



Hotel Stationery and Pre-Maximaphily Pioneers

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Today, I am offering a fascinating study in a philatelic area untried and unknown to many. Maximaphily is the philatelic hobby of creating and collecting maximum cards.

A maximum card (*carte maximum*, in French) is the result of a postage stamp being affixed on the picture side of a postcard displaying similar, if not identical, images so as to attain maximum concordance between them. Preferably, the cancel would also reflect close proximity to the object of concordance.

In this article, the word “concordance,” perhaps not usually aligned with philately, refers to the matching, usually partial, between two or more image elements, which, when placed together, enhances the harmony and beauty of the whole picture.

In articles published elsewhere (see resources list), I grouped the earliest (or precursor types of) maximum cards into three ancestral families: coat of arms, royal personages, and rooms with view (hotels).

The first or parental generation maximum card precursors in each of these three families are defined by the term TVA (*timbre côté vue et adresse* in French, meaning that stamp is on the same side as picture and address). The first three cards (Figures 1, 3 and 4) in this article show examples of TVA cards.

The second generation maximum card precursors in each of these three families is defined by a more familiar term, TCV (*timbre côté vue*, in French, meaning that stamp is on the picture side). The last three cards (Figures 5-7) in this article show examples of TCV cards.

The third generation maximum cards in each of these three and additional subfamilies are classic maximum cards, followed by (postwar) period (fourth generation) and modern (fifth generation) maximum cards.

Analytic studies of maximum card precursors in the third family has led to the identification of three generations of pioneers. Swiss publisher Jakob Müller and his peers, including Emil Christian Arthur Synnberg, Stephan Rüttger, and August Trüb, are the first generation, or TVA pioneers. They are responsible for the creation of TVA based on stationery designed to advertise various hotels, about a decade before the advent of commercial postcards, from which most TCV (stamp on the picture side) are derived.

I consider Müller to be the “Father of Maximaphily.” He did not create or post the first TVA, but undoubtedly he is



Figure 1. This stationery card by Müller & Cie was advertising for the historic Hotel du Nil (opened in 1836, closed in 1906) in Cairo, Egypt. The matching images of the Sphinx and Great Pyramid on both the 3-millièmes stamp (Scott 45) and one of the imprinted pictures on the hotel stationery is almost perfect.

the most influential among known and anonymous first generation or TVA pioneers, as this review will attest.

Müller & Cie, located in Aarau, Switzerland, is the small family printing business that expanded into one of the best lithographic postcard workshops and publishers, first by Müller, who was later joined by his brother-in-law, Trüb, when the business became known as Müller & Trüb.

The earliest Swiss hotel stationery may be the Carte correspondence issued in 1877 or earlier by Hotel Krafft am Rhein in Basel. Ernst Krafft opened this hotel in 1873. Since Aarau is about 30 miles (48 kilometers) from Hotel Krafft, we may speculate that this hotel stationery may be printed in the workshop ran by Müller's father, Clemens Müller. About 27 years later, Müller & Trüb would publish one of their last sets of hotel stationery for Hotel des Trois Rois, about a quarter mile from Hotel Krafft, connected by the historic Mittlere Brücke in Basel across the Rhine river.

The prototypical maximum card, in the mind of the majority of maximum card collectors today, is one that is franked with one of the Sphinx and Great Pyramid stamps issued by the Egyptian Post in 1888-1906, also known as the third period of the Fourth De La Rue Issue.

Among the several versions known to survive, all of them with the stamp on the same side as the image (TVA), the most concordant would belong to the Hotel du Nil stationery posted only in 1892 and 1893.

This edition was lithographically printed by Müller & Cie, as shown (Figure 1). I assume that Müller is responsible for the outstanding imagery of the design, which matches closely with the stamp design in almost perfect harmony, as if he anticipated the future maximaphily aesthetics.

This card was sent February 29, 1892, by the hotel director from Cairo to Alexandria in Egypt and is one of the earliest examples of the Cairo hotel sub-family first generation TVA cards.

Müller & Cie had more than 100 employees, including many talented artists, but only one of them, Hans Hool, who left his rubber stamp on the design proof for Hotels Schweizerhof & Luzernerhof of Lucerne, is known to us by name (Figure 2). No design proof for Hotel du Nil stationery has been found so far.

As a business competitor to Müller & Cie, but largely limited to local hotels in Lucerne (Luzern, in German), Synnberg & Rüttger, of Luzern, was founded in 1886 by Emil Christian Arthur Synnberg and Stephan Franz Rüttger.

This partnership designed hotel stationery for Hotel des Balances of Lucerne (Figure 3), Hotel & Pension Bürgenstock, hotels at Rigi-Kulm, and Hotel Gütsch of Lucerne. The former two are among the

first Swiss hotel stationery examples with a designated empty stamp box at the upper right corner, but it is absent from the latter two.

The former possibly could provide the template for Müller & Cie stationery designs for other grand hotels of the era, including Grand Hotel Villa d'Este at Cernobbio on Lake Como (Figure 4).

When Synnberg & Rüttger is compared with Müller & Cie, the latter is the only Swiss publisher who designed hotel stationery for five countries in two continents: Egypt, France, the German Empire, Italy (with Grand Hotel Villa d'Este shown in Figure 4) and Switzerland.

Müller & Cie dominated hotel stationery designs from 1892, the first year of Hotel du Nil and Continental Hotel stationery, with 60 percent market share (with stationery printed by Müller & Cie for 30 out of 50 hotels surveyed). Therefore, Jakob Müller is the most influential among known and anonymous first generation or TVA pioneers.

The adoption of a stamp box by Müller for use on Hotel



Figure 2. The only known designer of hotel postcards during Europe's Victorian era was Hans Hool, who left his rubber stamp on a design proof.



Figure 3. This stationery card by Synnberg & Rüttger was advertising for the historic Hotel des Balances in Lucerne, Switzerland. It was sent August 15, 1889, from Lucerne to Wilmington, Delaware. The Swiss flag atop the imprinted image of Hotel des Balances (opened in 1836) matches the 10-centime Swiss Cross and Number stamp issued in 1882 (Scott 73).



Figure 4. This stationery card by Müller & Cie was advertising for the grande dame hotel on the shores of Lake Como, Italy. It was mailed April 4, 1893, from Cernobbio to Hotel Milano in Pallanza. The Duchy of Savoy flag atop the imprinted image of Grand Hotel Villa d'Este (opened in 1873) matches the two 5-centesimi Kingdom of Italy Coat of Arms stamps issued in 1891 (Scott 67).



Figure 5. This lithographic postcard by Müller & Trüb was advertising for historic hotels in the Swiss canton of Schwyz. It was mailed September 1, 1901, from Rigi-Kulm to Coulanges-la-Vineuse, France. The Swiss flag atop the illustrated image of Grand Hotel Schreiber (opened in 1875) matches the 15-centime Swiss Cross and Number stamp issued in 1889 (Scott 76).

du Nil and Continental Hotel stationery would be the first important moment in maximaphily postal history, because without this step then the conversion into TVA may fail, as did Mena House Hotel stationery. The latter adopted the Universal Postal Union (UPU) approved format for writing address and affixing stamps on its reverse side, while Müller & Cie stationery would leave that side blank for messages.

In the case of all Müller & Cie hotel stationery designs, the concordant images may be more than coincidental because they seem to follow earlier issued stamp designs.

The second-earliest coat of arms TVA maximum card precursor is based on the Kingdom of Hungary postal stationery issued in 1869, but its concordant coat of arms stamp was released later in 1871. Thus, its anonymous cre-

ator did not design the 1869 postal stationery based on concordance with the 1871 Franz Joseph stamp in mind.

The third-earliest coat of arms TVA maximum card precursor was converted from a German Empire *Postkartenformulare* issued in 1871, though its concordant coat of arms small shield stamps were released months later in 1872. Therefore, its unidentified designer likely did not envision the imprinted coat of arms to mimic the 1872 small shield stamp.

Between 1901 and 1903, hotel cards with stamps on the same side as the image and address (TVA) are replaced by hotel/travel cards with stamps on the picture side (TCV) or the address side (TCA; *timbre côté adresse*). All lithographic postcards of the former type (TCV), including hotels at Rigi-Kulm (Figure 5), are printed by Müller & Trüb.

Before I coined the term TVA, I described this TCV as first generation, but now it would belong to the second generation. My previous criterion was lithography versus photography.

In 1905, another Hotels at Rigi-Kulm lithographic edition (Figure 6) was printed by A. Trüb & Cie, after Müller moved in 1903 to Zurich to take over the publishing giant Künzli Frères.

Among the hotel family second generation TCVs sent before 1905, photographic editions outnumber lithographic editions by about 2-to-1. Although his hotel stationery business would fade, A. Trüb & Cie would continue to thrive, printing hotel labels for luggage, hotel and travel posters, etc.

An early example of photographic hotel stationery, presumably advertising for Hotel-Pension Beau-Site (Figure 7),

was posted August 20, 1900, from Ballaigues to Vuillafrans in France, as the earliest hotel family TCV maximum card precursor.

This hotel was much smaller in size than Grand Hotel Aubépine, also at Ballaigues, whose hotel stationery was printed by Müller & Trüb before the former hotel was open.

My goal in studying maximaphily postal history is to identify pre-maximaphily pioneers who are responsible for the creation of TVA and TCV. First generation precursors are designed in the TVA format for hotels in Egypt, Italy, and Switzerland by Swiss pioneers.

Second generation precursors predominately (about 80 percent) are sent in the TCV format from Egypt and various European countries to France, presumably by French

pioneers. Second generation heritage maximum cards and third generation classic maximum cards are created by their respective pioneers, perhaps partly because they are TVA and/or TCV collectors, perhaps partly for being experimental philatelists and/or deltiologists.

In 1675, Isaac Newton wrote a letter to Robert Hooke in which he said, "If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants." Thanks to the pioneering efforts of the trailblazers mentioned in this review, along with the other contributors yet to be identified, today's maximaphilists have a solid foundation upon which to make new discoveries in maximaphily postal history. For this, we would owe a huge debt of gratitude to the pioneers of days past. By standing on their shoulders, who knows how far we may be able to advance.

Resources

- Sun-Yu Ng, "Maximum Card Precursors: Coats of Arms," *The Quarterly Journal of the Maximum Card Study Unit* 39, January 2021.
- Sun-Yu Ng, "Maximaphily Ancestry: A Retrospective Study of Three First Parental Generation Maximum Card Precursor Families," *Quarterly Journal of the Maximum Card Study Unit* 39 (April 2021, July 2021, October 2021, January 2022).
- Sun-Yu Ng, "Cairo Hotel Maxicard Analytics," *The Quarterly Circular*, The Egypt Study Circle 278 (September 2021).
- Sun-Yu Ng, "Pyramids Maxicard Analytics," *The Quarterly Circular*, The Egypt Study Circle 279 (December 2021)
- Sun-Yu Ng, "Introductory Philaconcordology," *Philaconcordology* (youtube.com/@philaconcordology3751).
- Sun-Yu Ng, "Western Art & Architecture via Maximum Cards," *Travel via Art & Architecture Maximum Cards* (youtube.com/@travelviaarchitecture9917).
- Sun-Yu Ng, "On the Origins of Maximum Card Precursor Families by Means of Concordance Selection: Postal Stationery as Maximum Card Forerunners," *The Quarterly Journal of the Maximum Card Study Unit* 41 (July 2023, October 2023).
- Sun-Yu Ng, "On the Origins of Maximum Card Precursor Families by Means of Concordance Selection: first generation Swiss pioneers and second generation French pioneers" *The Congress Book 2023* (August 2023).
- Sun-Yu Ng, "Jakob Müller, Father of Maximaphily," *The Quarterly Circular*, The Egypt Study Circle 286 (September 2023).
- Sun-Yu Ng, "On the Origins of Maximum Card Precursor Families by Means of Concordance Selection," *SCPPPC Postal History* (youtube.com/@scpppc-postalhistory3728).



Figure 6. This lithographic postcard by A. Trüb & Cie was advertising for historic hotels in the Swiss canton of Schwyz. It was sent July 25, 1905, from Rigi-Kulm to Rueil, west of Paris, France. The Swiss flag atop the illustrated image of Grand Hotel Schreiber matches the two 5-centime Swiss Cross and Number stamps issued in 1899 (Scott 72).

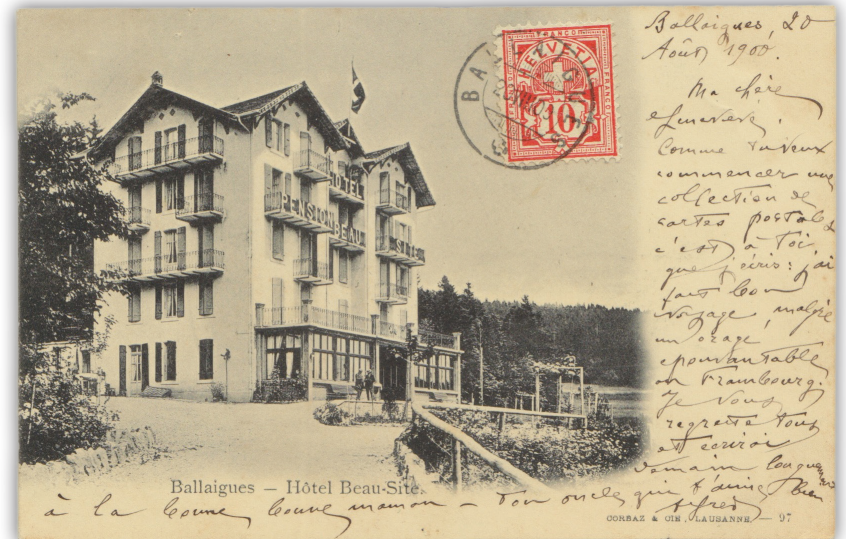


Figure 7. This photographic postcard, by Corbaz & Cie of Lausanne, was advertising for a small family hotel in the Swiss canton of Vaud. The Swiss flag atop Hotel Beau-Site (opened in 1898, closed in 1918) matches the 10-centimes Swiss Cross and Number stamp issued in 1882 (Scott 73).

THE AUTHOR

Sun-Yu Ng, Ph.D., applied his scientific research experience with conserved DNA sequence motif identification and cellular pathway studies toward the analytics of maximaphily postal history to discover more than 16 pivotal landmarks (at least tripling the number previously known to date; most are missed by simple keyword searches), in the sea of postal stationery, formular stationery, hotel stationery, and early picture postcards posted with concordant stamp issues. He continued the research of his late friend Ronald van der Leeden (1958-2020) and published seven articles (six on maximaphily postal history) and produced more than 90 Youtube videos (15 on this topic, 60 on Western art and architecture), along with other topics.