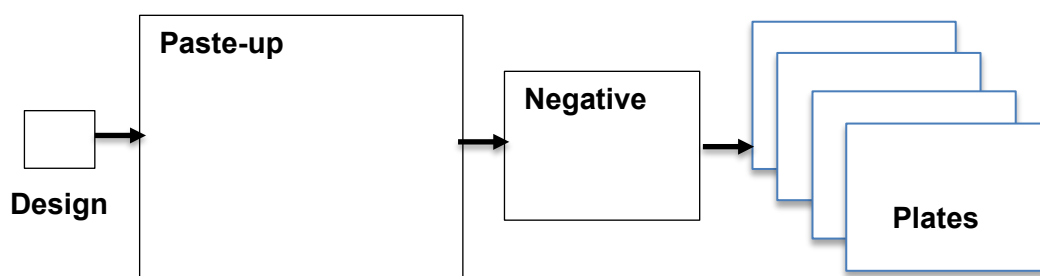


# Hradčany plates - the complete picture

It is a well-known fact among collectors that for (nearly) each denomination of the Hradčany stamps several plates were made to print the stamps. Less well known is how many of these plates were made, including those used to produce the postal stationery with Hradčany stamp images. This article will make a complete inventory, compile some data for each plate and propose an expanded nomenclature to identify those plates and the stamp images from postal stationery.

## The basics

For each denomination a negative was made from a paste-up with the 100 stamp fields and the tally numbers below those, arranged as in a complete stamp pane. This negative was then used to produce printing plates through a photochemical etching process, which yielded the necessary typographic plates in copper or zinc.



*Schematic picture of the production of printing plates: from design (one stamp image) to paste-up (100 copied designs) to one negative to multiple printing plates*

The plates of the same denomination can be distinguished by specific characteristics for each plate. In many cases there are subtle characteristics introduced by the printers, for instance by making cuts in the tally numbers below the stamps.



*Markings identifying plates: a, b, c: 5 h first design plates I, II, III;  
d, e: 10 h fifth design, plates I, II*

In other cases those intentional markings are not present and the plates can only be distinguished by their specific plate flaws.

Plate flaws are characteristics visible in specific positions on the printed stamp panes. Sometimes they are quite prominent and visible, more often they are just small points or breaks in lines in the design in a specific spot.



*Plate flaws from 25 h first design, plate II, pos 87 (many points and lines in oval)  
and pos 75 (small point in dove's tail)*

It is important to distinguish between **four types of flaws** one may encounter:

- *Design flaws* are present in the original design, used for the paste-up. Those flaws are present in every stamp of every plate of the denomination
- *Negative flaws* are flaws that originate in the paste-up or in the production of the negative from that paste-up (in most cases, there is no way to tell those apart). Those flaws will be present in each of the printing plates made from that negative. In a few cases the negative was damaged between the production of sets of printing plates, which results in negative flaws which are only present in the later plates.



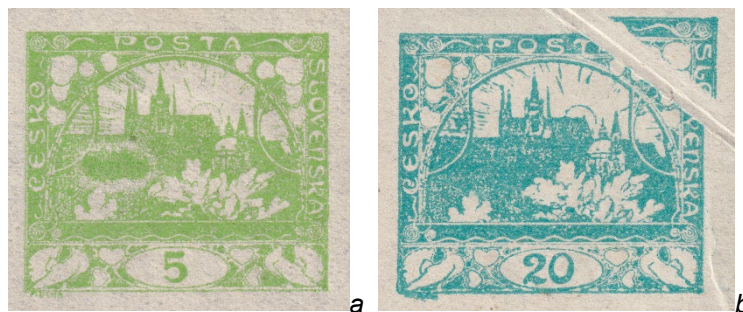
*Negative flaws: a, b: 40 h pos 40 'flag' flaw from plates I and II; c, d, e: 10 h first design, pos 1: lines through tower absent in plate I and II, present in plate III, IV and on stationery*

- *Plate flaws* are flaws that originate in the etching process. These are specific attributes of a single plate which can be found in a specific location on each of the prints made from that plate. Some plate flaws are due to damage that the plate sustained during printing and can only be found in later printings; some of these show further deterioration during printing.



*Plate flaws: a, b: from 5 h fifth design, plate III pos 40 and 71; c, d, e: evolving plate flaw in 20 h fifth design, plate I, pos 10*

- *Printing flaws* are flaws that originate in the printing process itself, for instance due to the presence of foreign matter in the printing press or to folds in the paper. Those flaws are transient, only present in a (very) limited part of the printed panes from a plate.



*Printing flaws: a: 'Zeppelin' in 5 h first design; b: paper fold*

The combination of negative flaws and plate flaws makes it possible to identify each individual stamp to its position in a specific plate. The plating studies published for each denomination serve as a guide for that rewarding activity of **plate reconstruction**. In some cases flaws discovered on plates by the printers were corrected, either before the start of printing or during the printing process. In the last case this correction is called a '**retouch**' and stamps can be found from before and after that retouch.



*Retouches: a: 3 h plate II pos 90, before and after retouch and detail from plate showing retouch with added metal; b, c: 20 h first design, plate II, pos 78 before and after retouch*

The combination of evolving plate flaws and retouches makes it possible to show the **sequence** of the different printings in which the same plate was used. Those different printings can also be identified by the presence of guide points and nail marks in the selvedge of the printed panes. For most plates there is a number of stages in their period of use that can be seen, especially in complete printed panes. Those stages are called '**patterns**', each pattern is defined by a specific combination of guide points, nail marks, evolving flaws and retouches of a specific plate<sup>1</sup>.



*Patterns: three different patterns shown for 3 h, plate I, pos 31-41*

### The fifth design plates

A specific situation exists with the plates with the version of the Hradčany image known as the fifth (or abstract) design. there are two separate points of interest here:

The **paste-up** for these stamps was different in that for the paste-up of the various denominations of this type only prints of the 25 haler denomination were used. In the other denominations (5, 10, 20, 50, 75, 120 and 500 h) the appropriate numbers were pasted over the number 25 in the oval, 100 times for each paste-up. This resulted in many variations in the appearance and positions of the numerals and also in dents in the oval which appear as negative flaws (constant for the same position of all plates), but now clearly due to flaws in the paste-up.



*Shifted numerals in fifth design, examples from 15 h stamps*

<sup>1</sup> Johan Sevenhuijsen and Mark Wilson have put together a complete overview of the patterns found for each of the Hradčany plates used for stamp printing in 'The Hradčany - a technical history' (2018). For some patterns several versions can be found; see this book for a discussion of these versions.

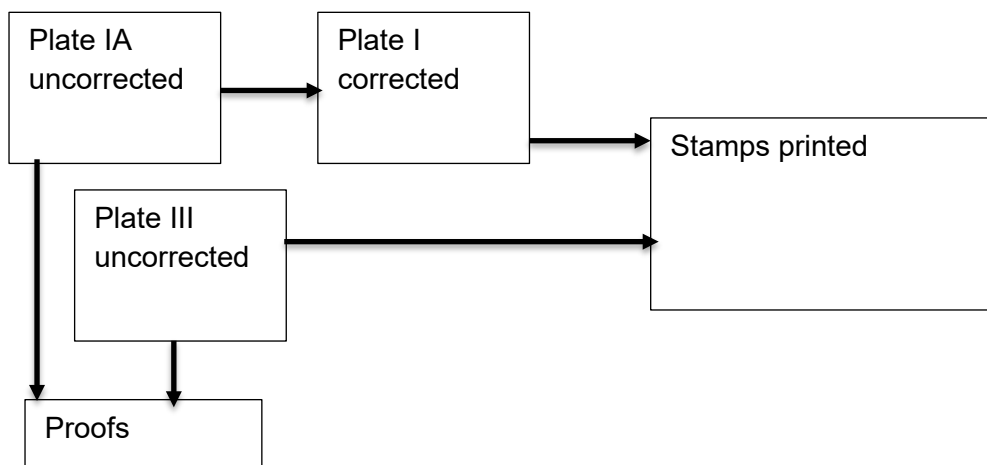


The design has two **design flaws** which were noticed by the printers before printing and those were corrected on a number of the plates. These are the open fourth spiral (type I) and the closed lines above and behind the tail of the right dove. After etching, those flaws were present in all positions on all plates of this design.

Before stamp printing began a printing shop employee went to work with a burr to scoop out some metal from the plates, which resulted in closing the spirals (from type I to type II) and opening the lines around the tail. However, this was not done in all positions, which results in the sought-after 'open spiral' positions from these plates.

Evidence of this procedure was found by the existence of printing proofs (in black, some also in color) which were clearly printed from the printing plates after etching, but before correcting the spiral and dove flaws. In those cases there are prints from two different stages of the plates: before correction and after.

We propose to name the (proof) prints from the stage before the correction by a letter A attached to the plate number, so plate IA before correction, plate I after correction (when stamps were printed from these plates).



*Schematic for fifth design plates with and without correction of 4<sup>th</sup> spiral and dove tail*



*Correction of spiral: 5 h fifth design, plate III, pos 41 proof print from before correction and stamp after correction; arrows to plate flaw (red) and open and closed spiral (yellow)*

After some months the printers decided to no longer bother with these corrections which resulted in complete plates with open spirals (type I) and closed lines at the dove tail in all positions.

## **The Postal Stationery stamps**

The Hradčany stamp image was not only used to print stamps, but also on various items of postal stationery. Best known are the postcards, but there is a large number of other stationery items such as parcel cards and other forms using this imprinted stamp image. The Pofis catalogues of postal stationery give a complete overview of what exists.

Most of these items were printed in the same printing shop as the stamps, the 'Graphic Union' in Prague<sup>2</sup>. The same printing presses were used and typographic clichés of the stamp image were used in the printing plates for this stationery.

These clichés were produced in the same manner as the printing plates for the stamps and the same negatives were used. That means that for the production of stationery new plates with 100 stamp fields were made. Those were then cut up in individual clichés, which were placed in the printing plates. Depending on the type of stationery (which came in different sizes), between 8 and 32 items could be printed with one printing plate. Different clichés were used for the different stationery items and for the different printing runs for those items. That is why large numbers of different clichés found use in the production of postal stationery. With some notable exceptions (about which more later) it is impossible to tie a specific cliché used on an item of stationery to a specific plate. In some cases it is possible to tie a cliché to a specific position in a plate, because the negative flaws (discussed above) are also present in the cut-up plates.

Studying large numbers of postal stationery items has made it possible to state with a high degree of certainty how many plates of the different denominations concerned were used for the production of postal stationery. Here is an overview of these findings (in the order of the first date of use):

### ***10 haler, first (captioned) design***

Stationery with this denomination came to the post office counters from February 1919. This denomination was primarily used on postcards (catalogued as CDV07-09), printed in red. In that same color this stamp image is also found on forms for collecting money due (CPV01). Printed in blue the same stamp image is found on various types of forms for sending parcels (CPP02-03, CPP12-13, CDP02-04 and CDP09-10). All in all, up to now, 283 postal stationery items with different clichés were described (some clichés were used on several types of items). For the most common type of stationery, the 10 haler postcard CDV07, the number of different clichés found is 109. This means that at least 4 printing plates must have been used, presuming that there were 32 cards on each plate (the exact layout of the printing plates is still unknown; this number is based on the dimensions of the printing forme used to print stamps). The number of clichés found on other types of stationery is certainly lower than the actual amount used, as some of these are very scarce and new discoveries will be made when new copies turn up. Based on these numbers it is certain that three different plates were made to produce postal stationery. This can be confirmed by the fact that for a number of positions showing negative flaws three different versions are found on stationery items.

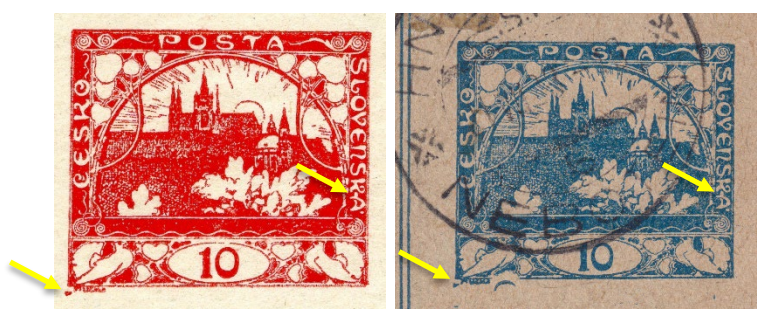
---

<sup>2</sup> Some postcards, a lettersheet and some parcel forms were printed in Vienna with a Hradčany stamp image, which differs from the ones used in Prague; those are outside the scope of this article.



*Three plates for 10 h first design postal stationery: pos 91 (with 'clock' flaw) in three versions A, B and C; arrows show the 'clock' (red) and specific flaws for the versions (yellow)*

A recent discovery is that for a very limited number of items, produced at the end of the period of use of this denomination, in 1920, clichés from plate II were used. That means that this plate was cut after the end of stamp printing to make some clichés for stationery. Up to now only one example is reported. Presumably the clichés from the three plates were all used at that time and clichés from the new (fifth) design were not yet available.

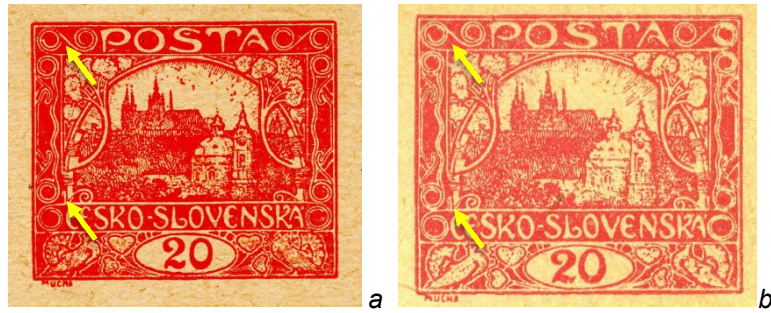


*Stamp cliché used for stationery: 10 h first design plate II, pos 38 as stamp (left) and on CDP04A stationery (right); arrows show plate flaws*

This stamp is the only one of this denomination from postal stationery that can be tied to a specific plate. No (proof) prints are known of the three plates cut up for stationery. We could call those plates V, VI and VII (continuing the numbering system for the stamp plates), but there is no way that any of the clichés found can be connected to a specific plate. To make that clear we propose to call the clichés with negative flaws by their position number, followed by A, B or C (in the order of their discovery). For clichés that have no negative flaws, assigning a position is of course impossible, so we give those a name with the prefix X-, followed by a number, in order of their discovery and description.

### **20 haler, preliminary design (Vb)**

In June 1919 the Czech post issued a set of postcards (CDV16 A-C) with the specific purpose to ask for financial assistance from relatives or friends living in the USA. This program was set up by ambassador Hutchinson, so these cards are often called 'Hutchinson cards'. The tariff for postcards to foreign destinations at the time was 20 h. It was decided to use clichés cut from the only 20 h plate available at the time that were not used for stamp printing. This plate was made as a stage in the design process for the fifth design, which was just rolled out at this time. The design is similar to the fifth design, but differs in some respects. Most striking are the closed 4th spirals, the open lines by the tail of the right dove and also the 'type II' wall types (pricky). Proof prints in black and in several colors are known for this design, but no complete (or reconstructed) panes.



*20 h in two versions in stationery: a: fifth design (as known from stamps, but with open spiral), b: preliminary phase Vb with closed 4<sup>th</sup> spiral; arrows show differences in design*

Later that year, clichés from this same plate were used for the money-collecting form CPV02 and in 1920 for two postcards for foreign destinations CDV20 and CDV21.

Up to now 59 different clichés have been found of this design. Due to the fact that no evidence is available on any negative flaws or on the composition of the complete plates, these clichés can only be referred to with the same type of name proposed above: X-, followed by a number in sequence of their discovery and description.

### **15 haler**

The 15 haler tariff for domestic postcards came into force from May 15, 1919. It was only in November 1919 that postcards with a 15 haler stamp image (CDV14) came to the post office counters. Until then the older 10 h cards were used, upfranked with a 5 h stamp.

The first cards with this denomination had the same monogram as the previous 10 haler cards. Later printings (first use from the end of December 1919) had monograms with a different design. Those were also used on the double card CDV15. The 15 h clichés for these cards were taken from a plate, known as plate VII, from which a (small) number of regular stamps had already been printed. In this plate 98 of the open 4th spirals have been closed as described above. As one or two complete prints of that plate are known, a complete description of all stamp positions is available and the clichés on the postcards can be tied to a specific position on this plate. In fact only 97 out of 100 stamp positions from this plate were used, most of them in several different printings. However, in the last printing run the number of usable clichés was apparently too low and a new plate had to be made. From this plate VIII only 16 clichés were used to print CDV14 postcards. As in this plate the open spirals were not corrected, all of these clichés show an open spiral. A relatively high percentage of the cards overprinted with 'S.O. 1920' (CDV17) came from this printing.



*15 h stamp image from stationery, pos 5 from plate VIII (open spiral)  
with negative flaw: tip of 5 is shorter and round*

The clichés from plate VII can easily be named by their position in that plate: VII-01 etc.. Of the clichés used from plate VIII only one can confidently be tied to a specific position by a



negative flaw (pos 5). The others can only be named VIII-X- with a number, assigned in the order of their discovery and description.

### **5 haler, fifth design**

This denomination was only used for one type of stationery, the telegram form CTÚ01, which came in 3 language versions A, B and C. As few of these forms have survived, only a very limited number of different clichés used is known. Luckily one of those clearly displays the negative flaw for pos 71. This makes it possible to establish that this cliché did not come from any of the plates I-VIII. All clichés seen have open 4th spirals, so they must have come from an uncorrected plate IX.



*5 h fifth design stamp image from stationery, pos IX-71  
(with negative flaw: line from connection between 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> spirals)*

It is probable that one printing plate with 8 forms (with the different languages combined) was enough to print all of these forms. So those 8 would be all that were used from this plate IX. The ones with clear negative flaws can be identified by their position on plate IX, the others must (again) be named IX-X-, with a number in the order of their description.

### **10 haler, fifth design**

This denomination was used on a variety of forms associated with parcel post (CPP04-05, CPP14-16, CDP05-06). Although some of these forms are not really scarce and there are a number of cuttings showing the stamp image in the marketplace, our study still yields new finds on a regular basis. The present number of different clichés found is 139, but this number is bound to increase when more forms turn up for our study. The number of clichés found means that at least two different plates must have been used to produce postal stationery. This can also be proven by the existence of two different versions of stamps showing the negative flaw for a specific position.



*Two 10 h stamp images from stationery, both showing negative flaw for pos 89 (break in 9<sup>th</sup> spiral); arrows to common negative flaw (red) and specific plate flaws (yellow)*



As in the case of the 10 h first design, therefore, the plates could be called III and IV, but it is impossible to assign any cliché to one of those plates (as no proof prints for these plates are known).

In the last items of stationery showing this stamp image, again a plate previously used for stamp printing was cut up to provide the necessary clichés. In this case this was plate II, from which a large number of clichés was taken, all from the top half of the plate. These mostly show up on CPP16b, which came to the post office counters in 1924, but, surprisingly, also a few were already used much earlier, in the printing of CPP14b forms, which were used in 1922.

These last clichés can of course be identified by their position in plate II; for the others the same system of numbering must be used as in the case of the 10 h I stationery, That is: the position number followed by A or B in the case of stamps with negative flaws and for the others X-, with a number in the order of discovery and description.

### **20 haler, fifth design**

This denomination was primarily used on postcards (CDV18, 19 and 22) after the tariff change to 20 h for domestic postcards, which took effect on 15 March 1920. The first cards came to the post office counters in May 1920, which means they could be used as such for only a limited time, as the tariff was raised to 40 h already from 1 August 1920. Therefore, a large percentage of these cards are found upfranked to that new tariff. Clichés of this design were also used on the forms to collect money due CVP03.

So, also in this case, plates had to be produced to provide the necessary clichés. In the Prague Postal Museum a black print is preserved of a plate of this denomination which is different from the plates I and II (used for stamp printing). This plate III was presumably intended for use in postal stationery. However, the vast majority of the clichés found on stationery do not show the characteristics found in plate III. This can easily be established in the clichés showing negative flaws.



*20 h fifth design stationery stamp image from pos 8 (break in arch), compared with plate III, pos 8; arrows show common negative flaw, difference in pattern of rays in the sky*

That means that a further plate IV, of which no proof prints are known, must have been used.

To date, the total number of clichés found on postal stationery for this denomination is 89, among which 3 probably are from plate III. The rest must stem from plate IV. Most of the clichés found on CDV18 are also found on CDV22 cards (where the monogram was replaced by the state coat of arms).

So, in this case, the clichés found from plate III can be identified by their position in that plate; the clichés found with negative flaws can be assigned their position in plate IV and the rest must get a number IV-X-, followed by a number in order of their discovery and description.

## All Hradčany plates

After this discussion, we can now make a complete overview of the known Hradčany plates produced and used for stamps and stationery. This is done in the table below. The table is ordered by design, giving a more or less chronological listing.

For each plate the following data are listed:

- the use for printing stamps (S) and/or stationery card and forms (C)
- the month of first use seen of stamps or stationery from this plate
- the number of different main patterns known for the plate (as listed and described in Sevenhuijsen/Wilson)
- For the fifth design, if the plate's 4th spirals were corrected (meaning there is the possibility of proof prints from before that correction)
- remarks to clarify the status of the plate

<b>Table - all Hradčany plates</b>					
<b>First and second (captioned) design</b>					
value	plate	use	first date	pat's	remarks
3 h	I	S	Dec 1918	3	
	II	S	Dec 1918	3	retouch pos 90
5 h	I	S	Dec 1918	4	reprinted in 1948
	II	S	Dec 1918	3	
	III	S	July 1919	1	
	IV	S	July 1919	1	
10 h	I	S	Dec 1918	3	retouch 'clock'
	II	S/C	Dec 1918	3	retouch 'clock'; cliché found on CDP04A stationery
	III	S	Feb 1919	3	retouch 'clock'
	IV	S	Feb 1919	3	retouch 'clock'
	V	C	Feb 1919		Three plates cut up for clichés used in postal stationery; clichés can not be tied to individual plates as no proof prints from these plates are known
	VI	C			
	VII	C			
20 h	I	S	Jan 1919	4	
	II	S	Jan 1919	4	retouch pos 28, 78

<b>Table - all Hradčany plates</b>					
	III	S	Feb 1919	2	retouch pos 78
	IV	S	Feb 1919	1	
25 h	I	S	Jan 1919	3	
	II	S	Jan 1919	3	
30 h	I	S	Jan 1919	2	
	II	S	Jan 1919	2	
40 h	I	S	Jan 1919	2	
	II	S	Jan 1919	3	Last printing in yellow for Red Cross overprints
100 h	I	S	Jan 1919	4	
	II	S	Jan 1919	6	
200 h	I	S	Jan 1919	5	
	II	S	Jan 1919	5	Tally numbers removed for last printing for Airmail overprint
400 h	I	S	Jan 1919	2	corrected before etching, 'type II'
	II	S	Jan 1919	2	
<b>Third and fourth (circles) design</b>					
1 h	I	S	Mar 1919	2	
	II	S	Mar 1919	2	
50 h	I	S	Mar 1919	2	
	II	S	Mar 1919	2	
60 h	I	S	April 1919	3	
	II	S	April 1919	5	Last printing in green for Red Cross overprints
80 h	I	S	April 1919	1	
	II	S	April 1919	1	
300 h	I	S	April 1919	1	
	II				Only used for color proofs



<b>Table - all Hradčany plates</b>					
1000h	I	S	June 1919	3	
<b>Preliminary stage of fifth (abstract) design (Vb)</b>					
20 h	I	C	July 1919		Only proof prints known, no complete panes; cut up for stationery, clichés can not be tied to a specific position
<b>Fifth (abstract) design (V)</b>					
5 h	I	S	Aug 1919	2	Corrected spirals
	II	S	Aug 1919	2	Corrected spirals
	III	S	Dec 1919	3	Corrected spirals
	IV	S	Dec 1919	3	Corrected spirals
	V	S	May 1920	2	
	VI	S	May 1920	1	
	VII	S	April 1920	1	
	VIII	S	April 1920	1	
	IX	C			used for telegram forms
10 h	I	S	Jan 1920	5	
	II	S/C	Jan 1920	5	clichés used on CPP14b and CPP 16b
	III	C	Dec 1920		Two plates cut up for clichés used in postal stationery; clichés can not be tied to individual plates as no proof prints from these plates are known
	IV	C			
15 h	I	S	June 1919	4	Corrected spirals
	II	S	June 1919	4	Corrected spirals
	III	S	April 1920	1	
	IV	S	April 1920	1	
	V	S	Feb 1920	2	
	VI	S	Feb 1920	2	
	VII	S/C	June 1919	1	Corrected spirals. After printing some stamps, cut up for postal stationery

<b>Table - all Hradčany plates</b>					
	VIII	C	Feb 1920		16 clichés used for stationery
20 h	I	S	Jan 1920	2	Corrected spirals
	II	S	Jan 1920	2	Corrected spirals
	III	C	May 1920		Black print known; some clichés used for postal stationery
	IV	C			No proof print known, cut up for postal stationery
25 h	I	S	July 1919	3	Corrected spirals
	II	S	July 1919	3	Corrected spirals
	III	S	Dec 1919	1	
	IV	S	Dec 1919	1	
50 h	I	S	Aug 1919	1	
	II	S	Aug 1919	1	
75 h	I	S	July 1919	1	Corrected spirals
	II	S	July 1919	1	Corrected spirals
120 h	I	S	Aug 1919	1	
	II	S	Aug 1919	1	
500 h	I	S	Aug 1919	2	Tally numbers removed for last printing for Airmail overprints
	II	S	Sep 1920	1	Corrected spirals, before printing tally numbers removed for Airmail overprints
<b>Altered fifth (abstract) design (Va)</b>					
30 h	I	S	April 1920	2	These plates were not etched, based on a negative, but put together from individual clichés, produced by a galvano-electric process
	II	S	April 1920	2	

As mentioned above the research into the postal stationery with Hradčany stamp images is a work in progress. High resolution (1200 dpi) scans of items of stationery are very welcome to take this research steps further. All scans and descriptions of the clichés found up to now are available (without charge) for interested collectors. Contact the author at [joan7h@gmail.com](mailto:joan7h@gmail.com).

This article would not have been possible without the close cooperation with a number of collectors over a long period. It was conceived in discussion with Jíří Křnák and Miloslav Marčan (who is also responsible for the Czech translation) and Mark Wilson gave valuable suggestions.

*Johan Sevenhuijsen*