Research on C.G. Röder, Leipzig, has been neglected a bit during the past year, at least in my opinion. Not surprising, George Webber is still busy with the Pinkau/Trenkler codes, and I think nobody can handle two ppc printing “giants” at the same time.

Research on the contract printer Röder has become a regular feature in TPA since the time Jack Foley was able to identify Röder as prime printer of early Stuart (GB) cards, and A.K.G. Leonard wrote the first article on this big printing firm in “Picture Postcard Monthly (GB)”. In the meantime we (which includes an increasing number of interested collectors worldwide) were able to shed some light on the Röder history and their massive ppc production/characteristic batch number system.

Why is G. G. Röder of interest? They printed “views” only, with very few exceptions, but for each and every country you can think of (pre 1914). They produced quite good quality, although they had also plain “cheap” lines. The mass is however of better quality as those produced by Pinkau in my opinion. I am talking of their major process which was collotype with overlay litho colours. In this field Röder was probably the biggest of them all (over 90 presses good for postcard printing (equal number of collotype, litho and letterpress machines; plus other (rotary) presses for music note and especially book printing around 1907). Bigger as Stengel, Dr. Trenkler & Co., Emil Pinkau & Co., Knackstedt & Näther, Schaar & Dathe, etc. etc. Röder had so much press capacity, a solid financial background, that made them independent; with their own printing presses were surely able to produce 250,000,000 cards per year. If they actually did, well, I don’t know.

C.G. Röder works continued to print cards until WW2 years and the bombs fell. They even continued to export cards in the 1920’s to late 1930. And so did also Emil Pinkau & Co. Both firms were active on the Canadian market in the 1930’s according research of Chris McGregor, B.C., Canada and recent card finds of Maggie Torns from Ontario. This is not typical for that time and for German ppc printers, of which many had to close down or concentrated on other printing goods. This shows however, how specialized (and big) both firms, Röder and Pinkau, were.

Post WW2 ppc production!

Now comes the surprising find of Henk Voskuilen (NL). We already learned from Henk’s article in TPA 14, that Pinkau continued to print cards after WW2 until the late 1960’s (longer!). Although their main factory was hit heavily twice by bombs.

Well, the Röder building was also hit and in flames, but not totally destroyed. They began to print post cards after WW2 again!! This is really amazing! Henk brought a photocopy of a card from his last Leipzig visit (from “Museum für Geschichte der Stadt Leipzig”) and showed it to me during his recent stay in Rastede. The picture (not good for reproduction) shows a monument of famous composer Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy at Leipzig which was unveiled on the 100th anniversary of Mendelssohn-Bartholdy’s death. At same place where the first was standing until Nazi’s destroyed it in 1934. Henk’s find is not a put this imprinted information helps a great deal.

Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy lived from 1809 - Nov. 4, 1847, so this card was printed in late 1947. By the way, those Leipzig printers back in business after WW2, worked mostly for the Soviet Government, and had to print mostly (school) books in Russian language.

In stamp box we find a “N 5814”, at down hand left position (M 306) C. G. Röder, Leipzig - Bg.134” and at down right corner a “Z 6843” imprint. My actual theories re these imprints are as following: The number in stamp box is a “new” card number register. The “M 306” number is very interesting (M = material!). Here I strongly believe we have an official allocation identification for paper/card-board. During war years everything was rationed. I have a Röder printed card for the publisher C.T.M. (Carl Theoricht from Hann. Münden), a long-time customer of Röder, imprinted year date 9/40 and Röder batch no. 589,475 and no “M” number. Two other C.T.M. cards (7/41) 647,316 + 647,317 suddenly show a “M 1360” imprint. Röder batch number 666,332, which is the highest no. I have seen also carries a “M 1360”. Henk brought also some of his Röder’s with him. He has a couple of cards which look like WW2 production but have already a “new” register number (1927 / 1953 / 1959 etc.) on.
I strongly believe these “M” numbers were used until about 1949 when the German Democratic Republic was established. The “Z” could be a Zensur (Censor) number. This system was adopted by the GDR authorities and a official (permission) code is found always on all printed matters in the GDR. A lot of control indeed.

I have two cards on cheap card board with typical Emil Pinkau/Trenkler “dot & dash code of Pinkau under “M 125” together with a consecutive “Z” numbering (1713 and 4627 in this case). So, for the early years after WW2 we can use this information for identification and dating. However, a lot of more research is necessary to find out more on these official codes and dates when they were in use. GDR government reorganized a great deal during their early years. Firms came under official supervision (or previous owners were dispossessed), put together with others, renamed, or turned into VEB’s.

One of Henk’s cards is worth a special mention. A card printed by post WW2 Röder (imprints in stampbox read: “M 306”, another no. “Z 1193”, then “Z Mühlbach” and a “Nr. 6042”) for their long-time customer CTM (located in West-Germany)! A “Photo-Plasma Special” process of poor but typical after war quality, and p/u in 1953. So there were quite many (traditional) business contacts between the “two Germany’s” – the eastern and western zone(s), before the wall was erected.

The Röder “R” Matter

The great gift for researchers of Röder ppc production is their batch number system. This number is found of 98% of all Röder printed cards. For many years it goes consecutively upwards until WW2 years and is perfect to date postally unused cards (roughly).

But something important happened at Röder works in 1909. From this year on we have a “double numbering” (see George Webber’s articles in TPA 10 + 11). A Röder card with a batch number in the 110,000 Th range, for example, can date from 1906 as well as from 1913. George named this the “Old Register” in use approx. 1904 - 1910) and the “New Register (from 1909 onwards). Okay, I still not understand why they decided to make it that complicated or what forced them to have two register systems at the same time.

Then we have few cards which are definitely Röder printed without any batch number at all. Then the mysterious “J” Register (on early Röder cards) where the letter “J” is set in from of the batch no’s, sometimes even with a 2nd Röder number on found. This is George Webber’s research field which I do not want to comment here. Just take a look at my “J” = “1” note on page 36.

We found out that other letters placed in front of typical batch numbers were initials of Röder customers. “S” = Seidel; “A.K.L.” = Alfred Krieger, Leipzig. Was this arrangement an idea of Röder or a wish of their customers? I have seen Alfred Krieger cards, who operated worldwide, which were definitely NOT printed by Röder but with his initials in front of the card/batch number. Complicated matter, guess in the A.K.L. case Röder put the initials in front of their batch number and Kriegers number at the left position lower. So one tends to believe that the left number was that of the original or first printing and the right that of the reprint (Klagenfurt, Austria, for example. Publ. Joh. Leon sen., no. 172 / 1902. Left no. reads 13288 and the other 20034, p/u 1903). This appears to be a short-lived system, as on all cards found the right number, the actual number, is always in the 20,xxx Th. range. To make it even more complicated we found double numbers, one regular plus another with “J” on typical down right corner position. The
Do you need more Röder batch number mysteries? Well, here is something strange, again cards come from Henk’s collection.

Regular readers will remember the name “Otto Leder, Meissen” (photographer & publisher). He used Röder as printer, but also Stengel & Co. (+ others?) Otto Leder (OLM) has a wonderful register system: negative number - colon - year date = eg 1244:02. That the last two numbers stand for the year date is a fact proven by various p/u OLM cards found.

Here we have now Rotterdam, Park, publ. by local firm “P. F. v. d. Ende” and p/u in 1903. On address side down left corner position we find 1244:02. So, Otto Leder took this photo in 1902. The Röder batch number at typical position reads 19663. (ill. A)


When we say that the Röder numbers go upwards, and don’t care of the J-Register/double numbering thing, we have a problem with these two Röder cards and numbers now. A card with Röder no. 19663 bears a OLM code of (late) 1902 and is postally used in 1903. But that from Africa has a OLM code dated (early) 1904 but a lower Röder batch number = 17946. This makes not much sense when relying on a consecutive numbering. I feel the early (batch) numbering system used by Röder works needs some more detailed research. Unfortunately early Röder printed cards are not seen that often.

Finally I am still very much interested to find out when C.G. Röder started with (collotype) postcard printing. We know that Röder did some chromolitho cards in pre-1900 years. But Röder’s rapid raise to a major ppc printer was based on the collotype process (with litho overlay colours). We know that a collotype dept. was set up at Röder works as early as 1890. In general it is said that the technical development of the collotype process (presses and the important pre-press sector) was suitable for mass production of ppc’s around mid 1890’s. So far all found early Röder’s are postally used in 1901. Some of these must had been printed in 1900. But where are these earlier printings? Maybe we do not know for what we have to look out. Early Röder printed cards don’t have to be of similar design/quality as later ones. They might show a different numbering system?.

Were the “J” register cards the first Röder’s? If so, where are pre 1901 postally used samples? Should those batchnumbers set in smaller type to be treated the same way as those set in regular size?

Many questions/mysteries indeed. Hopefully more research will bring some results in the (near) future. The Röder ppc history is well worth be researched. Not only because of their huge ppc output for publishers worldwide, the production figures we can make out. But also for being in ppc printing business for a span of over 50 years.

An unusual address side layout is found on this Röder printed card (304367) from Asuncion, Paraguay. A map of this country occupies most of the address side, leaving not much space left for writing the address. Address side printed in green ink. Mailed from Paraguay to Leipzig, Germany in January 1921. The batch number shows that this is a post 1918 Röder production. Collotype + colour overlays, some halftone patterns found in clouds/retouch.
**South America Connection of C.G. Röder**

A small selection of cards from the collection of Chris Ratcliffe

- **Canal Zone (Panama)** - Culebra Cut looking North - publ. J. Maduro jr. OLM code 310 : 06. P/u Feb. 1907 to Germany. Röder no. 89881. Ed. note: I know this is Central America, but chose it anyway. Love these “technical” views.

- **Bahia - Brazil** - Emporio Industrial do Norte. Multi-view of the northern Brazil trading center, which is also the publisher I believe. Card no. 20. Not p/u, undivided back. Röder no. 50362, c. 1904-05. Shown are various buildings (factory, school (?) and office building, monument of founder Luiz Tarquinio, (harbour) pier with a single sailing vessel. Interesting!