

Frankfurt on the River Main (Frankfurt/M.) – not to be mistaken with the (smaller) city of Frankfurt/Oder! – has always been a commercial metropolis. Frankfurt was also home of a number of (early) postcard printers & publishers, but never had such a leading role in ppc production as the cities of Berlin and Leipzig.

Let us take a look at some of the early firms from Frankfurt, especially those who worked for abroad, and where there is a good chance that you might have such cards in your own collection.

One of the early around postcard printers was

Philipp Frey & Co.,

Lithographische Kunstanstalt und Steindruckerei, Alte Mainzergrasse 39, FF/M. Established on Sept. 1, 1844. Owner since January 1884 was a *Carl Frey*. Specialized in souvenir views and postcards. In later years Ph. Frey & Co. produced chromolitho postcards (and greeting cards?) and other paper items mostly for the US market. The protective tariff of 1909 meant the (final) end for this firm, although the economic situation had become difficult since 1906 already. Philipp Frey (not to be mistaken with *August Frey* also from Frankfurt!) closed down by mid 1909 and the business was removed from the register of companies in Sept. 1910.

Illustrated below is a typical “*Gruss aus Marienbad*” (Bohemia), showing a queue of “illustrious” characters in front of one of the fountains with the healthy (mineral) water. Card is in bad condition unfortunately. Quite old Ph. Frey sample, mailed in July 1895 from Marienbad to Blankenstein, Germany.

The next oldest ppc printer, and probably the biggest of them all for some years, was

Gerhard Blümlein & Co.

Lithografie und Steindruck, Lersnerstr. 23. Establ. on Dec. 1, 1864. Owners in 1898 were *Gerh. Joh. Blümlein* and *Friedrich Hölter*. Specialized in “views” and postcards. Post-1900 cards often have only a “G.B. & Co., F. A/M.” imprinted, earlier cards often show complete name. Blümlein’s operations were so big and internationally that it should be worth an own comprehensive article. For example, Blümlein printed many of the early British court size cards (from 1895 on), lots of cards for Italy etc. And plenty of early German chromolitho cards came from Blümlein’s presses.

POSTCARD PRINTERS & PUBLISHERS
FROM
FRANKFURT

Blümlein managers were clever enough to realize early that the chromolitho process was too slow and costly for the tough competition among postcard producers. Especially for “picture” postcards and Blümlein did a lot of them for export. They turned to letterpress printing and halftone process for illustration work in early 1900’s.

As I said before Blümlein’s history is worth a separate article. Before I pick up one of their international connections, some data of what happened to G.B. & Co.: they are still around in 1921, Blümlein seemed to have retired, or more likely, passed away in the meantime, as his partner *Friedrich Hölter* did. Owner was the widow to Mr. Hölter, *Katharina Elisabeth Hölter* and a *Eduard Freund*. Managing director is a *A. Hölter*. Their cable address reads “Album” and their speciality were still postcards with views. Their business had declined a great deal: 28 workers, 2 x letterpress machines, 4 chromolitho presses and some 18 other machines. Just a fraction of their pre- 1914 size I believe. The Blümlein business was converted into a “Ltd” in 1923. By 1928 the workforce consisted of 30 people and a new modern press and some other equipment was added. *Eduard Fraund* (misspelled?) was the owner now and *A. Hölter* still the manager. PPC’s were no longer their major business field, but catalog, poster and label printing. In the early 1930’s some more presses/machinery were added and Blümlein & Co. even appears as a small entry in a 1950 printer’s directory. Always found at the same street address.

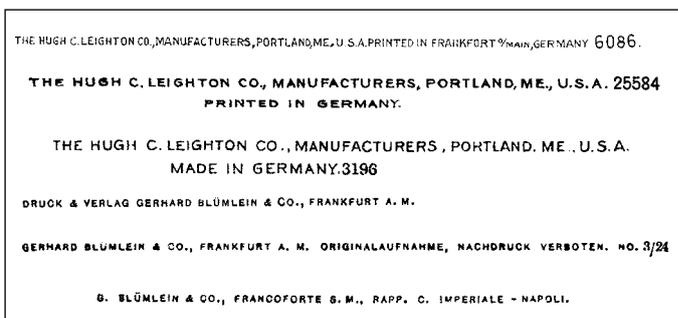
Illustrated below is a touristic “*Gruss von der Weser*” card showing the cities Hameln, Karlshafen and a river boat, for publisher “*F. W. Meyer, Hameln*”. An imprinted number reads ‘1164’. Typical blackened borders (from album pages). P/u within Germany in July 1897.

It is most likely that Blümlein & Co. worked for “*The Hugh C. Leighton Co., Manufacturers, Portland, ME., U.S.A.*” for a longer period, probably until 1909. Before the US company became “*The Leighton & Valentine Co, NY City*” and Valentine took over the printing.

The Leighton cards I refer to show in addition to the publisher imprint a “*Printed in Germany*” or “*Printed in Frankfort o/Main, Germany*” line. What convinced me that Blümlein did the printing for Leighton is not only the identical printing quality (halftone) of good to average quality, but especially the use of Blümlein’s favourite typestyle. Mostly “square looking” caps, found also on many non-Leighton Blümlein cards. (see below, 1:1)

Leighton Co. described themselves as “*Pioneers in view cards in this country*”. “*That 30 million post cards are always in stock; 12,000 subjects of view cards*”. These promotional imprints are found on a acknowledgement card (regular card with extra imprint) sent out in August 1908. Another card of same type has only “*High Grade – view cards, season and birthday cards, gold bordered cards and novelties*” imprinted and was mailed in Sept. 1909. It bears number 28368 and picture shows the *Wasp Rock Tunnel and the James River, VA*. This is the highest card number I have seen so far. The lowest I have is 3196 (divided back) plus several without any number and undivided back. IF the numbering is consecutive it meant indeed big business for Blümlein.

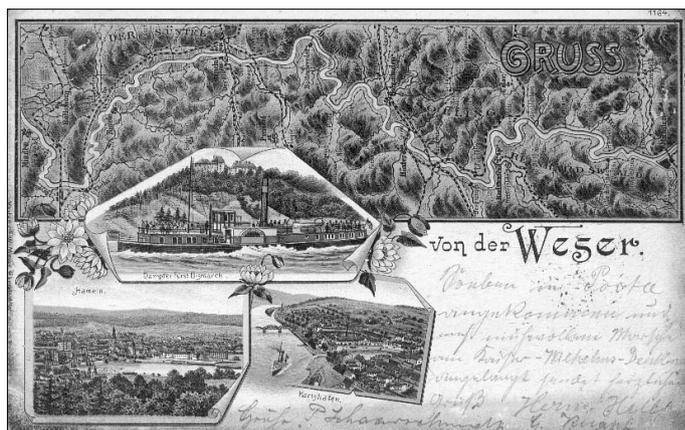
Howard Woody states in his article “*International Postcards*” (in “**Delivering Views**”, 1998), that (quote) ... *the Hugh C. Leighton Company obtained a postcard factory in Frankfurt, Germany, where it could print, publish, and distribute issues from a stock of forty million cards. Leighton accepted individual orders*



Philipp Frey & Co.



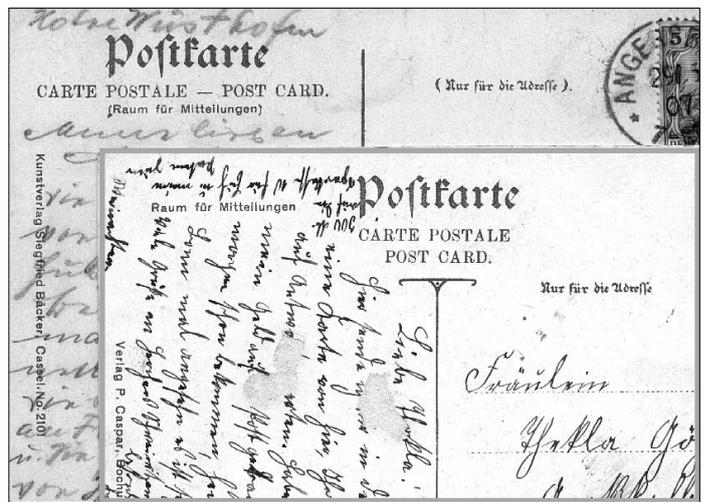
Gerh. Blümlein & Co.



and sold sets of one hundred cards for one Dollar. Later Leighton sent printing contracts to other factories. End of quote. Well, I don't really believe that Mr. Woody is correct with the estimation (perhaps it is just a quote from a Leighton promotional advert?) that Leighton Co. obtained/bought Blümlein & Co., but that there was a deep business relationship between both firms for some years.

Although the orders of Leighton Co. were surely big, Blümlein had still capacity to produce plenty of (mostly) German views. This gives us an some idea of how big Blümlein's printing capacity/output was in pre 1914 years. Illustrated are two address side layouts which were used by Blümlein. The "key" card for identification was discovered by Henk Voskuilen, Amsterdam. This should be enough on Blümlein for this issue. There is much more to discover in Frankfurt.

Two samples of Blümlein address side layouts. Using a characteristic "Postkarte" in German Fraktur type style and French/English version in caps. Either arranged above dividing line or top left position. Usually printed in brown ink. Very unusual font used for "Nur für die Adresse" = For address only.



A "postcard factory" that turned up recently is

Deutsche Ansichten-, Album- u. Postkartenfabrik Boch & Kirsch,

also to trade under the name of

Vereinigte Kunstanstalt Boch & Kirsch u. J.C. Berke & Co.

and

J.C. Berke & Co.

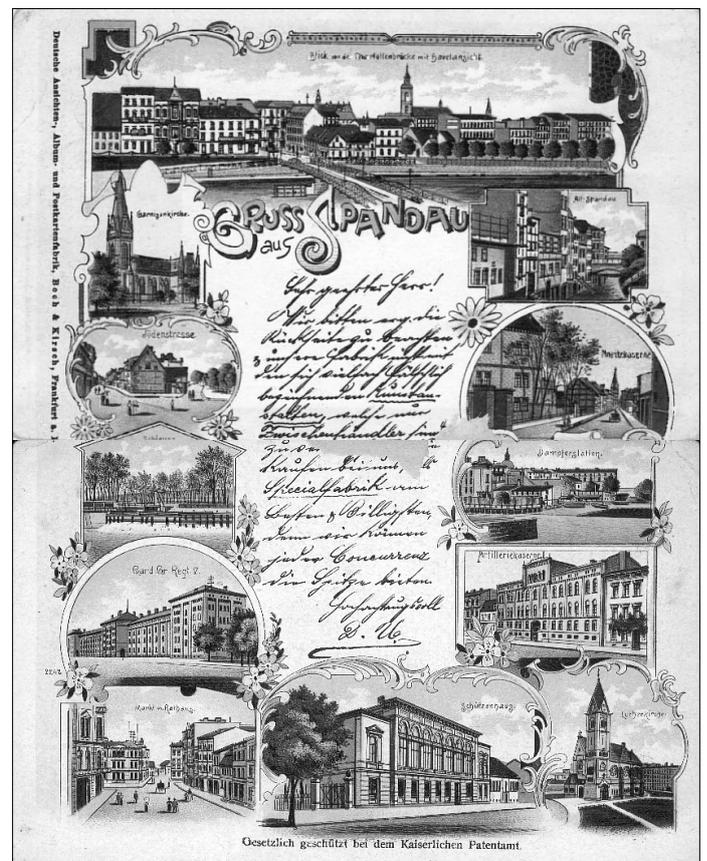
all found at the same address: Scheidswaldstr. 28, and later at Gartenstr. 47, FF/M.

This is really a unusual, little-known company which I discovered not long ago, and a lot of research is necessary to find out more. But I believe this is again one of these long gone firms which produced a lot of cards for customers worldwide, but we simply don't know how to identify their production yet.

German Views, Album and Postcard Factory Boch & Kirsch was founded in 1896 and the owner is said to be a *Christian Kirsch* according post-1900 directories. They started as typical chromolitho printers, but added soon collotype printing process for production. I was offered a promo card which looked very much like a half of a double-card (see below). Frans Bokelmann found the same promo but also the second half (see ill). My card shows views from an unidentified place in Eastern Europe. B&K offered various printing qualities at low prices and export to all countries. This firm stayed in business until the late 1920's.

J. C. Berke & Co., chromolitho printers, was established in March 1872, and the 1898 directory entry lists *Ferdinand Wilhelm Boch* and *Max Fay* as owners. Spec.: poster, label, catalogs and picture postcards. Same address as Boch & Kirsch. However, a listing in a 1921 directory says that *Christian Kirsch* was the sole owner since 1896. Confusing! Still around in 1933, owner now a "M. Kirsch", offset process was added, but ppc printing no longer mentioned.

The third company (name): Boch & Kirsch & J.C. Berke were merged (for some years). Although they resided at the same place. Postally used cards from this business period are found between 1905-1912. I had a well printed collotype card with colour overlays and fine glossy finish for some time. It had only a rubberstamp imprint of the the process name "**Chromhelios**" on address side. Address side layout / "Postkarte" is not that common (see below). Printed in red-(orange) ink. Two thin lines forming the dividing line. This is definitely the "**Vereinigte Kunstanstalt Boch & Kirsch u. J.C. Berke & Co.**" All cards seen so far are of good to very good printing quality. BUT there are many other similar cards around who might also come from this firm. Henk Voskuilen came up with a card that bears the imprint "**Frankfurter Lichtdruckanstalt**". This 1897 founded firm was a specialized ppc (collotype) printer. It is not yet clear if B&K just worked for them or if they controlled this firm too. But I wonder how B&K's cards for their foreign customers looked like??



Two matching "halbes" from the collection of Frans Bokelmann. "Gruss aus Spandau", probably a "Kartenbrief" (card-letter). Promotion imprint in handwriting style asks customers to avoid middlemen, but to order direct from factory. Below promotional imprint (reverse). P/u 1900.

**Deutsche Ansichten-, Album- und Postkartenfabrik
BOCH & KIRSCH, Frankfurt a M.**

Renommirteste Spezialfabrik für Extra-Anfertigungen von Ansichts-Postkarten, Kartenbriefen etc.
in
**Photobunt-, Photographieton-, Helios-, Chromotypie-
Aquarelle-Ausführung**
nach einzusendenden Photographien oder sonstigen Bildern.
Export nach allen Ländern. — Prompte sorgfältigste Bedienung. — Enorm billige Preise.
Grossisten erhalten Vorzugsnotirungen.

Grösste Neuheit!
Chromotypie-Karten, vollständig naturgetreue Wiedergabe der Photographie.

MITTEILUNGEN

POSTKARTE.

Here is another interesting one

August Frey

Lithografische Kunstanstalt – later also a *Lichtdruckanstalt, Grüneburgweg 12*. Founded in December 1888. Spec: picture postcards and town/city views (booklets). I believe *August* came from the *Ph. Frey* family. His cable address reads “Columbia” and I think this is a good hint where his favourite market field was. August Frey started as regular chromolitho printer but added collotype printing process soon. I have a number of US cards (good) printed by the firm of August Frey, but this would need more space as I have here available. It appears that A. Frey concentrated entirely on ppc’s and so was hit by protective tariffs. There is no information found on this firm in post-1914 directories. Illustrated is a “novelty” item by August Frey. Most of the text is mirror-faced and the information presented is a bid odd. **“Latest News! Novelty! Postcards without picture!”** Mailed from Bremen to Holland in Oct. 1898.



The other illustrated A. Frey printed card is in my opinion much more of interest. It proves that they worked also for British customers. **“Old Wolverton - Cottages and Inn”** is a sample card with Frey’s business given as *“Lichtdruckanstalt”* (collotype printer). An rubber-stamp imprint reads *“Farben-Lichtdruck”* which is not fully correct. This is a fine coloured card but not all colours were done by collotype process. Nothing on address side, typical card to be pasted into a sample booklet. Frey liked to use a certain art nouveau typestyle for many captions. Very similar to the popular then art-nouveau *Eckman* font. But they used regular serif fonts also, normally printed in red ink.



I am very interested in any British cards which show illustrated address side design / “Phototyped in Frankfort” in stamp box. The printing quality (collotype) makes me believe that they were done by August Frey, but I need more cards to find out.

POST CARD

Red for Inland
1 only.

The Address to be written here.

Phototyped
in
Frankfort

A listing discovered recently in a 1895 issued ppc collector publication mentions a firm named **“Frey & Kirsch”** being printers and publishers. Seems to be an early alliance between *August Frey* and *Christian Kirsch*. Maybe also another yet unknown member of the Frey family. It is not the firm of *Ph. Frey* who is listed separately. There was indeed a lot of progress in Frankfurt’s ppc printing scene.

Adolf A. Rosenblatt

Lithografische Kunstanstalt – Buch-, Stein- u. Zinkdruck, Rossdorfer Straße 18. This firm was founded on August 1, 1878 and owners in 1898 were *Adolf A. Rosenblatt* and *Isaak Rosenblatt* (since July 1, 1881). They were specialized in the production of picture postcards as well as congratulation cards by chromolitho process. Rosenblatt closed down by early 1909 as a result of the US protective tariff. Their major customers had been in the USA during the last years of the firm’s existence. A recent find in *“Der Postkarten Sammler”*, July 1896 issue, lists a firm named **“Rosenblatt-Sali Wolff”** as publisher of chromolitho cards with views from Frankfurt. It seems that a co-operation between Rosenblatt (the printer) and a Sali Wolff (the publisher) was in existence for some time.

Rosenblatt is best know for their wide range of (often embossed) border/passepartout cards. See next page for a small selection of such cards. These cards were not only designed and printed but also often published by Rosenblatt. Mostly leaves, fruit or shells with changing inserted local views. It is said that there are at least 25 different Rosenblatt border designs around. Of course other publishers copied these designs, issued similar looking ones, but there is always one technical aspect that makes it possible to identify Rosenblatt production. While other publishers/printers had their chromolitho borders preprinted and then added the individual views by collotype or halftone printing processes, Rosenblatt did the complete picture side by chromolitho process only. This gives their cards a homogeneous look and the touch of quality. And Rosenblatt’s printing quality was indeed always very good to excellent! So, they continued to produce excellent cards, and as long as chromolitho cards were “in” and customers were willing to pay higher prices, everything was okay. But already by 1903 the interest of German ppc buyers changed, prices for chromolitho topo cards dropped, because of the heavy competition of other printers using faster and cheaper production processes. The market was flooded with views. Rosenblatt printed and published of course also plenty of typical *“Gruss aus”* and regular topo cards. But always by chromolitho process to my current knowledge. See ill. **“Gruss aus Wiesbaden”** with Kaiser Friedrich monument in front of the Nassauer Hof. Card no. 6271 mailed to San Francisco in March 1903.

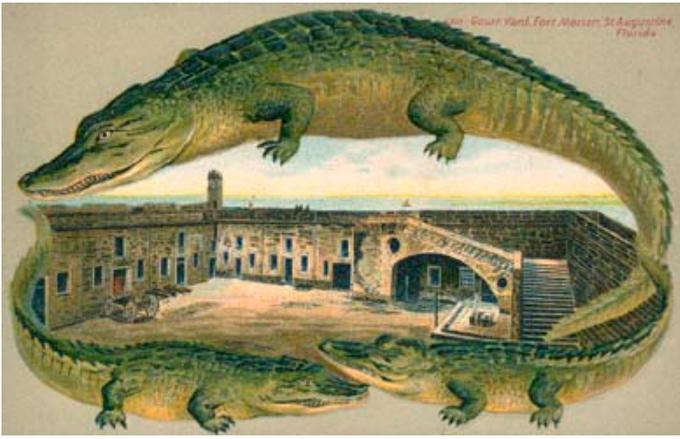


To compensate small profit margins on the German market, or even losses (Rosenblatt’s name turns up on a list of “dumping card sellers” to be avoided), Rosenblatt looked out for business abroad. Especially the USA seemed to be a good place for chromolitho cards, although importers already had to pay some customs duties in the years pre the 1909 protective tariff. Anyway, US postcard buyers were willing to pay a little bit more for good quality cards.

One of Rosenblatt’s US customers, perhaps the biggest until the close down, was the publisher **S. Langsdorff** from New York City. For this publisher another outstanding border series was designed: the *Alligator border* series. Please see page 21 for a sample from this series. The card illustrated comes from the collection of *David W. Kalies*, Florida. David is not only an avid collector of these cards but also tries hard to find out more on the Langsdorff business, their card line (many have a winged circle SL & Co logo on) and their history in general. Please see page 43 – David really appreciates any help with his research he could get.

I have not yet managed to find information on the Rosenblatt factory. Must had been of some size. My research continues. The Rosenblatt business is long gone but their superb chromolitho work is much appreciated by many collectors worldwide today.

Rosenblatt - Frankfurt



S. Langsdorf & Co., New York, published the "Alligator-Border" series. This is "S 551", *Court Yard, Fort Marion, St. Augustine, Florida*. From the collection of David Kalies. All other here illustrated Rosenblatt cards come from the collection of Frans Bokelmann.



The earliest Rosenblatt card I have seen is this "**Gruss aus Meran**", for local publisher "Julius Scheibein" with full name "Lith Kunstanstalt Rosenblatt, Frankfurt" imprinted. **This card was mailed in May 1892!**



Gruss aus Zutphen - with Rosenblatt as publ./printer - no. 8053



Delft - with full name - no. 12318



Groeten uit Leiden - no. 8159 ↓ **Bremen** - no. 7623, p/u 1902



Gruss aus Groningen - no. 7672 ↓ **Zandvoort** - no. 7251, p/u 1903

