

And finally... Heidi's Postcard - a postscript from the editor

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And finally...

Heidi's Postcard – a postscript from the Editor

In *Swiss Express* 117 (March 2014) we showed a postcard of the Vierwaldstättersee that Heidi Marriott had found in a charity shop in Totnes. The date of the card was unknown, it had never been written or posted, and the only clue to its age was a stamp-square stating a 5-rappen stamp was required. We asked if there was a philatelist out there who could help with dating Heidi's find. Fortunately one of our members is Werner Gattiker, not only a philatelist, but also the proprietor of SWISSSTAMPS, a specialist stamp dealership. He has informed us that the 5 rappen rate was in use from the introduction of the tourist postcard in 1870 right up to the end of 1917. From January 1918 the postcard rate went up to 7½ rappen. This would appear to indicate that the postcard was published between the opening of the Treib Seelisberg Bahn (TSB) funicular on the 31st May 1916 and the end of 1917, meaning that the publishers were quite quick off the mark. However, there are other alternative scenarios. The basic card may have been in circulation for some time before 1916 and with work on the TSB having started in April 1914, the publishers added the small detail of the TSB to the bottom right-hand corner of the earlier drawing at this time. Another



possibility is that the original drawing was made as far back as 1910 at the time of the Federal concession for the TSB being granted. Funiculars were quick and relatively cheap to construct and it may have been considered in the area that it would have been up-and-running in just a year or so. Although this was the era of the Belle Epoch, when tourists were flocking to Switzerland, by 1910 the events that would lead to war

in 1914 were already brewing-up over Europe. In the circumstances perhaps investment money was not as forthcoming as the promoters of the TSB expected, hence the delayed start four years later. Without local knowledge we will probably never know the reasons for this, or the actual date that the card was manufactured. Werner tends to agree with me that the line of the TSB was drawn-in 'in anticipation' of its opening. Incidentally, it is not generally realised that in many tourist areas of Switzerland the total numbers of visitors that arrived in the pre-WW1 boom time were not reached again until the end of the 1950s. The TSB survived this period and is still working today serving residents, and visitors to this corner of the Vierwaldstättersee. No doubt there are more modern postcards showing it, the postage is dearer though! 

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