

## BACKGROUND TO THIS RESEARCH.

The printing firm of C.G. Röder in Leipzig was a major producer of picture postcards (mainly views) mostly printed using the colotype process. This firm was so dominant that their history must reflect the history of cards themselves and it is this that makes them so interesting to me.

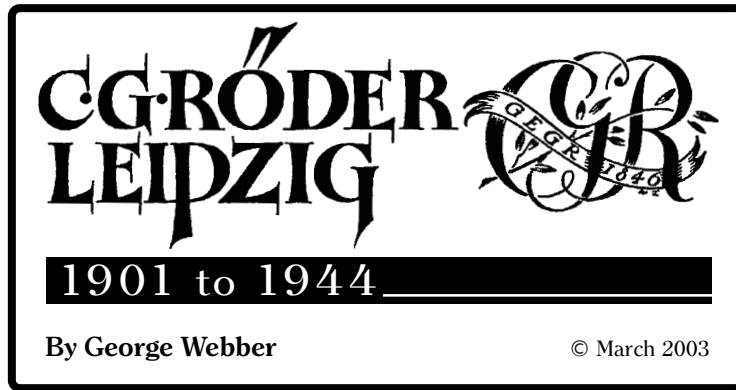
Most of their cards were given a job number and it is possible to date these cards simply using this job number. Accurate listing is necessary as reminiscences are not always reliable, (for example see the probable Valentine "indiscretion" in this article). The main benefit of dating these cards accurately, is that you can trace how Röder's production responded to events from 1901 right through 1944 and it is this history that appeals, as opposed to the necessary number listing.

**Pre 1901** Röder is known to have had colotype printing capacity pre 1901, for instance the firm had 4 colotype presses in 1896. This is difficult territory which is still under research.

**1901** Production rate about 7 to 8 thousand jobs per annum. **Numbering 1 to 7800 approximately.** (The three highest p/u cards seen for 1901 are 7538, 7580, 7620).

Röder mass production of **numbered** ppc's started in early 1901. It seems that Röder numbers were prefixed by a "I/J" in 1901 (and 1902). I am now inclined to tread this as an "T" and not as a "J" at all. "*Index*", "*Indexzahl*" and "*Indexziffer*" are everyday German words for Indexing and Index Number. There has been considerable discussion of this "J" or "T", but for my part, I am satisfied that Röder assumed that future PPC production was going to be limited and that they could keep indexed details/materials of all printings, allowing very cheap reprints when necessary. The English publisher *Wrench* suffered from

**Gruss aus Lipten b. Altdöbern**  
- Multi view *Platin Crayon* OLM. Photographic prints using platinum instead silver salts were highly regarded in the early 1900's. This OLM Röder colotype printed card (p/u 28/02/03) beautifully reproduces the "platinum" look. It has an "I/J" number of 19,402 which is the highest I/J number that I have. (Chris Ratcliffe reports as his highest "I/J" number 19,707, for the publisher Guggenheim). It must be very doubtful if these "I/J" numbers went over the 20,000 mark?



I have previously published tentative numbering schedules in TPA's 10 and 11 (1996). Since then many more Röder cards have come to light, these allows much more accurate numbering right through to the end of WW2. The dating should be accurate to within about one year. I have also had a lot of help with Röder card "finds" from many enthusiasts, not least from our Editor.

One principal development since the 1996 articles is that I have found a lot of cards printed by Röder for the firm OLM (Otto

the same delusion and this brought him down as the PPC boom took off. It was not sensible to store all these details in a world that had gone PPC mad and was craving novelty and change all the time.

As Röder was keeping indexed records of the 1901/02 printings there was no need for the customer to put in a large order for each job. We are all used to seeing Röder promotional cards in later years, implying that the minimum order was 1000 cards and that 3000 would be better. This would **not** apply in these first years of 1901 and 1902. Judging by the number of repeat printings we find for the Swiss publishers Goetz and Guggenheim in 1901/02, it would seem that they were not ordering in large quantities each time, but were content to order exactly what they judged they could easily sell. When these were sold, then they went back for a few more!

Things were to change drastically in later years, when if inexpensive cards were needed then you had to take many thousands of cards per order. Helmfried reports that the

Leder of Meissen, Saxony). As well as the Röder number they have the year date of the Leder photograph printed on. It is straightforward to eliminate reprints done years after the photograph was taken (typically with OLM they seem to have come back for a reprint a year after the initial printing) and from these year dated OLM cards alone you can

get a fairly accurate picture of Röder production in the PPC boom years from 1902 to 1908. Of course this has only been part of the story and I have used the year dating put on by other firms, and also postmark dates (much less now).

In this article I will give a year by year dating and approximate Röder production figures. I expect there are still some inaccuracies but on the whole I think the general picture drawn relates well to the known story of the PPC world, in general.

Röder total PPC production was about 7 Million cards for 1901. I have found that Röder handled about 8000 jobs in 1901, this gives an average order of under 1000 cards per job. This is ridiculously low for mass production printing. Orders of 2 to 3000 cards per job, would be where the real profits were to be had. Clearly this "I/J" system, with distributors coming back for reprints at a rate of hundreds at a time, had to stop and be replaced by thousands!

**1902** Production rate about 12 thousand jobs. **Numbering 7800 approximately to 20,000.**

Röder continued with this awkward (for them!) "I/J" system, finally dropping it in 1902 (I have not seen a "I/J" card above 20,000). The German market was strong and the **mass market** British PPC boom was starting up in this year. (Prior to this date the UK market for PPC was relatively small, catering for the middle classes)

**1903** Production rate 15,000 jobs per annum. **Numbering 20,000 to 35,000.**

It is known that Röder had 16 colotype presses in this year. Roughly speaking then it looks as if each machine correlates with round 1000 PPC jobs per year. This is only a rough "ball-park" correlation. Helmfried points out that the colotype machines were not used exclusively for PPC's and for part of the year they were used for printing book illustrations etc. This makes sense, as I imagine the mid winter months of November, December and January (»)



would see lower demand for PPC's. There would be little point in ordering and paying for cards in November (say) if they were not to be sold until the high summer months.

The demand for cards from the UK was very strong in 1903 and this led to Röder needing to increase capacity again for 1904.

**1904** Production rate increased to 20,000. **Numbering 35,000 to 55,000.**

Both the English and German PPC booms were continuing very strongly and the USA was getting seriously interested.

**1905** Production rate 20,000. **Numbering 55,000 to 75,000.**

Again a heavy year in Germany and the UK with very definite signs of interest from the USA, this led to a major increase in capacity for 1906.

**1906** Production rate increased to 35,000. **Numbering 75,000 to 110,000.**

Another very strong year, heavy demand from Germany, the UK and the USA and indeed the whole world.

**1907** Production rate 35,000. **Numbering 110,000 to 145,000.**

Röder is known to have had 36 collotype presses in this year. We see that the number of collotype presses correlates again with the deduced production rate, of about 1000 per year for each machine. Demand was pressing hard from Germany, the UK, USA and just about everywhere else in the world.

**1908** Production rate 45,000. **Numbering 145,000 to 190,000.**

The demand from the USA was **extremely** heavy in this year. This far more than made up for the slight weakening of demand from Germany and the UK. There are anecdotal stories of USA postcard publishing repre-

sentatives scouring Leipzig to get their cards printed. Possibly Röder bought a few more presses and employed some more workers in this year? Alternatively the "normal PPC" printing season might have been extended? Röder offered to print cards in lots from a minimum of 1000 to 6000 per view. I could imagine that the **average** batch size went as high as 3000 cards in this year. (I do not know if the average could have been much higher, as a lot of these cards were of the type of "Main Street, Very Small Town", USA). This would give an output of about 140 Million cards per annum. This was probably their best year as the PPC bubble was about to burst.

**1909** Production rate 35,000. **Numbering 190,000 to 225,000.**

The USA Senate passed a restrictive tariff on postcards in August 1909. It was especially aimed at **view** cards which was Röder's speciality. On top of this punitive tariff the USA was rapidly losing interest in view cards. (The USA demand for non-view cards still continued steadily however). This was of course a serious blow to Röder, as view cards were their lifeblood, but there was still enough interest from the rest of the world to keep production quotas filled.

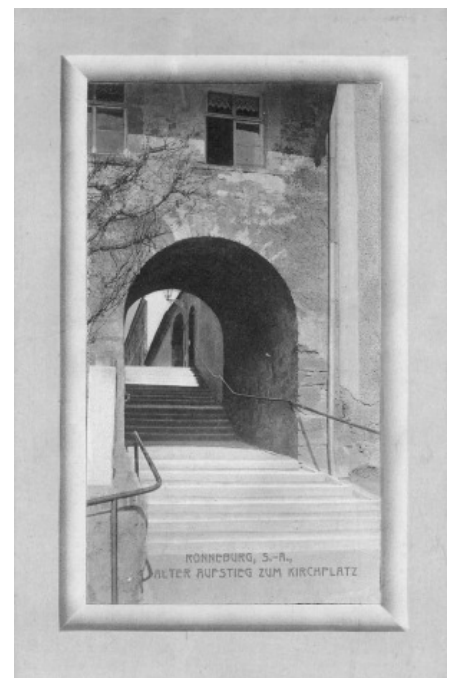
**1910** Production rate about 30,000. **Numbering 225,000 to 255,000.**

This was the last year of the "old" first register numbering. The numbers seem to have got as high as about 255,000. The highest "old register" number I have seen is 253,844 (p/u 1914).

**1911** Production rate 35,000. **Numbering 1 to 35,000.**

In 1910, Röder had started job numbering with No 1 again. The PPC world was then in a bad way, with demand falling off in a number of countries (but not all). On the

other hand a thorough clear out with other major collotype firms going bankrupt (eg Knackstedt & Näther of Hamburg and other majors) allowed Röder to survive and indeed prosper in a modest way. I suspect that this new numbering, starting at No 1 again, may have been part of a cartelisation agreement with the other Leipzig major producer Emil Pinkau. I can only trace Pinkau's card numbering back to 1913 when this firm had got to 2500 (coded number). But they presumably were numbering their batches before this, without putting the details on their cards. This might lead back to Pinkau also starting from the beginning in 1911 also? Very speculative I know, but the Leipzig cartel was strong and some sort of "market sharing" simply had to be reached. This was very common practise with German firms at that time, the chemical industry was a very pronounced example of "market sharing" and certainly the printing industry was not far behind. Another reason to think this was a cartelisation agreement is that Röder's production share stayed precisely and exactly the same at 35,000 jobs per year until the end of WW1 in 1918. (Another example possibly of cartelisation sharing was Pinkau's very steady "allowance" of 400 lots per year in the 1920's).



**C.G. Röder and the British market**

Röder printed for a number of the British major companies. This particular **Tuck** card → (*Ronneburg, Saxony*, Tucks "Passepartout" make for local publ. Leopold Brandes) has no number but the border style on the front is distinctively Röder. (Numbered Tucks printed by Röder do exist, see TPA 11). Other publishers using Röder include **Peacock** (Pictorial Stationery Co.) numbered 132,083 ↓ ("Stylochrom" card, *Fermain Valley, Guernsey*). **Abraham** of Keswick no 44,153 ↘ (*Coaches descending Dunmail Raise, series no. 436*) and **G.W. Wilson** (not shown). – All cards from the collection of Chris Ratcliffe. –



**1912 to 1918**

Production rate steady at 35,000 jobs per year. Röder had 34 colotype presses in 1913.

I would imagine that the average lot size was not much above the minimum print level of 1000 cards per lot, say about 1500 cards per lot. This would give a yearly production rate of about 50 Million cards per annum. Some way from the glory years of 1907/08!

Year	Röder Numbers (thousands)
1911	1 to 35
1912	35 to 70
1913	70 to 105
1914	105 to 140
1915	140 to 175
1916	175 to 210
1917	210 to 245
to Nov. 1918	245 to 274

The end 1913 / beginning 1914 numbering is very accurate, as I have a photocopy of a letter from Röder dated February 1914 confirming a recent printing (from the collection of Chris McGregor).

We can see that once past 1918 the possibility of confusion with pre 1911 numbering vanishes, as on the "first time round" numbering Röder only reached about 255,000.

**1919 to 1929**

Estimated production rate steady at 16,000 jobs per annum. This gives the following Röder numbers used, all in thousands.

Year	Röder Numbers (thousands)
1919	275 to 291
1920	291 to 307
1921	307 to 323
1922	323 to 339
1923	339 to 355
1924	355 to 371
1925	371 to 387
1926	387 to 403
1927	403 to 419
1928	419 to 435
1929	435 to 451

**C.G. Röder and Valentine**

This Röder printing for Valentine of Dundee (*White Sands, Aberdour*, Valentine's Series, p/u 6 June 1904) is interesting, as the card number of 40057 indicates a printing in 1903. I had previously thought that Valentine printed all of their own cards, as this fact is proclaimed proudly on almost all of their output. I have checked this with the Valentine archives and this 40057 number does **not** fit in at all with the two main Valentine registers, but it does fit the Röder register. There was a large upsurge in the British PPC market in 1903, this may have caught Valentine temporarily short of printing capacity?

**1930 to 1933**

The production rate seems to have dropped to very low levels. Numbers used **about 450,000 to about 470,000 very approximately**.

1930/33 were the years of the Great Depression which hit Germany particularly badly, with truly massive unemployment. Although Röder was still exporting some cards in the inner war years, a lot of its work was for German publishers and work here seems to have diminished drastically in these depression years. Figures are very hard to get, but production was low, a lot of the cards were for very minor villages in Germany. By the end of 1933/1934 the German economy was recovering and there appears to have been a reversion to normal activity.

**1934 to 1939**

Estimated production 20,000 jobs per annum. Helmfried reports that the number of colotype presses had gone down to "less than 20" in the 1930's. This would be very approximately in line with my finding of a correlation of about 1000 jobs per press in any one year.

Year	Röder Numbers (thousands)
1934	480 to 500
1935	500 to 520
1936	520 to 540
1937	540 to 560
1938	560 to 580
1939	580 to 600

**1940 to 1943**

Estimated production rate 20,000 jobs per annum.

1940	600 Th to 620 Th
1941	620 Th to 640 Th
1942	640 Th to 660 Th
1943	660 Th to 680 Th
1944	Little or nothing?

The overall production rate seems to have largely ignored the great inflation of 1922/23, but was badly affected by the great depression of 1930/33. Things picked up again in end 1933/1934 with a reviving economy.

The volume of cards produced post WW1 was a pale reflection

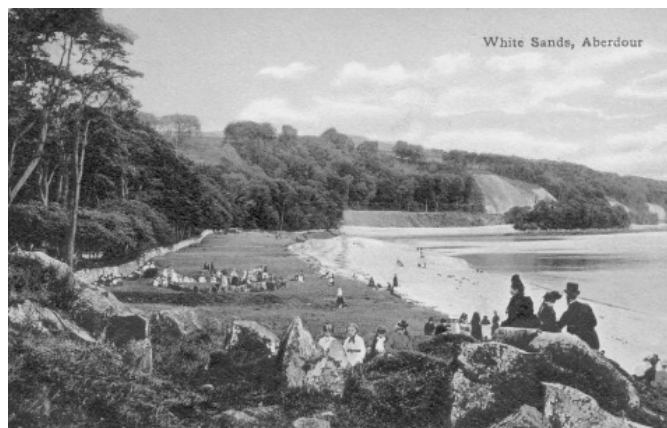
of former glories. The average batch size would also be low, an average of 1000 if they were lucky in the 1930's (a lot of the cards were for very small locations in Germany).

The highest Röder number I have is **669,173**. Helmfried has **674,166**, used in October 11th 1943 and Chris Ratcliffe has **671,994** dated 6.10.43. This indicates a finish around the 675 thousand mark for WW2 production. Production probably finished at the end of November 1943, as the heavy Allied bombing of Leipzig was concentrated into the months at the end of 1943 and beginning of 1944.

Unfortunately Leipzig housed a Junker's aircraft factory as well as oil storage facilities. Two of the bombing raids, the one of the 4th December 1943 and the other of 19th February 1944 were particularly damaging, destroying the city centre. Röder was in the Stötteritz district which was burnt out in the December 4th 1943 raid. According to one source 75% of Leipzig's printing capacity was lost, at that time. The railway and communications were badly affected.

The middle of the Röder factory was knocked out by the bombing but the two ends survived somehow. Enough of it survived to allow production to continue there after WW2. Indeed when I saw it in the 1990's, the OAN (Offizin Anderson Nexö, the DDR successor to Röder) factory were using the re-roofed front portion left after the bombing. The post 1945 reconstruction period is difficult and is under research. I feel that Röder production for 1901 to 1944 is enough for one article.

On my visit to the old Röder factory in Leipzig's Perthestraße I saw that some of the old Röder colotype machines were still there and were still producing high quality colotype work for the firm of "Leipziger Lichtdruck Werkstatt". I understand that LLW moved in the mid 1990's to new premises at Nonnenstraße 38, Leipzig, taking the old Röder machine(s) with them. LLW are still printing in the very highest quality colotype as well as running "Lichtdruck" courses and conferences. It is good to know that such an important part of Leipzig printing history has been preserved. (»)



**Technical Notes:**

Care must be used with the photo year dates on OLM cards. For instance you can find OLM cards with the photo dated 1907 with Röder numbers from 111,000 to 175,000. But Röder only printed from 110,000 to 145,000 in 1907. Röder printed the other 1907 dated photographs in 1908. OLM was particularly fond of repeat printings one year after the date of the photograph. Again, a few publishers would have cards printed by Röder towards the end of one year and have the next year date imprinted on for "verlag = published" reasons. Sensible business then, but slightly confusing now.

**Thanks to** (in alphabetic order):

Frans Bokelmann, Bob Conrich, Jack Foley, Oene Klynisma, Helmfried Luers, Chris McGregor, David Pearlman, Chris Ratcliffe, Bryan Rowley, Henry Toms, Maggie Toms, Henk Voskuilen,

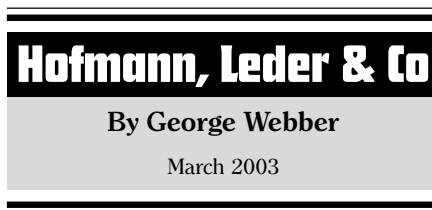
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Helmfried gave an initial account of the firm of Hofmann, Leder & Co in TPA 11, including some excellent illustrations of their "Kunstverlag" promotional cards. Although we are aware of Otto Leder, nothing was known about Hofmann or his firm.

I wrote to the Saxony archives and they were kind enough to send me details of this firm. It turns out that the firm was founded on 20th November 1899 in Meissen. The three principals were:

- Paul Max Hofmann
- Johann August Otto Leder
- Arthur Richard Beyer

The firm was set up to buy and sell "Luxuspapier" products, Galanterie (fancy goods)

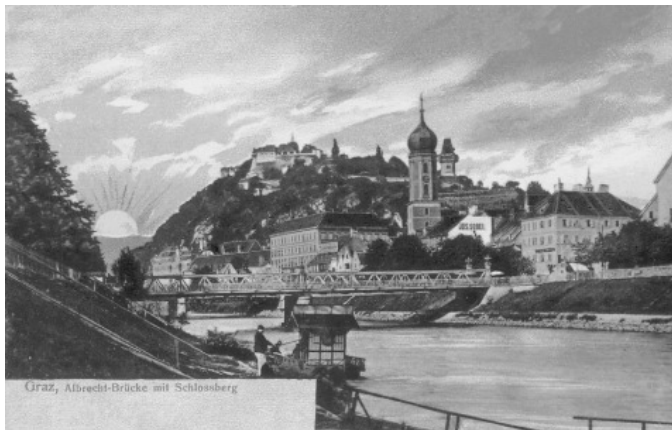


and leather goods as well as writing materials etc. The description "Kunstverlag" was used in their letter heading.

Beyer left the firm on 31.05. 1900, so he played little part in it. Otto Leder left on 05.01. 1901, leaving only Herr Hofmann to soldier on. The firm soon went broke and bankruptcy procedures were started on 21.12. 1903.

The above makes clear that this firm was a short lived fancy goods dealer. Any cards issued would be for 1903 or earlier. Otto Leder's involvement with this firm was quite fleeting and peripheral. Of course Leder went on to make his own successful career in PPC publishing.

There still are questions left about Leder. Was he a photographer? The cards he issued were generally of very high photographic quality and design. Did Leder photograph the views himself or did he commission other photographers to work for him? Have there been any exhibitions of his work and lastly does anybody have any biographical details about him?



View of Graz, Austria with promotional imprint of Hofmann, Leder & Co. on reverso. Röder printing process "Photo-Lila", (card no. 20065 = late 1902 / early 1903) was already used by Hofmann, Leder & Co. - from the collection of the editor -



Interesting to learn that George Webber received an answer from the Saxony archives. I wasn't so lucky, as often before, the final note said I should better come along and check directories myself. Perhaps it would be a good idea to have a foreign postal address of my own for any possible inquiries in the future. But enough of this.

George mentions TPA #11 as source of some information on the firm Hofmann, Leder & Co. First mentioned in TPA #10, p18, then TPA #11, p32. It appears that he may have also overlooked the OLM piece in TPA #18, pages 14-19 which deals with Otto Leder and the printers he had used. As I understand Hofmann, Leder & Co and the later (as we know now) own Otto Leder business as one complex, I have included all tiny bits of information I had at hand at that time on the Hofmann business, too.



But I don't want to complain and correct only at this place. I found an listing in the business columns of "Papier-Zeitung" that puzzles me a bit.

George had found out long ago that the Otto Leder business was run/owned by a Karoline Sophie Leder, which had just married a Herr Weiss, according an entry in a 1908 yearbook.

PZ, Oct. 20, 1907: Mrs. Linda Martha Bonitz née Walther has left the Otto Leder, Meissen firm. Mrs. Karoline Sophie Mai née Weiss from Dresden is sole owner now.

Aha, Karoline was a born Weiss and not married to a Mr. Weiss but a Mr. Mai. And not a member of the Leder family. Appears to had been an entire women's controlled business, our OLM postcard publisher. The mention that Karoline Sophie Mai comes from Dresden explains quite well the move of the business to Dresden in (early?) 1908.

But where was Johann August Otto Leder?? What had happened to him? Still alive and travelling across the globe to shot photographs to be published as postcards? Or had he passed away already by 1907? Further research will perhaps find an answer. Also why a "Otto Leder" postcard business suddenly turned up at Munich around 1912.

Perhaps Otto was indeed a (travelling) photographer. Running a business AND travelling abroad for months doesn't work together.