

Zeitschrift: The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK

Herausgeber: Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom

Band: - (1982)

Heft: 1787

Artikel: New stamps celebrate St Gotthard centenary

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-686130>

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New stamps celebrate St Gotthard centenary

THE Swiss Post Office last month issued seven new multi-coloured postage stamps to commemorate a series of 1982 centenaries and other anniversaries in Switzerland.

Major interest among collectors is concentrated on the pair of 40-cent stamps marking this summer's centenary of the opening of the nine-mile St. Gotthard railway tunnel between Göschenen and Airolo.

One hundred years ago anyone wishing to journey from Lucerne to Milan had to face 27

harrowing hours of tiring travel – by boat, train and stage coach – before arriving in Milan utterly exhausted and often needed several days of rest and relaxation to recover from the experience.

Today's traveller can breakfast in Lucerne and still reach Milan in time for lunch only four and half hours later – thanks to the St. Gotthard.

The tunnel has contributed greatly to the movement of passengers and goods across the Alps within Switzerland and also to the international flow of traffic

from northern to southern Europe.

One of the two stamps shows a steam engine built in 1906 and the other a powerful electric locomotive of the 1980s capable of speeds up to nearly 90 miles an hour.

The two stamps are linked by a bridging strip (not valid for postal use) picturing a detail from the workers' memorial erected at Airolo station – a reminder that nearly 200 workers died during the 10-year construction of the transalpine tunnel.

The other new Swiss postage stamps commemorate the following anniversaries:

20 cents – Centenary of the Swiss Hoteliers' Association.

40 cents – 15th anniversary of the Swiss Gymnastics Society.

70 cents – 50th anniversary of the International Gas Union.

80 cents – 150th anniversary of the Berne Natural History Museum.

Sfr. 1.10 – Centenary of the Swiss Society of Chemical Industries.

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