

Victor Suppantschitsch  
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VICTOR SUPPANTSCHITSCH.

The Nester of intellectual philately, Senate President Victor Suppantschitsch, completed his 80th year of life on 31 October.

He was born the son of a merchant of Laibach in Carniola in 1838, and his father wished him to see him enter trade as well. However the son was more inclined towards study, left his local High School in 1857 and studied law in Vienna. He entered official service in 1862, became a Court Assistant in 1869, Deputy Public Prosecutor in the provincial court of his native town in 1873, District Judge in Adelsburg in 1874, Provincial Court Counsellor in Klagenfurt 1883, Counsellor in the Supreme Court for Steiermark, Carinthia and Carniola, in 1889 he was appointed Chairman of the Arbitration Court of the Workers' Compensation Board for Carinthia and Steiermark and in 1896 he was promoted to Court Counsellor in the highest judicial body in the Empire, the Supreme Law and Cassation Court of Vienna. In 1894 he was distinguished by the award of one of the highest Austrian orders, the order of Leopold, and in 1906 he retired as President of the Senate, went back to Graz and since then has enjoyed his happiest years with his family and his Summer home in the Tyrol.

When he was a high school student, Suppantschitsch collected plants and butterflies, until the death of his brother in 1863 brought him into possession of a small stamp collection, which he carried on as a pious duty but with real good will, as in the same year he began to take the first German specialist magazine, the **Magazine für Briefmarken-Sammler** by Zschiesche & Köder of Leipzig. In 1864 he also began to take the **Börsenblatt für den Briefmarkenhandel** from Wilh. Reichel & Co. of Kaufbeuren, and the **Allgemeine Deutsche Briefmarkenzeitung** from Siegmund Friedl of Vienna, and the **Weiner Briefmarken-Zeitung** from Heinrich Koch. The last published Suppantschitsch's first philatelic work on special collecting and inspired him to the serious study of postage stamps and a more scientific approach to philately, so that further articles of his appeared in the current specialist journals. In 1880, the Firm of Ed. Wartigs of Leipzig published his *Leitfaden der Philatelie* [*Guidelines to Philately*]. In 1880 this was distinguished by a bronze medal from the Société Française de Timbrologie (with few exceptions, this remains the highest distinction received by the stepchild "Philatelic Literature"). In 1882 appeared *Weltbriefmarken-Album* [*World Stamp Album*] compiled by Suppantschitsch, and this was issued up to 1899 in 6 volumes as the *Patentiertes Permanent-Briefmarken-Album* [*Patented Permanent Stamp Album*].

This fruitful literary activity brought Suppantschitsch into lively contact with philatelic luminaries, and the charm he showed to everyone brought him many opportunities of friendly interchanges. His friendship with the apothecary Ferdinand Meyer of Franzensbad, who published the widely accepted *Handbuch für Postmarkensammler für den Permanenten Gebrauch Bestimmt* [*Handbook for the Permanent use of Postmark Collectors*] from G. Zechmeyer of Nuremberg in 1881, struck such deep roots that his death (31.12.1882) almost destroyed Suppantschitsch's productive ability. However, time had a healing effect, the will to work broke through again, and 1892 the firm of A. Larisch of Munich brought out Suppantschitsch's major work, the *Bibliographie der gesamten Deutschen Philatelistischen Literatur seit ihrem Entstehen bis ende 1891* [*Bibliography of all German Periodical Literature from its origin to the end of 1891*], which, in spite of its technically impractical format was an inspiring and animating source for all philatelic researchers.

On 1895, J. J. Weber of Leipzig published the *Grundzüge der Briefmarkenkunde* [*Fundamentals of Philately*], with a second edition in 1908. In 1897 came the *Katalog der Philatelistischen Bibliothek des Oberlandesgerichtsrates V. S. in Graz bis ende 1893* [*Catalogue of the Philatelic Library of the Supreme Court Counsellor V. S. in Graz to the end of 1893*]. This was also printed in **Austria-Philatelist**, 1895/97. In 1901 came *Die Entstehung und Entwicklung der Philatelistischen Literatur in der Zweiten Hälfte des XIX Jahrhunderts* [*The origin and Development of Philatelic Literature in the Second half of the 19th Century*], and in 1904 *Die Seltenheiten der Philatelistischen Zeitungsliteratur bis 1900* [*Rarities of the Philatelic Periodical Literature up to 1900*], previously published in the Dresden **Philatelist**, 1903/4. In 1909 came *Die Philatelistischen Literatur Österreich-Ungarns im XIX Jahrhundert* [*The Philatelic Literature of Austria-Hungary in the 19th Century*], and in the Dresden **Philatelist** from 1905 to 1908 a series of articles on *Über Unregelmässigkeiten bei Herausgabe, sowie über Irrungen und Verstösse in der Numerierung, Datierung und Paginierung der Philatelistischen Zeitungsliteratur bis Ende 1900* [*Irregularities in the Issue, and Mistakes and Differences in Numbering, Dating and Pagination of the Philatelic Literature to the end of 1900*]. More recently, Suppantschitsch has been practically the most active contributor to the *Handbuch der Deutschen Philatelistischen Literatur* [*Handbook of the German Philatelic Literature*] that appeared from 1916 as a supplement to the Dresden **Philatelist**, and is now finished.

In recognition of his great services to philately, Suppantschitsch was awarded the Lindenberg medal in 1913. We reported this on p.33 of 1913 and from there we reprint the portrait, accompanied by a facsimile of his signature showing his extraordinarily fine writing.

It can be seen from his literary activity that Suppantschitsch developed from being an ardent stamp collector into an even more zealous book collector, with the extraordinary result that the acquisitions to his philatelic library just up to 1900 amounted to some 1800 books, 3037 complete volumes of periodicals, and more than 30,000 single issues. This most extensive private library enabled Suppantschitsch to give outstanding support to the exhibition of philatelic literature at Bugra in Leipzig 1914 by sending in 984 selected gems, i.e. published materials not available in other libraries; some of them did not appear even in Crawford's library. Lending such valuable items at such a distance is a proof of his unlimited helpfulness in promoting and fostering serious philately, as is also the devoted work he put in on the accompanying forms. They give not only the complete titles, carefully entered individually, but also very explicit explanations of the rarest items. However, even this was not enough: Already in his seventy-sixth year, he did not shrink from the difficulties of a long journey to

visit the exhibition, to view the initial endeavour. Our distinguished guest visited at the end of June when the exhibition was not really ready, but all his questions about particular exhibits were speedily answered. Not only the external aspect of literature exhibition, but also in particular, the reason for the detailed placement of the many items entrusted to us received recognition, and the praise received from the most experienced and respected of bibliophiles constituted our most valuable mark of honour and our best thanks.

We felt amply repaid for all the trouble of setting up the exhibition, which did not reach its full flower because of the war.

The evening brought us a few pleasant hours of gossip, when Suppantschitsch amongst others gave us a brief account of his travels in the high Alps. With the wish that a man retaining so much mental and physical vigour at such a great age may live to see many more birthdays, we will express our heartfelt thanks for the methodical encouragement that Suppantschitsch has steadily given to philately for 55 years in spite of many injustices.

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