

Osnabrücker Papierwaren- Fabrik

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MARKE.

Ed. note: Research on this firm has become a nightmare. I know where to find a detailed story covering the history of the first 25 years of OPF, but it seems to be impossible to get access to the copy of the PZ with the article in. This certain PZ issue/volume is either not available at archives or not open to public because of various reasons which appear to change everytime you inquire. I continue my efforts but in the meantime have to work with the information at hand.

Osnabrücker Papierwaren-Fabrik (OPF) is generally treated as an early and important firm in the deLuxe paper trade and postcard business too. Founded in 1881 by **A. Löwenstein** and according an early advert from June 1887 (see ill) their address was Oranienstr. 119, Berlin SW. Their registered logo at that time: (Lion = Löwe in German, holding shield with star inside circle) which differs from the more common OPF trademark illustrated above.

The firm's name is really unusal. A Berlin based manufacturer used the name of a city in northern Germany (not far from Rastede). Why? Did the Löwenstein family come from the Osnabrück region? Maybe, but I don't think so. I guess Osnabrücker Papierwaren was a paper trade term for a certain (refined) paper quality. OPF ordered most of their paper from the Düren region (Rhineland, south-west of Cologne), home of the Schoeller "Paper Clan" with their own 4 paper mills and 3 other paper mills/manufacturers around = (fine) paper maker country.

The OPF advert from 1887 describes their business as manufacturers and wholesalers of all types of cards (from trade, menu to bevelled gilt edging greeting cards), letterheads and envelopes, embossed of course, and all sorts and colours of hand made paper with deckle edge. Sole manufacturers of: *Mahdi, Canterbury, Emerald, Afghan, Gordon, Pasha, Cashmere* papers. Yes indeed, the writing paper used back then told a lot about your personality (and income). OPF was strong in decorated writing paper, unusually shaped, with classic pattern preprinted by chromolithography and always neatly packed in specially designed boxes.

By 1897 the prospering firm OPF had moved into bigger premises at Ritterst. 90. **Armand Formstecher** had become **A. Löwenstein's** partner. OPF's entire program consisted now of 6,000 diff. articles / designs in 1898; business worldwide was booming. OPF employed over 200 people and had branches and agencies in Paris, Vienna, Copenhagen, St. Petersburg, New York and Melbourne.

The trademark "**Osnalion**" (**Osnabrück** + "**Lion**" for **Löwenstein**) was officially registered for OPF Löwenstein & Formstecher on Oct. 30, 1899. Later their new own factory building was also called "Osnalion House".

Information for the years 1901-1907 is still not available. By 1907 OPF has moved into an own building situated at Köpenickerstr. 32a, which also belongs to the Luisenstadt district. The "Osnalion House" is described as 5 storey tall, impressive in size. OPF occupied the 3rd to 5th floor. Offices, dispatch department and stocks with finished products on the 3rd floor. The factory itself was found on 4th floor: copperplate engraving, box and envelope production, embossing dept and die stock, engraving, colouring dept, various printing equipment incl. some huge format presses and a brandnew (by May 1907) big format steel engraving press.

Die Osnabrücker Papierwaren-Fabrik
(Engros.) (A. Löwenstein) (Export.)
BERLIN S.W.  **Oranienstr. 119.**
liefert in geschmack- voller Ausführung

Menns, Tisch-, Tanz-, Visiten- und Gratulationskarten mit abgeseh. Goldschnitt, sowie in altdeutschen Mustern, mit u. ohne Prägung. Elegante Kassetten mit hochfein geprägten Briefbogen und dazu passenden Umschlägen. Echte Büttelpapiere in allen Färbungen in Reichhaltige Auswahlendungen zum Betrage von 10, 25, 50 und 100 M. gegen Aufg. genügender Referenzen oder Voreinsendung des Betrages. Etwa nichtkonvenirende Waaren nehmen wir gegen frankierte Retoursendung zurück.

The entire 5th floor was occupied by OPF's huge paper stock, making sure that even unusual paper qualities were always at hand.

After several moves during the first 20 years in business, OPF/successor stayed at the Köpenickerstr. 32a location until WW2.

Osnabrücker Papierwaren-Fabrik, Düren, was established in March 1908 as independent branch (Osnalion House) to handle fine paper orders directly from the production place. Managing director was a **Paul Koschkowitz**. A new logo was introduced (see ill), guess this is not found on postcards. However, it seems that difficulties turned up. **P. Koschkowitz** left the OPF branch Düren already in November 1908 again to established a business of his own. **Adolf Holtzschue**, representative of OPF Berlin for many years, became new managing director.

Richard Löwenstein, representative of OPF Löwenstein & Formstecher in South America for several years, died at Rosario hospital after being involved in an accident on July 12, 1910. Richard was 27 years old and I strongly believe he was **A. Löwenstein's** son or another close relative. It was probably this loss of a family member ought to become his successor that made **A. Löwenstein** sell his share of OPF some time in 1912 I believe. Further research will hopefully unearth detailed information. Fact is however, that by early 1913 the name **Osnabrücker Papierwaren-Fabrik** is NO LONGER around. **Klimsch** 1913 printing trade directory lists instead "**A. & O. Formstecher**" at same address. Owners: **Armand** and **Otto Formstecher**.



Two cards (not numbered) from a London series and **OPF** (letters within a trefoil logo) **Berlin-London** imprint. Left card: *Ludgate Hill & St. Paul's Cathedral*, p/u Feb. 1906 and on the right: *View from Southwark Bridge*, p/u May 1905. Cards were printed by collotype process and hand- as well as machine-coloured. Anthony Byatt writes in his book "Picture Postcards and their Publishers" (1978) that OPF opened an own London branch in 1903 at 304 High Holborn, W.C. OPF is said to have supplied first cards for the British market in 1901.

Now we know that former partner Armand Formstecher took over the entire firm together with another family member. In 1913 A. & O. Formstecher employed about 250 people, had a total of 34 printing presses (letterpress, chromolitho and copperplate) plus some 90 other machines working.

Klimsch 1921: Not many changes except that the workforce has dropped to 120 people – times were hard – and the name of Mrs. Gertrud Stiller, company secretary is listed.

PZ Feb. 1927: previous not known partner to Formstercher's, Dr. Heinrich Diehl leaves the firm. Max Bergmann and Elsbeth Diehl, née Bergmann, both factory owners, take over control of A. & O. Formstecher; Otto Formstecher remains as partner.

What happened to the former OPF Düren branch? It was taken over earlier by "OSNABUS – Vereinigte Papierwaren-Fabriken Baumgarten & Schoeller", Berlin W 35, Lützowstr. 2. The supplier takes over trade. (see advert please – comes from PZ 1927).

It becomes really confusing now. An old name turns up again: **Osnabrücker Papierwarenfabrik Erich Schoeller GmbH**, Berlin SW 68, Neuenburger Str. 5. Owners: Erich and Sigfrid Schoeller. Managing director former OPF Düren branch director A. Holtzschue (entry in Klimsch 1928). The Schoeller Paper Family is everywhere indeed!



Klimsch 1928: The firm is named now **Formstecher & Co.** Owners: Max Bergmann and Dr. jur. Heinrich Diehl. 3 new offset presses set up at factory replacing the chromolitho presses. 130 workers.

Klimsch 1930-33 / Birkner Paper Directory 1938: Times were indeed difficult. Formstecher & Co. was sold to Max. O. Dukas, originally from the city of Fürth, Bavaria, and for some time the main office was found also at Fürth. The company secretary Gertrud Stiller is still around. 38 printing presses, 90 other machines and about 100 workers in 1930.

A final "OPF" business history note:

The 'new' OPF Schoeller firm disappeared soon again and was put together with other enterprises of the family. To my own surprise I found another "OPF" firm and this time it even comes from the city of Osnabrück. The Birkner Paper directory 1938 edition lists a: **Osnabrücker Papierwarenfabrik Wilh. Früh Söhne – Hanns Hesse**, establ. 1906 which produced bags for various trades as well as duplicating pads and booklets. Smaller firm with less than 20 workers. The different "OPF's" once around are indeed unusual!

'OPF' Postcards

PICTURE POSTCARDS:

It was not common that a firm that had specialized in deLuxe paper articles produced regular ppc's. Greeting/subject cards however were often produced by such firms

Osnabrücker Papierwaren-Fabrik did print regular ppc's, all that I have seen or heard of were done by collotype process. The colouring often a combination of machine and hand-colouring. Others were printed by duotone (also named doubletone) process. Sepia looking cards for example were often printed in light and dark brown, superimposed, giving the image a much wider tonal range, more contrast, more depth.

I have shown two OPF cards with views from London. Have/know of other ppc's printed by OPF with views from Singapore/Straits Settlements (publ. Koh & Co.) and Egypt. There might be many more. It appears that OPF had wanted to take part in the ppc (export) boom which lasted approx. to 1908. Their full page advert in a Klimsch 1898 directory lists their various printing processes available and includes already collotype. By 1913 this process is no longer mentioned. Earlier already the market for collotype printed cards for export was down, prices ruined, only big specialized printers were in the position to stay in business. OPF stopped their collotype ppc production (around/before 1907 I believe) before losing any money and concentrated on their quality products.

GREETINGS/SUBJECT CARDS:

I searched through 1000's of cards but in the end it was nothing but a waste of time. As I said in my introduction, research on OPF proved to be really difficult. Although greeting and subject cards were not OPF's major product line, a greater variety was produced. I have seen reviews praising the very high quality of design and printing. Anthony Byatt lists in his work "Dutch Tile postcards, Champagne Bottle series, flower series, comic and sporting cards etc... Continental banknote / coins series, Animal series in silver frames..." So, why did I fail to find any? Because I stayed away from the high priced cards? The mentioned high quality makes OPF cards wanted by collectors, many might be held in collections already. But I think the major reason for not finding any OPF greetings/subject cards is the fact that they were produced for export and sold abroad, and only few may have found their way back to Germany. Osnabrücker Papierwaren-Fabrik was extremely export-orientated. Their business boomed before the outbreak of WWI, despite increased protective tariffs.

Maybe readers can help with some photocopies of cards showing the letters O.P.F. or trademark with these letters within a trefoil/cloverleaf. Your expenses refunded of course.



UNUSUAL OPF CARDS:

Above a photocopy of a card to give you a rough idea what I mean with "unusual". Postcard meets philately/postal history. It comes from B.M Jones of the "Sudan Study Group" and Phil Mason, both from Great Britain. The description reads: Large, colour reproductions of Sudan postage stamps on cards with fantasy or animal designs (Mr. Toad; red-eyed white mice; dachshund; devilish fiend; fantasy cockrell; devil with quill pen). Divided and undivided, framed, UPU backs with publishers OPF trademark (found above left leg in ill above).

Another variation is described as following: Vignette style coloured picture mounted on card with embossed frame to picture. "Greetings from the Sudan" in fancy script and title in seriffed upper and lower case letters under the picture (...). Most cards found by the members of "Sudan Study Group" show OPF logo, but several of same make do not.

I have hoped to find some promotional brochures or illustrated price lists of Osnabrücker Papierwaren-Fabrik to be able to provide some information on this unusual stamp facsimile card series. But as I said several times before, OPF is indeed a tough nut to crack. So, if you have seen such cards or any information on it in (older) literature your help is really much appreciated. Not only by me but also by the "Sudan Study Group".

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The **Köpenickerstr.** where OPF's "Osnalion House" was situated, was also the home of other postcard trade firms. The big greeting card factory of **Paul Pittius** for example, which was established at Oranienstr. 119, the same address OPF was found in 1887 (!)

But let's take now a first look at an interesting collotype picture postcard printer, who appears to be an unknown quantity ➡➡➡