

THE WORK OF JEAN DE SPERATI II

SWITZERLAND

CANTONAL ADMINISTRATION

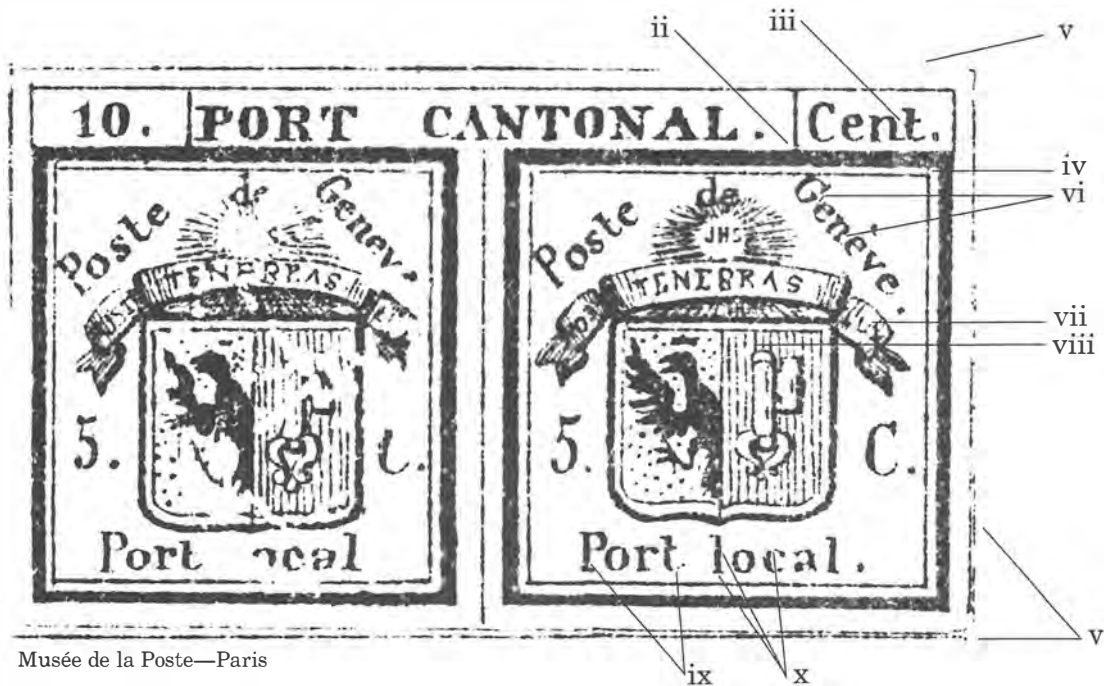
1843 Double Geneva

There is a Sperati matrix (negative) at the Musée de la Poste-Paris, dated October 1949, of this stamp which differs from the two reproductions listed in *Sperati I*. It shows signs of retouching by Sperati. The model for this forgery had a defective left half.

While it is tempting to equate this forgery with Reproduction B in *Sperati I*, in fact it lacks all the specific characteristics. There are some near similarities, but no exact matches. For the record a detailed description of tests for the right half follows.

SPECIFIC TESTS (right stamp only)

- (i) In the top panel the first "N" of "CANTONAL" has a dot on the left side of the join of the left leg and diagonal. The vertical of the "T" is pinched from both sides, just above the bottom serifs. The "O" is open at the bottom. The second "N" has a coloured stroke across its left leg at mid-height; the right leg has a dot on its left side, two-thirds of the way up from the bottom. The vertical of the "L" has a diagonal crack, starting on its left side at mid-height and proceeding upward to the center of the vertical.
- (ii) The vertical frame line after "CANTONAL." does not touch the frame line at its lower end, except via a very thin line bridging a gap of about 0.1 mm.
- (iii) "t" of "Cent." has a dot on its left side, at mid-height.
- (iv) The innermost thin right frame line is broken in its extension to the horizontal thick frame line above it.
- (v) The outermost thin right frame line is missing at the top right over half the right stamp. It is doubled



Musée de la Poste—Paris

THE PREVIOUSLY UNLISTED FORGERIES

- on the right at the bottom and along the entire bottom.
- (vi) In "Genève." there is a dot to the left of the middle of the first "e". The "n" has a nick on its right leg.
 - (vii) The "U" of "LUX" has its left arm bent outward.
 - (viii) In the vertical shading lines of the shield there are a number of extra breaks. The shading line to the left of the barrel of the key has a blob on it, near its top.
 - (ix) The base of the P of "Port" is nearly broken away. The "t" has its bottom stroke broken away and two cracks across the vertical.
 - (x) The "l" of "local" has its top serif nearly broken away and nicks in the left side (2) and right side. The "c" has its top arm broken away and a notch in its left, just above the mid-point.

1845 Basel Dove (Photographic Plate D)

One of the more interesting Sperati forgeries not reported in *Sperati I* is the Basel dove. It will be recalled that Sperati could not complete his agreement with the BPA until he had fulfilled his outstanding contracts for manufacturing forgeries of Switzerland. The range of his Swiss forgeries was quite complete, so it was previously a mystery that the Basel Dove did not seem to be included, although its three colours and embossed dove present special difficulties.

While a finished copy of this forgery has not been seen, it appears that at least some were made. Sperati's daughter has stated that her father sent her to Geneva with a copy for a customer whom she met in a café near the Gare Cornavin. She also stated that she did not remember the name of this client.

In Sperati's archives there was a certificate for a genuine Basel dove, signed by a Swiss expert, Dr. G. Fulpius of Geneva, on 9 November 1948. He found the stamp to have rather fresh colour, normal margins on four sides, and with the embossed dove being quite distinct. It was strongly thinned on the reverse side, over about half of its surface. Thus, it was an ideal copy for use as a model by Sperati. Of course, Sperati could also have used a proof as a model and it appears that he did so, at least in part.

Through Sperati's daughter a substantial amount of material relevant to this forgery has been obtained and studied. This includes his extensive notes for the procedures he planned to use in producing the embossing of the dove, tests of the embossed dove, glass matrices (negatives) and a cliché for the black portion, a glass matrix for the entire stamp, photoprints of entire stamps, and proofs of the blue background burelé. The central crimson background for the dove itself has not been seen, except as part of an item for the entire stamp.

Sperati's notes and his three test pieces with embossed doves indicate that he experimented extensively, both with photoengraved copper and zinc, different cushions or pads, and with wet and dry processes. The notes are dated between 15 June 1952 and 16 March 1953. Sperati's results were rather good, although the tip of the right wing appears to bend to the left too much.

At least one of Sperati's burelé prints seems to have been taken from a genuine essay, not an original, judging by his notes.

Sperati would have used photographic filters to achieve colour separation and create clichés for the separate colours. While we illustrate some of his work in progress, only the black part is useful for identification. Two identical glass matrices (negatives) for this have been studied, one of which is at the Musée de la Poste-Paris. It is, of course, possible that some of the following tests were retouched out by Sperati for the final cliché.