

There is much to discover on the worldwide internet, also on old picture postcards. New material added every day, somewhere. Requiring quite some time on the internet regularly to stay up-to-date.

Therefore I was grateful when Dutch collector Gilbert Deraedt told me of a book published on the life and work of Alphons Adolph, photographer, collotype printer and publisher. I put an note on my pin board; and forgot.

One day I discovered Gilbert's message again. He had also kindly enclosed some Adolph/Beyer printed cards/views. Now I was quick to find out if the book was still available. Via the web shop of Geschichtswerkstatt Hachenburg. Although originally published in 2013 already, some stock still around (at reasonable price). What I received impressed me. Well-illustrated book, soft-bound, offset printed. Some advertising of local sponsors. The content the results of combined efforts of Hachenburg, Löbau, Zittau and Passau archives and institutions together with research by local historians, ppc collectors and family descendants.

Alphons Adolph was born 1853 in Hachenburg/Westerwald, moved 1871 to Vienna to become a photographer, studied collotype printing process, too. Moved to Löbau/Saxony in late 1877 to work as photographer. Here he gained his fame on 1 July 1879 for being the first to have used collotype for printing **photographic picture postcards**. Actually views of the city of Löbau. Finally moved to Zittau/Saxony early 1887 and set up a collotype printing business in rented rooms: Erste Oberlausitzer Lichtdruck-Anstalt Alphons Adolph, soon "Co.", as this required quite some capital. Employed 15(+) workers, collotype hand

## IN FOCUS:

# Alphons & Adolph & Johannes Beyer

presses as well as two collotype flatbed presses (at least according my information. The business said to have prospered then, with international customers. Nevertheless A.A. & Co. did run in financial problems, couldn't pay the rent anymore. A. Adolph and his partner sold the firm to the businessman Johannes Beyer in March 1889, who moved the company to a new address in Zittau.

Late April 1889 Alphons Adolph bought a photo studio and house in Passau, Bavaria. A. Adolph's health said to have suffered from his time at Zittau. Well, he continued quite successful at Passau until his death in March 1934. The studio was continued by his son/family.

Just a short description of his life and the different places he worked. The book includes plenty of information on his life and especially family, his roots, regional information, basic information on the history of photography and collotype, and the role ppc's played back then.

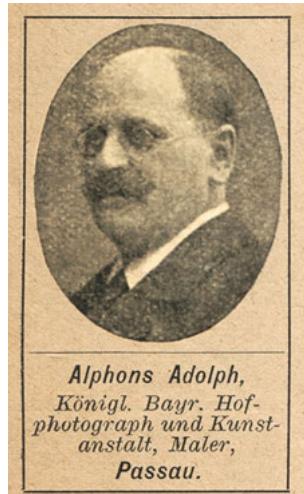
The book includes incorrect statements, illogical matters and is in general in subjective writing of course. Like the stories on NPG, Berlin and Emil Römmeler, Dresden, when family descendants and documents/memories are a major source of information. But that is okay, you just have to keep this always in mind.

Nevertheless I can only recommend to get a copy of this work while stock lasts. Some German knowledge essential, although well illustrated as said before.

Research work of this quality and amount isn't often found anymore.

See also my additional comments on A. Adolph and J. Beyer.

From:  
"Das Echo".  
Ein Industrie-  
Erzeugnis-  
Nachweis,  
1902 to May  
1909.



## A. Adolph's Invention — The J. Beyer printing business

Alphons Adolph's is described to have "invented" the **photographic** picture postcard way back in summer 1879. I have a problem with the term "invention". Adolph has not invented the picture postcard, nor has he invented/improved any collotype printing or photographic process. He simply printed a view of Löbau onto thicker card, instead on thinner smooth surface paper which was then glued onto thick, brown card with rounded corners = cabinet picture size. Unfortunately none of the first/early A.A. photographic postcards have survived the times. Guess it were low runs of cards anyway when using a collotype hand press. I wonder who did the postcard imprints, the address sides. Had Adolph a (small) letter-press machine in operation then?

Anyway, the news of the first Löbau postcards were widely published in (regional) press back then. Which was reprinted for the years to come. Likely he was the first, or better say among the first to do it this way. Direct collotype printing onto thicker card board. We should not forget something that the authors omitted, that there were 13 firms working with collotype printing process already by 1873 in Germany. Years before A. Adolph moved to Löbau. That Emil Römmeler, Dresden, had a new constructed collotype flatbed press running in 1875. See article this issue. By 1890 there were 117 collotype printers in business, and 1894 even more than 200.

Now why has none of the early collotype printing businesses, some even better equipped, thought of doing photographic



### Alphons Adolph – Erfinder der fotografischen Ansichtskarte

Published by Geschichtswerkstatt Hachenburg e.V. 2013.  
ISBN: 2196-3088. 180 pages (size 210 x 225 mm), 240 illustrations.  
Written/compiled by Bruno M. Struif including guest articles by Markus Alberth, Bernd Mälzer and Hannah Streit.  
Available from: [www.geschichtswerkstatt-hachenburg.de](http://www.geschichtswerkstatt-hachenburg.de)

ppc's? Likely because there was no profit to be made. PPC's played only a minor role then. Printed were illustrated letterheads, illustrations in general, for books or the trade. That was what they made (good) money with. This applied also for the relatively short-lived A.A. & Co. printing business in Zittau. The postcard boom started later.

I was surprised to see no A.A. collotype cards from the 1880's in the book, but the typical cabinet size cards with pasted on views only. These appear to have been favoured by the (limited circle of) customers then. Might have been more profitable, too.

In my opinion and according the actual knowledge, Adolph Adolfs did not use his "invented" photographic postcards much in the early to mid 1880's. Perhaps due to limited production means, time and funds. Or as said above, simply because there was not the demand for this product. There are no such cards from that period illustrated in the book. In general there are no foreign AA cards illustrated, with the exception of Austro-Hungarian Empire. Although correspondence of foreign customers is shown. The collector(s) involved might have not cared for these or hardly found any who survived the times.

**Erste Oberlausitzer Lichtdruck- und Photographische Kunstanstalt Alphons Adolph & Comp.** was the unusual long company name while the business was found at Zittau, Saxony. Described to have been busy (in modern, rented rooms) but nevertheless something went wrong. Adolph and his business partner Carl Julius Lange were not able to pay the rent anymore. The proprietor gave them notice to quit effective 1 April 1888. The Zittau days lasted only three years. They were lucky to find a businessman named Johannes Beyer who took over the business completely (incl. debts), moved it to a new erected building at Lessingstr. 2. Now the business name (since 20 March 1888) was even longer:

**Passau.** Often seen view of a typical part of this Bavarian city on the Austrian border. Origins go back to Roman times. Shows nicely why Passau is also called City of Three Rivers. "Lichtdruck Hofphotograph Adolph, Passau". Monochrome collotype printing. P/u late April 1907.



**Erste Oberlausitzer Lichtdruck- & Photographische Kunstanstalt Johannes Beyer (vorm. Alphons Adolph & Comp.).** Used officially until c. late 1906 according "Der Photograph", issue 7, 1907. Then it read just **Johannes Beyer**.

What went wrong at Zittau is unclear. Something important is missing here. Furthermore it reads that A. Adolph was suffering of health problems due to the booming printing business. Why he moved to Passau, Bavaria, particularly is not explained. Anyway he had suddenly sufficient capital (42,000 Marks) to buy a established local photo studio/business on 27 April 1889. The authors of the different articles should better have "synchronized" data of the Adolph biography. I fully understand that lack of information/documents can result into interpretation difficulties. But a booming business together with being unable paying the rent doesn't work together. Sorry.

I had hoped to learn more on the J. Beyer printing business from the Adolph book. But there is only little I didn't know already. Furthermore I am strongly interested finding out if AA had an own (postcard) printing business at Passau indeed. Well, I don't think so, probably a collotype hand press for small print runs. The authors of the book show no

evidence that Alphons Adolph had an own printing shop. Although AA was not only a ppc publisher but offers collotype printing to order in (regional) advertising. Later even gravure. The writer even attributes an Autochrome printed card with AA. Likely they do not know how much different equipment and skilled staff it needs to produce above printings. No workers mentioned at all and his studio/house had not the needed space to install bigger presses and all the pre-press stuff needed (detailed description of the rooms in his last will). He might have had others premises for that, but no one knows for sure. It just reads that AA continued to order ppc's for J. Beyer before he started his own printing again.

Although A. Adolph offered collotype printing he is never listed in any Klinsch volumes. Regular entries were free of charge. Not found in any other printing trade directories I have access to. His trade registration was that of a photographer. He was an early ppc publisher, with job printing customers abroad. But he appears to have not been able to meet the growing market competition (financially/technically) and his position faded soon after the turn of the century. Continued for some time mostly with regional/Bavarian views.



Austrian Emperor Franz Joseph I. celebrated 50 years government in 1898. This is probably the most common card with AA mention. Must have been produced in bigger numbers. "Lichtdr. v. A. Adolph, Passau 1897. Photogr. v. C. Pietzner, Wien". P/u 18 February 1898.



**Greetings from Reichersberg.** Old but relatively small town found in Upper Austria. Postcard published by local Jos. Huber. "Lichtdruck A. Adolph, Passau." P/u but postmark illegible, divided back. Average collotype printing quality. Interesting is the address side layout, with five writing lines (often seen on earlier Austrian views). Different from other AA cards.



*"Der Photograph" (Fernbach/Bunzlau), no. 4, 1896: Collotype printed postcards of Johannesburg/Transvaal are produced at German collotype printing houses in great numbers; including the company of Alphons Adolph, Passau. — Dutch collector/author Bram Leeflang illustrates a couple of cards with "AA" inside shield logo in his fine done book "Pioneer Postcards of South Africa 1896-1900".*

*"Der Photograph" no. 32, 1896: Alphons Adolph, Passau, offers postcards of the Moscow Coronation as well as Budapest Millennium Exhibition to collectors.*

*"Der Postkarten-Sammler", Leipzig, 1 July 1896: The quality of AA's cards is praised. Mentioned are places in Austria, Antwerp, Madrid, Bilbao, Johannesburg, Dorpat, Odessa, Luxembourg etc. The publishing dept said to be increased considerably soon.*

### Johannes Beyer, Zittau



Nothing is known on this businessman (Kaufmann) who took over the Adolph & Co. business. According an address book from Zittau published in 1883 (on internet), Johannes Beyer was a local resident, living at Augustus-Allee 16. Which is just around the corner of his later printing premises. No information found on how he earned his living before becoming a printing company proprietor. Likely he soon installed additional printing presses and other machinery. In late 1890's advertising the Beyer business is described as "Grossbetrieb" = large business, which is probably a little bit vague description. Published own ppc's and worked as contract printer. Unless name is imprinted, cards printed by Beyer cannot to be identified yet. Used a JB logo later, but only on own subject/greeting cards. These prove that Beyer had also litho printing/machine colouring. Hand-/stencil colouring was also done. Some of his postcards were also embossed, other with image plate-sunk. The Beyer printing business was quite good equipped, collotype/lithography/letterpress/embossing.

*"Der Postkarten-Sammler", Leipzig, 1 September: Adolph display advertising, 17 views after nature of the Budapest Millennium Exhibition for 1 Mark.*

*"Der Postkarten-Sammler", Leipzig, 1 Februar 1897: Adolph display advertising, 10 different quality views from places abroad for 1 Mark postpaid.*

Similar adverts/reviews in other publications found from late 1890's.

The latest Alphons Adolph, Passau, postcard-related advertising I found in my literature collection so far, is the mention of six adverts he had placed in the weekly export journal "Das Echo". According a publication register the adverts were found in volume 27 which should date from 1908. Unfortunately I do not have any of these issues.

Interesting is the mention of a second Beyer production site at Grottau (later Hrádek nad Nisou), Bohemia. Grottau was not far off Zittau, just across the border. When exactly Beyer incorporated the Grottau business is unknown yet. Both places found listed

**Greetings from the Carbide Works, Freyung.** This Bavarian company is still in business. "Lichtdruck Hofphotograph Adolph, Passau". Well balanced tonal range reproduction. Despite writing on picture not p/u as card but mailed inside letter.

together on ppc's with divided address side = post-1905. Beyer advert found with Zittau/Grottau in "Die Postkarte", no. 51, 1906. I guess that J. Beyer cooperated with the since 1887 existing Tscharek printing business at Grottau. The Tscharek family continued the Beyer business at Zittau later.

Johannes Beyer died on 21 November 1910. A notice in PZ no. 100, 1910, describes Beyer, proprietor of printing works at Zittau (Saxony) and Grottau (Bohemia) as one of the oldest and highly regarded German collotype printers and representative of the postcard industry.

Bernd Mälzer, author of the book article A. Adolph and his years at Zittau, states that the Beyer business was continued by a new partnership which was forced to declare insolvency about two years later. And that Anton and Alfred Tscharek from Grottau, took over most of the company and continued at the old address until c. 1930.

I have not found any insolvency notice, but: PZ no. 35 (1 May), 1913: Mr. Max Taubert has left the Johannes Beyer collotype printing business and Anton and Alfred Tscharek have joined the company and continue the business under the name **Johannes Beyer Nachfl.** (= successor).

They managed to survive WW1 years (economically) and Klimsch 1921 provides following information: **Johannes Beyer Nachfl., Zittau.** Letterpress, lithography and collotype, bookbinding and accounts (books) factory. Establ. 1885. Owner: Anton Tscharek. Specialised in ppc's and general printing work. 3 letterpress, 2 platen presses, 1 litho flat-bed and 3 litho hand presses, 5 flatbed/1 collotype hand press and other machinery. 40 workers.

The same data is found in Klimsch 1925 again, but not in Klimsch 1926/27, 1928 or later volumes. J. Beyer Nachfl. said to had



**Zittau. Marketplace and Magistrates' Court.** Strong card, size 166 x 108 mm, photolike collotype print (glazed) pasted onto. J. Beyer production with blind year stamp 1893.

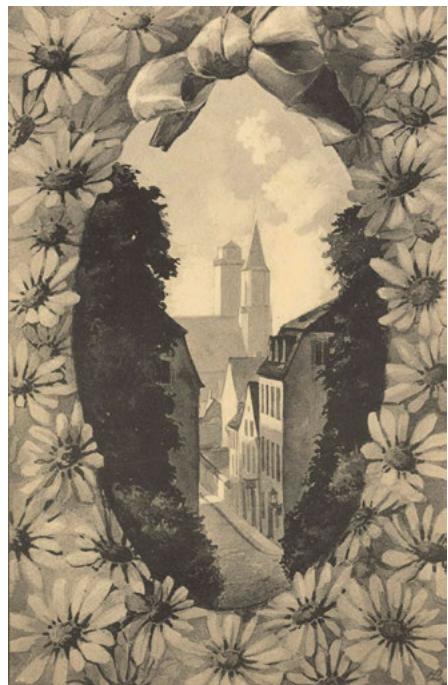
been registered in Zittau trade records of 1930. I don't know. Owner passed away?

Finding reliable information on firms from the old Austro-Hungarian Empire, or later independent countries, is pretty difficult in most cases. But I was curious to find out more on the Tscharek printing business. Then I remembered that I once purchased a supplement to the regular Klimeschs Adreßbuch des graphischen Gewerbes 1939. It was published after Austria joined Nazi Germany, and parts of Czechoslovakia were annexed: "Sonderdruck Deutsche Ostmark und Sudetengau". Some 200 pages of company information, advertising and propaganda. Grottau was found in Sudetenland, and yes, there was a business listing:

**Anton Tscharek KG**, Fine Arts printers, Gabelerstr. 131, Grottau. Establ. 1887. Owner: Anna Schön née Tscharek. Letterpress, litho and collotype printing, paper products, book publishers, bookbinding, publishers of the newspaper "Grenzland-Zeitung". Typesetting, process camera, 6 letterpress machines (small to large), 1 flatbed and 2 litho hand presses, 4 collotype presses, 16 bookbinding/other machines. 29 workers.

Likely some of the above mentioned (printing) equipment came from Zittau when the J. Beyer succ. company was wound up. Due to death of owner or any other reasons. Guess the Tscharek printing company has continued to print ppc's up to the outbreak of WW2. Pre-1900 Tscharek cards found offered on the internet occasionally.

Finally, despite my "mild" critical comments, I can only recommend the Alphons Adolph book. In-depth work on postcard-related firms like this has become scarce nowadays.



Margaretentag, Zittau. Not p/u. Divided back.

Lichtdruck von Johannes Beyer, Zittau i. S. — Grottau i. B.

Advertising Johannes Beyer (not the long company name!) placed regularly in "Der Photograph" (Fernbach/Bunzlau) publication during the first half of 1898.



**Gruss vom Töpfer.** Oybin municipality, Görlitz district, Saxony. Very close to the border of Bohemia/Czech Republic. The "Töpfer" is a mountain in the far north of the Oybin valley. Most peaks of odd looks and individual names. The shown Töpferbaude (guest house), found at a height of 580 metres was erected in 1860, built down and replaced in 1905. Johannes Beyer designed, printed and published this view in 1891. Heavy writing. Some sides cut slightly, perhaps to fit better into album. Mailed from Oybin to U.S.A. on 20 July 1894. Arrival postmark Thomasville, Georgia, reads 1 August 1894. Impressive fast delivery service in my opinion.

► **New Year greetings.** JB logo, series 587, 1 - 4. P/u 31 December 1912. Collotype printing, round image shape embossed, with air-brushed shadow effect. Windmill in winter was hand- and machine coloured. Caption imprint by lithography.

(below) Another **New Year greetings** card by Johannes Beyer. Series 591, 1 - 6. Mailed on 30 December 1911 from Zittau to a small village near Löbau. Another collotype printing with additional machine colouring. Well done, has almost water-colour painting quality. Have other JB greetings for other occasions. Would appreciate information on any other around.

