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POSTCARDS FROM THE PAST

Michael Farr



ABOVE: Front and back of postcard from Les Avants. The Sonloup Funicular is the straight line up the hill

RIGHT: Schynige Platte postcard.

BELOW: Postcard of Mont Pelerin sur Vevey.

TOP RIGHT: Postcard of the Gotthard Tunnel.

RIGHT: Front and back of postcard from Chateau D'Oex.

Abandoned in Tavistock while Pauline and her sister searched clothes shops, I found myself at the stamps and postcards stall in the Pannier Market. The cards were carefully segregated, though I had to track down Switzerland in the Europe General section. I have found in the past that postcards majoring on a train attract high prices but several primarily scenic pictures which featured railways were on offer at only 50p each.

As well as the pictures, the messages are often quite intriguing. A most attractive colour view from Mont Pelerin looking over Vevey and Léman says "Pattie asks me to tell you she is 'off'. She has been in bed since Friday. Apparently the journey was too much. We have had perfect weather till today." Clearly the weather was changeable, even in 1908. Having an affinity to the Vaudois region, I also bought a couple of black and white views of Les Avants; one posted in 1938 to Mrs Read in Little Salton, Cheshire begins "Up here having my lunch; walked to Blonay and took train to Les Avants." So she must have used the Blonay-Chamby line changing there onto the MOB. She continues "A beautiful day, the jasmin (sic) and all the mountains white but the snow has gone. No-one about; feel to have the whole world to myself here". Obviously not a very busy day on the funicular to Sonloup - even the sender said she walked up! (See page 21 opposite).

A card featuring the skating rink at Chateau D'Oex sent in January 1909 is printed in monochrome but with a blue tint. The message to Mrs Nevitt of Romford Road, Stratford,

London E. reads. "We arrived safe after a long and cold journey. The hotel is full up and nearly all English. I am thankful the hotel is heated." From the Jungfrau region I found one of the Schynige Platte Bahn and another of a view looking across the valley to the former funicular from Lauterbrunnen up to Grütschalp to connect with the train to Mürren. Both these were unused, so no clue as to the date, but the detail on the latter card was phenomenal.

Finally, I did buy one card featuring a locomotive in the foreground - of a train emerging from the Gotthard Tunnel at Göschenen. This was in colour but probably in the 50p category because the colour printing left something to be desired. The Schöllenen line is visible in the background, although no train is in sight. The sender (whose name is illegible) had been staying at the Grand Hotel Bellevue at Andermatt and posted the card to C.J.Horrocks Esq at the Grand National Hotel, Luzern on 11 August 1923.

One thing that surprised me was that while some of the cards were attributed to a local photographer, several were produced by Photoglob. The firm, which still issues many Swiss cards including those very collectable ones reproducing old posters, was founded in 1889 by Orell Füssli, the well-known Swiss printing firm specialising in maps and with particular links to transport companies. Having taken over Gebrüder Wehrli, Suter of Oberrieden and Foto Geiger of Flims, Photoglob is now the leading supplier of tourist, flower and animal cards as well as those with peel-off self-adhesive labels. 