 1918. After the downfall of the monarchy, Freistaat (free state) Schaumburg-Lippe was proclaimed. The fifth issue therefore is without the word 'Fürstlich'.

Due to inflationary pressures after the war, the lump sums to be paid by the states were raised for the last time on 1 October 1919. The National Assembly had already introduced a bill that would abolish all



Letter 13.4.1872 from Bückeburg to Lauenhagen near Stadthagen with the first issue of the label, accompanying a packet with the same address weighing 50g and insured for 2 Reichsthaler 15 Silbergroschen. The numbered 'W' (for 'Wert') label indicates that the value has been declared.





Second issue of the label tied with the service stamp inscribed for the District Court (Amtsgericht) in Stadthagen, repeated in handwriting below. Posted 10.9.1890 to the land-registry office (Katasteramt) in Bückeburg.



Third issue of the label on a wrapper posted 29.8.1908 in Bückeburg to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Munich.

postage and fee exemptions. Despite opposition from most states the Reichspost pushed through the termination of all the contracts, with the state governments agreeing that the official stamps would be introduced from 1 April 1920. Thus ended on 31 March 1920 the postage arrangements under contract no. 8.



On 1 August 1916 the Reich government imposed a war levy (Reichsabgabe) on many postal rates. Whereas all other states paid the levy by increasing the lump sum paid to the Reichspost, Schaumburg-Lippe decided instead to pay it using postage stamps. On this 9.8.1916 Bückeburg letter to a neighbouring locality the levy was 2½pf. Fourth issue of the label tied with the service stamp of the State Court (Landgericht) in Bückeburg.



Fifth issue of the label on a local letter posted 15.10.1919 in Bückeburg. The text 'FÜRSTL.' has been removed from the service stamp.