

The Gustav W. Seitz Fine Art printing company probably never played a leading role in German postcard printing trade. Simply because it was not their major business. Nevertheless Seitz produced quite a number of early (pre-1900) postcards, not only for home market. All were done by colourful chromolithography, a quality still much appreciated by a lot of collectors.

Many court-size cards issued by the British publisher "Pictorial Stationery Co. Ltd." from London show a small imprint: 'Printed at the Fine Art Works, Holstein'. Years ago I received inquiries if I would know who the printer was hiding behind this particular imprint. Well, the state Holstein surely had several (bigger) litho printing companies at that time, but none really qualified being the source. I should have considered that 'borders' are not always fixed, that big cities grew and annexed bordering land, villages and cities. Wandsbek became part of Hamburg in 1937, but this is something you nowadays don't think much about as you know it being a part of the city. Hamburg born G.W. Seitz moved the expanding business to the new erected factory in Wandsbek (Holstein) in 1870.

COMPANY HISTORY

Gustav. Wilhelm Seitz (1826-1900) went to the Munich polytechnic to study wood engraving and lithography. Returned to Hamburg in 1850 and is found listed with his own business (engraving/letterpress printing) in the Hamburg addressbook of 1854, although other sources mention the year of 1856 as official business start. By 1857 he sold his equipment and concentrated fully on lithography. Colour printing (especially labels) were the major articles. In 1861 Seitz sold his stock of labels and production means to concentrate fully on artistic reproductions of oil paintings and water colour work. The company read '**Artistische Anstalt Gustav W. Seitz**'. Klimsch adressbook of 1876 lists 95 male and 16 female workers, 9 flatbed litho presses, 24 litho hand presses and other machinery.



"PRINTED AT THE FINE ART WORKS, HOLSTEIN"

Kunstanstalt (vorm. G. W. Seitz) AG Wandsbek

G.W. Seitz was always interested in technical innovations and founded the trade publication 'Lithographia' in 1861. This publication, first issued bi-weekly, later weekly was soon continued by other publishers, later to be re-named into 'Graphische Künste'. Seitz travelled and visited the most professional colour printers of that time, eg. *A. Lemerrier*, Paris, in order to study and improve his own production techniques. He improved and invented a couple of (reproduction/lithographer) tools and working processes. His improved '*automatic pantograph*' allowed to enlarge/reduce colour reproductions for litho printing quicker and without quality loss.

But G.W. Seitz not only printed art reproductions. He published own material and distributed similar quality work (eg. by famous Louis Prang, Boston, USA). Even had an own book and art (print) shops for some time. The Seitz business was around at several world exhibitions (Melbourne, Philadelphia, Vienna etc.) and had good, close contacts to British (art) publishers. The Seitz company was registered at Stationer's Hall as print seller.

On July 18, 1890 the Seitz business was converted into a joint-stock company. The name read now: **Kunstanstalt (vorm. G.W. Seitz) AG**. The business capital was 1,000,000 Marks, reduced to 300,000 Marks in August 1897. The early years of the AG brought up to 6% dividend for stock-holders, soon to drop down to 2% or no dividend at all.

In 1895 G.W. Seitz, in the age of 69 years, forwarded the director job to his long-time employee *Wilhelm Klenk*. Gustav Wilhelm Seitz died on Nov. 24, 1900. Klenk continued Seitz' work but added also other articles to the production line.

The business report (PZ 51 - June 28, 1906) shows a profit of 27,467 Marks, but the 2% dividend was not paid to stock holder right away because of a current long-time strike of the employees.

Klimsch 1908 describes the Seitz AG: *Director J.W. Klenk. Fine art printers, litho, collotype, letterpress printing, embossing, picture framing. Specialities: illustration printing,*

posters, post cards. 14 flatbed + 2 collotype presses, some 80 other machines, 120 workers.

Swiss printing trade publication 'Schweizer Graphische Nachrichten', no. 20, June 15, 1908 has a small note on a fire at the Seitz factory in the night of the 25th May which caused serious damage. Many printings and material were destroyed. The business report 1909 mentions the fire as reason for less turnover, nevertheless a profit of 28,751 Marks was made (4% dividend). 1910-11 reflects the general difficult situation of the chromolitho printing business. Net profits down to 10,022 Marks, but still a dividend of 2% for stock-holders. In 1912 another worker's strike occurred. In order to stay competitive an offset press was installed in 1913. Major problem during WW1 years was the lack of (skilled) workers. Art reproductions for framing were still selling somehow well.

The years to come however, despite a try to establish a packaging printing dept. hit the firm badly. Export markets were lost, prices down due to heavy competition. During the inflation time odd notices appeared (PZ no. 72, Aug 8, 1923): *A dividend of 100% was proposed, the stock capital to be increased by 30 million Marks to 60 million Marks. The amount of work said to be very satisfying.* Furthermore all entries in the Klimsch addressbook volumes in the 1920's repeat the identical information, the same figures of pre-WW1 times. Well, old sources are not always fully reliable.



At top: **Gruss aus Wandsbek** – not by Seitz but a Gustav Kissen, Berlin S.59 for local publ. Fr. Oldenburg. Card or printing job no. 1270. P/u July 1896.

Left: **Hamburg - Lombard Bridge** / view of the city. Typical vignette style leaving much room for message. Seitz imprint. P/u April 1899.

Right: Advert from 'Papier-Zeitung', 1897. G.W. Seitz offers postcard printing after water colour paintings or photographs. Also 45 diff. designs of elegant designed desk pads.





Left: Dresden - Blick vom Körnerhaus aus. No G.W. Seitz imprint. Not p/u but the imprinted caption shows a '189...'

Right: Card no. 12 ('Unter den Linden') from a Berlin series with Seitz imprint. Signed 'H.H.' - P/u Oct. 1898. Different - illustration covers most of the picture side.



Right: Rural Spring/Summer motif with bee hive. P/u July 1898. This is so far the only card or pre-1900 date that shows the company imprint not in the typical (grey) caps but in a italic type in red ink. Arranged untypically along the lower long side of the card.



The situation got worse. In 1928 the 'Kunstanstalt (vorm. G.W. Seitz) AG' merged with the 1823 established Charles Fuchs company (same business). New name: **Vereinigte Kunstanstalten vorm. G.W. Seitz und Charles Fuchs AG**. The company declared insolvency on Oct. 18, 1929, finally removed from company trade register on June 28, 1933.

Hermann Huppert, who ran a stove manufacturer / enamel works bought the site (more than 6,000 m²) with factory buildings at an auction. Family members moved into the old director villa. The entire area was hit during an air raid in 1943 causing severe damage. Rebuilding in 1948 left not much of the former Seitz buildings, the very last remains being demolished by mid-1999.

(Additional information on G.W. Seitz can be found in: 'Die Kunstanstalt G.W. Seitz in Hamburg Wandsbek und ihr künstlerischer Leiter Wilhelm Ebbsinghaus' by Chrisa Pieske. Altonaer Museum in Hamburg 2001. Band 32.)

THE POSTCARDS

I mentioned in the intro that Seitz was not specialised in ppc printing but concentrated on quality art prints. The mention of postcards among their 'specialities' turns up as late as in post-1906 business descriptions to my actual knowledge. However, it does not mean that Seitz did not take advantage of the upcoming postcard (collecting) boom, starting in Germany by c. 1895. Especially as coloured cards were high in demand then, all done by chromolithography, in which they were experts.

The earliest mention of Seitz printed (and published I believe) cards I found in literature dates from 1895, but the writer leaves the impression that there had been more around previously. On the occasion of the Kiel Canal celebration, Seitz issued a series of six cards with views from the canal as well as navy

topics. Other German cards by Seitz of pre-1900 date were typical city series, Hamburg, Berlin and Dresden. Another series shows landmarks and popular spots of southern Saxony region. Many known samples show an advertising imprint of the chocolate factory 'Richard Selbmann' from Dresden on picture side.

G.W. Seitz did not use any type of trademark on his printings. Usually the full name is mentioned, although there are German cards around which were definitely done by Seitz but without name mention. The address side layout offers little help for identification as it is often the case with pre-1898 issues. Printers copied the design of the official, regular postcard (form C 154) more or less accurately. There might be similarities found on pre-1900 Seitz cards I don't know of because I have a limited number of cards only at hand.

Cards for customers abroad

On internet I spotted several samples, although the usual low resolution images make a definite identification quite impossible. You have to trust the information provided by vendors. A nice piece from an archives collection shows an advertising card of the French (champagne) company Doyen & Co., Reims with clear Seitz imprint. Postally used in 1902.

Another card from the Berlin series (no. 9), signed 'H.H.' and p/u in April 1900. Shown is the so-called historic corner window of the 'Altes Palais'. Popular among visitors coming to Berlin in the 1880's as the royals used to be seen here quite often watching the changing of the guard. The Palais was destroyed during WW2 but originally reconstructed. The inscription of the angel-like illustration reads: I have no time to be tired.



The Pieske book not only stresses the close business contacts of G.W. Seitz with British customers, but mentions similar ties to Scandinavian countries and France. Whether these contacts led to considerable postcard printing orders from firms in these countries is unknown yet.

Pictorial Stationery Co. Ltd., London

According A. Hyatt's 'Picture Postcards and their Publishers' (1978), the Pictorial Stationery Co. Ltd. was incorporated in June 1897. Run by John Davis (London) and Walter Hugh Keep of Hendon. This early British postcard publisher's approach was to offer artistic postcards and stationery to the public. Their early court size postcards (guess the numbering started with 1000?) mostly from water-colour drawings were printed by chromolitho and usually show the 'Printed at the Fine Art Works, Holstein' mention in publisher line. Very likely Messrs. Davis and Keep ordered their initial postcard series from Seitz. Said to be than 400 diff. cards, mostly views. Not long ago I received scans from George Webber (Guernsey) who concentrates on early British postcards. A court size card showing the Marine Parade of Margate. Card no. 1018 by Pictorial Stationery Co. Ltd and mailed from Britain to Switzerland in August 1897.

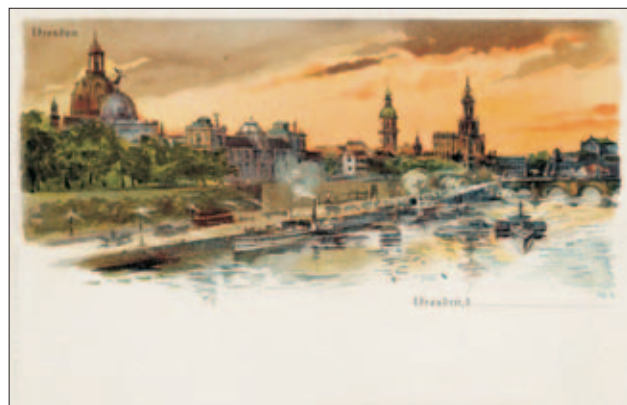
Well, this fits nicely and taking the normal production times back then in account, the business relationship between Davis/Keep and Seitz could date from early 1897. Perhaps Gustav W. Seitz had been in touch with one or both gentlemen previously, not necessarily with postcards but art prints.

Pictorial Stationery Co. registered the 'Peacock' trademark in late Dec. 1900. The name 'Autochrom' was filed already earlier. The normal size postcards with Peacock logo appear to had been printed mostly in Germany, not by Seitz, too. However, the 'Familiar Figures of London' series (see TPA 21, p. 28) was 'Printed at the works in Berlin' by halftone (Autochrom) process. I had thought this would had been a reprint of an earlier chromolitho done issue, but this is probably wrong. All other Peacock 'Autochrom' cards I have show a clear 'Printed at the works in Saxony' imprint next to stamp box. All Seitz cards I have seen so far were done by chromolithography. There is of course a small chance that there are also Seitz cards around done by collotype. But I guess his two presses were needed for certain painting reproductions processes, similar als Meissner & Buch, Leipzig, did.

Pictorial Stationery Co. Ltd. is said to have ceased operations some time in 1908.

Information on any other Seitz cards, especially of post-1905 date, is most welcome. Also information on cards for countries other than Germany, Britain and France and clear Kunstanstalt (vorm. G.W. Seitz) AG mention appreciated. Thank you!

G.W. Seitz must had good business contacts to Saxony. Not only worked for several trade firms but published at least two series on the city of Dresden. Besides the vignette-type cards there is a second, later I believe, series with views of the city. Once again the cards show no individual number. The illustrated card is not p/u, shows the 'Deutsche Reichspost Postkarte' imprint and a 5 Pf. (retail price) imprint inside stamp box.



Many of the illustrated G.W. Seitz postcard were kindly lent to me by Chris Ratcliffe (Neunkirchen). Thank you very much! – My sincere thanks to all other persons who have helped with research!
Helmfried Luers

Pictorial Stationery Co. Ltd. card no. 1020 shows a view of the **Crystal Palace**. Mailed from London to Potsdam / Berlin where it arrived on Oct. 25, 1898.

Below: card no. 1029 with two views from London: **Westminster Abbey** and **West Towers**. Mailed from London to a small city not far where I live in late July 1899.



Britain, I should better say the British Empire, was a favourite market for numerous German postcard printing companies and deLuxe paper manufacturers.

Many of the early British cards were printed by firms like Römmler & Jonas and Moritz Zobel (both from Dresden), Blümlein & Co., (Frankfurt), G.W. Seitz, (Wandsbek) Knackstedt & Nätzer (Hamburg) and others from Berlin, Dresden, Leipzig etc. There is still much to find out.

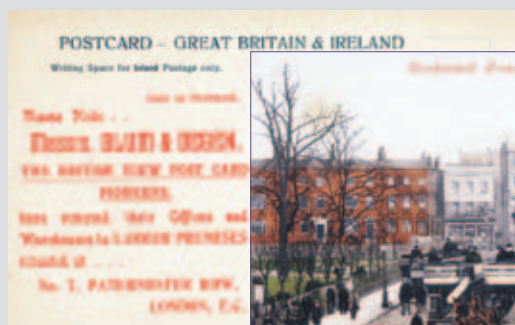
Blümlein & Co. for instance is best known for their colourful chromolitho work, but I wasn't aware that they printed also stand-

ard monochrome collotype cards. A recent card find by Chris Ratcliffe proves it. **Carisbrooke Castle** for **F.N. Broderick, Ventnor** shows clearly the Blümlein name imprint. P/u Dec. 1900, with the typical 'POST CARD – GREAT BRITAIN & IRELAND' imprint on address side (in red ink).

The same imprint turns up on a **Blum & Degen** card with imprint informing of their move to larger premises at No. 7, Paternoster Row. The company appears to had been indeed *Pioneers in British View Post Cards* as they often claimed. They had always mil-

lions of card in stock, which lead to financial problems by Oct. 1908. A receiver took over and offered the business for sale together with 6 million postcards, of which 2 million were printed by photochrom type like the sample illustrated below.

I really don't know why many of these coloured B&D cards show no "Printed in Germany" / similar wording. I think I can prove soon that the B&D photochrom cards were printed at Dresden, by photochrom specialists **Nenke & Ostermaier**, a company that printed much more cards as expected.



Camberwell Green (in London?) not p/u, div. back.

