

## The 1912 Rhein-Main Zeppelin Airmails

The German Reichspost granted permission for a "Postcard Week" to be held from 10<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> June 1912, to raise funds for the "Mother and Baby Care Charity". This charity had raised funds over a number of years to found and run homes for mothers and babies in the city of Darmstadt. This particular "Postcard Week" had special mail consignments carried by air either on the Zeppelin airship Schwaben (LZ 10) or the Euler biplane "Gelber Hund". These were the first airmail flights made with the permission and cooperation of the Reichspost, who also agreed to recognise the unofficial airmail stamps sold on behalf of the charity and to allow these stamps to be cancelled. As well as the obvious charity support, this postcard week was a clear demonstration of the zeppelin capability to carry large quantities of mail and an early indication of commercial capability.

**Exhibit Purpose:** Recording the first time a Zeppelin was used to collect, transport and deliver official airmail, with the cooperation of the German Reichspost.

Deutsche Luftschiffahrt AG (DELAG) of Frankfurt-am-Main was a subsidiary company of Luftschiffbau Zeppelin GmbH. It was the first airline in the world, being founded for the purpose of conducting flights between the larger German cities and excursion flights over scenic regions. Schwaben was the tenth zeppelin airship, built in July 1911, and it went on to have 218 flights and carried a total of 1500 passengers before burning on the ground in June 1912, just after the close of the "Postcard Week".

The postcard week was so successful it was expanded to include flights the following week with the final flight on 23<sup>rd</sup> June.



**Exhibit Scope:** Mail carried by Schwaben (Zeppelin LZ10) from each of the five major cities of the German Grand Duchy of Hessen, during the Postcard Week from June 10 to 16<sup>th</sup> June 1912, and further extended to June 23<sup>rd</sup>.

The five cities are Frankfurt-am-Main, Darmstadt, Mainz, Offenbach and Worms.

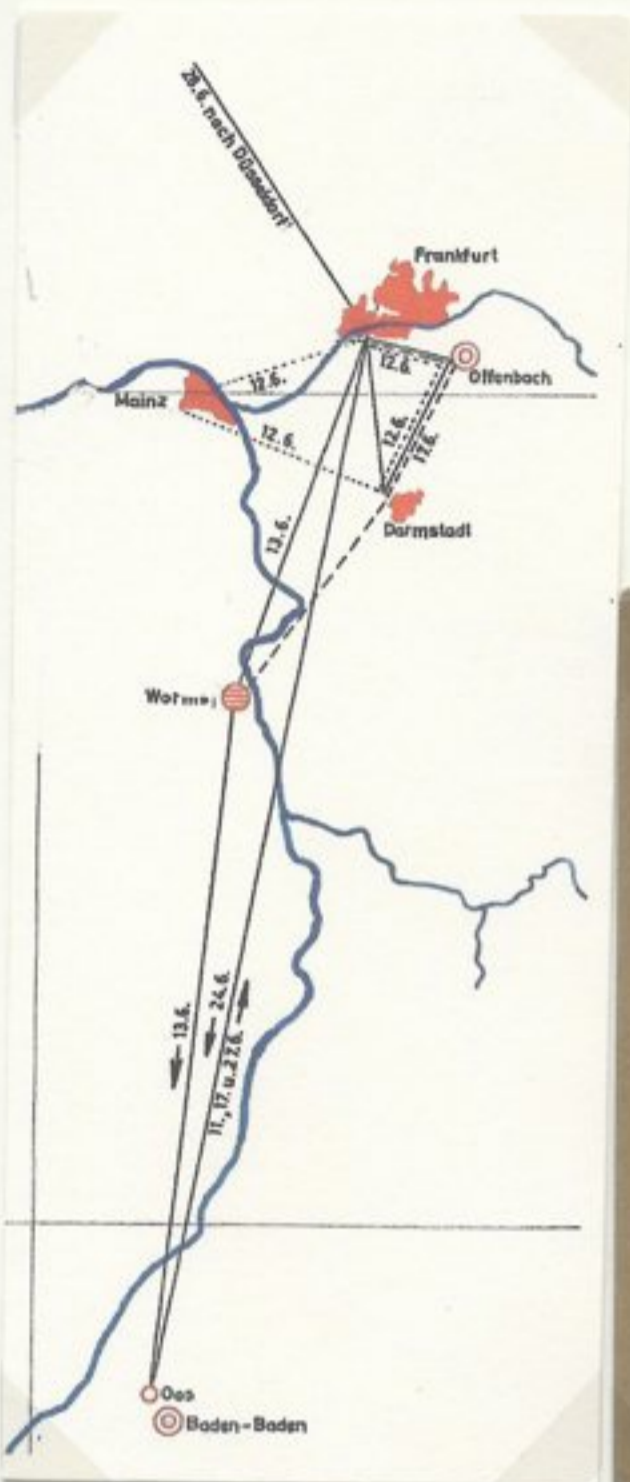
**Exhibit Plan;** Mail from each of the major participating cities, presented chronologically by date.

The main sponsor for the Charity "Postcard Week" was the Grand Duchess Eleonore of Hessen und bei Rhein. This is one of a set of "Royal Family" postcards, photographed by court photographer Steinacker and produced to raise money for the charity during postcard week.

**Mint Card,** pre-franked with semi official 10pf Charity Week adhesive, card face featuring the Grand Duchess Eleonore of Essen und bei Rhein.

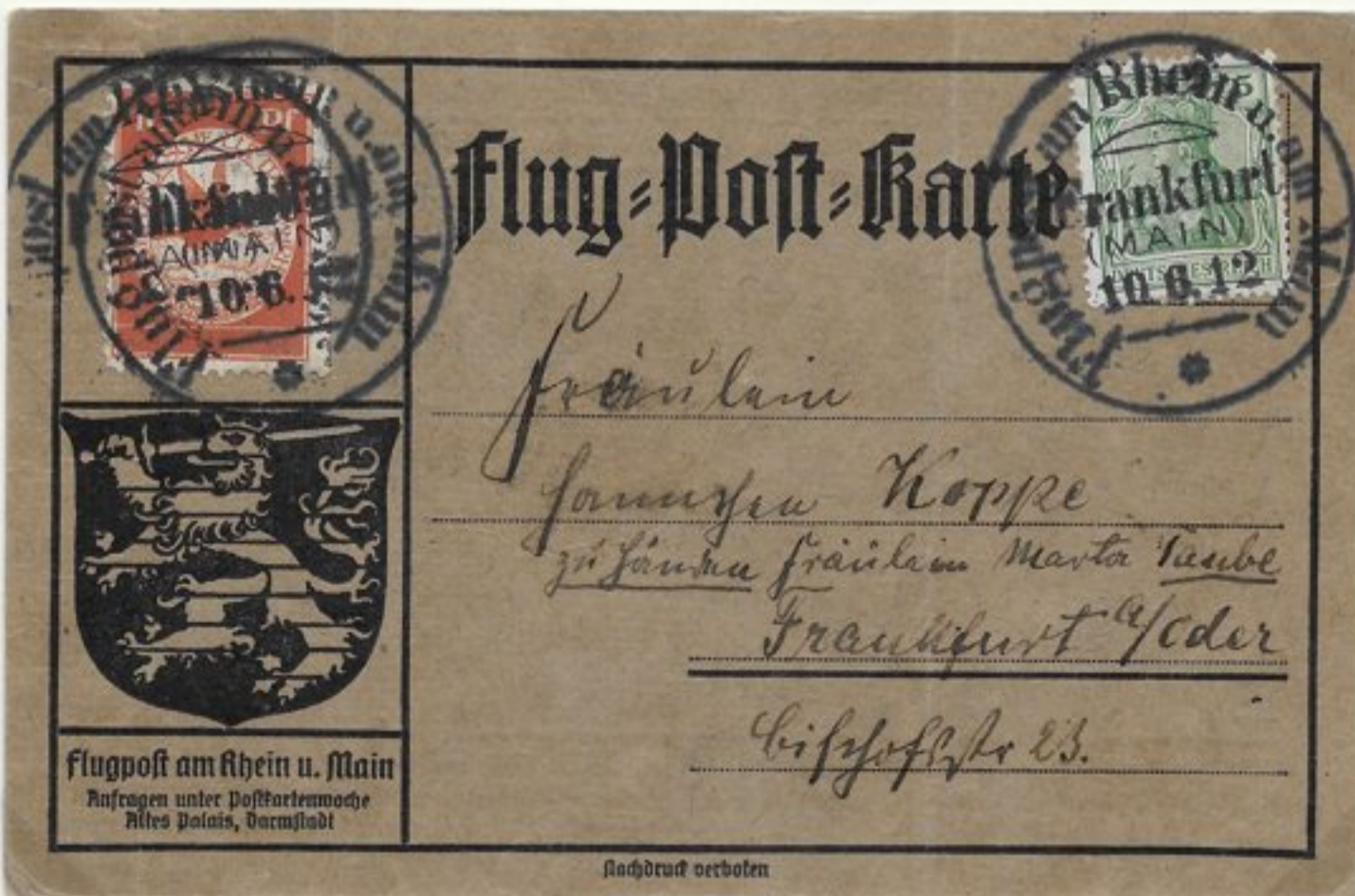
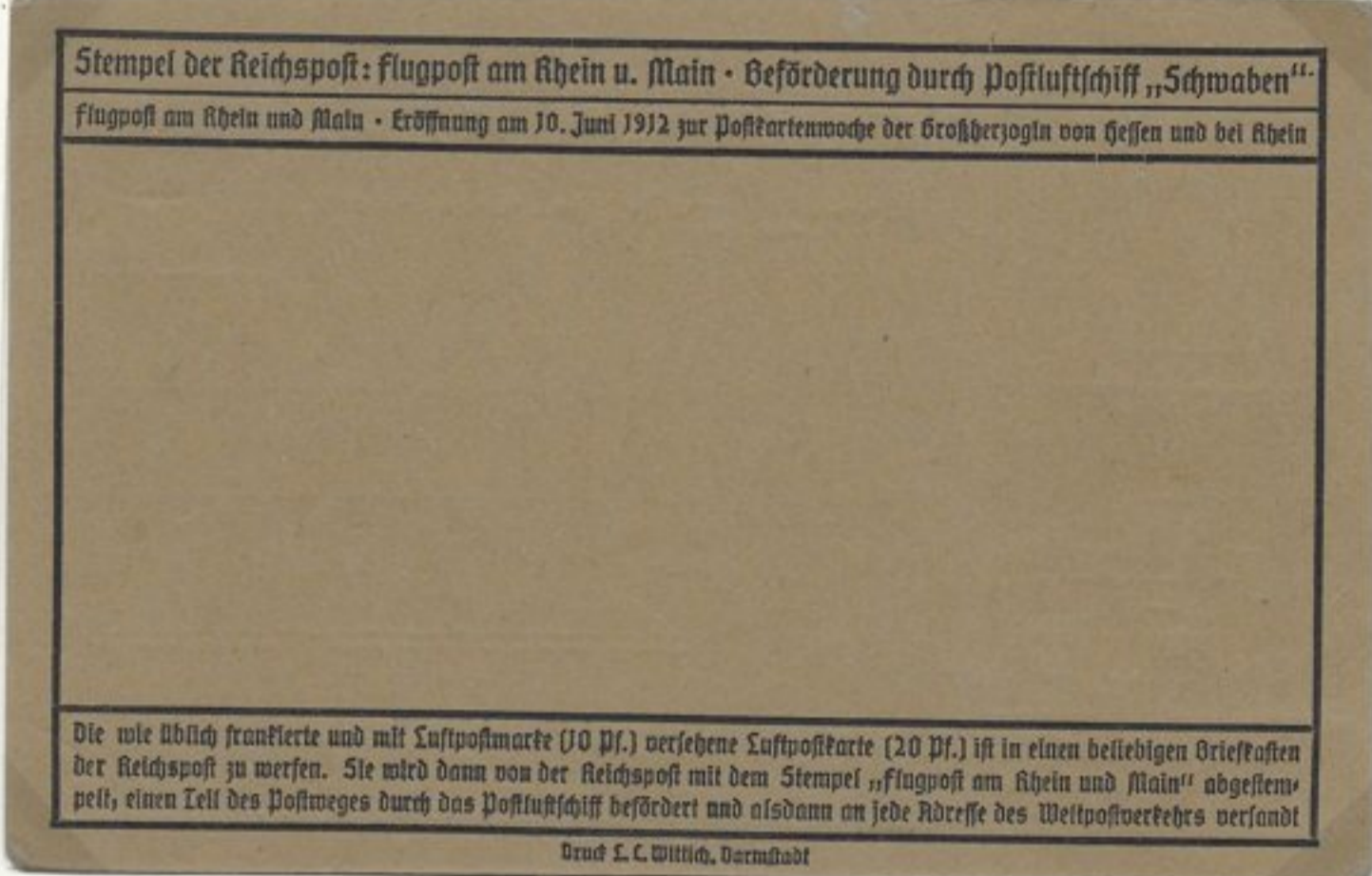
# Frankfurt-am-Main Mail

10<sup>th</sup> June 1912



Schwaben Flights and Dates

The first flight took off from Frankfurt-am-Main on 12<sup>th</sup> June carrying cards mailed over the previous two days, visiting the towns of Offenbach, Darmstadt and Mainz. Mail was dropped in 25kg bags and mail also taken on board in each of the designated locations. Frankfurt-am-main had a population of 334,978 in 1910 and was located on the river Main, 17 miles north of Darmstadt. The official cards went on sale on 10<sup>th</sup> June and the earliest cards sent have this date. However, the first date of sending for the other four cities was 12<sup>th</sup> June. It has been recorded that 510 kg of mail was carried by air during "postcard charity week".



**Upper Card:** Reverse of Mint postcard produced for posting in "Charity Postcard Week" June 10-16<sup>th</sup> 1912.  
**Lower Card:** Card posted locally to Frankfurt, 10<sup>th</sup> June 1912; earliest cancelled mail from Frankfurt-am-Main during Postcard Charity Week. Both Reichspost 5pf definitive and Charity Week 10pf semi-official stamp are cancelled.

## Frankfurt-am-Main Mail

11<sup>th</sup> June 1912

The semi-official Rhein-Main airmail stamps were sold at the main post offices of each of the participating cities. These were designed by Professor Kleukens of Darmstadt and letterpress printed on unwater marked buff paper, by the Osteried printing firm in Frankfurt-am-Main. Each stamps bears the inscription "First German Airmail to the Rhine". The Rhein-Main airmails could be posted at any mailbox in any of the five cities. Each card carried by Zeppelin airship was required to be franked with the Reichspost 5pf definitive (local postage card rate) and the 10pf semi-official Rhein-Main adhesive. All the costs of the Rhein Airmail adhesives went directly to the charity and senders could choose to increase this contribution by purchasing 20pf or 30pf adhesives.



**Upper Card:** Card posted locally to Frankfurt, 11<sup>th</sup> June 1912, carried to Worm.

**Lower Card:** Card posted locally to Frankfurt, 10<sup>th</sup> June 1912; returned to Frankfurt am Main.

Lower card has semi-official airmail adhesive applied upside down, this was at the time a recognised way of sending secret messages of love to the one receiving the card.

Frankfurt-am-Main Mail

12<sup>th</sup> June 1912

The cancellers used are ring type, 39mm in diameter with the inscription "Flugpost am Rheinu.am Main". Only one office in each city was used to apply the special cancellation but there is evidence of the use of more than one cancellor in some locations.



Card above and right sent to Offenbach, each correctly franked for local delivery.



Card franked with 20pf semi official airmail adhesive, meaning the charity donation was doubled by the sender.



20pf charity adhesive. Local mail to Neckarsulm 14<sup>th</sup> June 1912. All charity adhesive fees went to the charity as well as the cost of the card

20pf charity adhesive. Local mail to Fulda. 15<sup>th</sup> June 1912



Card franked with 10pf semi official airmail adhesive, local mail to Offenbach. 15<sup>th</sup> June 1912

## Frankfurt-am-Main Mail

17<sup>th</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1912

The main sponsor for the Charity "Postcard Week" was the Grand Duchess Eleonore of Hessen und bei Rhein. She used the rising popularity of aviation to capture the imagination of those living in the Grand Duchy of Hessen. Both the special postcards and special adhesives were sold on behalf of her charity, with the bulk of the funds coming from sale of the stamps. However, Frankfurt-am-Main was not regarded by many to be part of Hessen and copies of postcards featuring the Royal family were not put on sale here. Similarly, most cards in Hessen were pre-stamped with 10pf charity stamp, whereas supplies sent to Frankfurt-am-Main had been pre-stamped primarily with 20pf charity stamps.



Cards sent to Fechenheim (city district of Frankfurt-am-Main) and Stuttgart on 17<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> June. The latter card was sent on the final flight of the extended charity postcard week. Both cards franked with the 20pf charity adhesive

## Darmstadt Mail

12<sup>th</sup> June 1912

The population of Darmstadt was 83,123 in 1910 and it was the capital city of Hessen. Darmstadt was also the major beneficiary city of the charity post card week as funds were being raised for the "Mother and Baby Care" homes located here.

The olive green cards, produced for carriage on the Schwaben Zeppelin, were printed sixteen at a time in four columns of four, and were printed by letterpress.



Cards posted from Darmstadt on 12<sup>th</sup> June to Ludwigshafen (upper card) and Oberhessen (lower card). Correctly franked with Reichspost 5pf definitive and semi-official 10pf charity adhesive.



Photographic card of the Grand Duke, correctly franked at 10pf for carriage to Switzerland (Reduced copy above).

Reverse of card featuring The Grand Duchess (as on title page), produced for Charity Week. Card sent on 13<sup>th</sup> June. From Darmstadt to Mainz.



Card sent from Darmstadt to Bad-Vanbeim, correctly franked at 5pf for carriage to German city and 10pf charity adhesive.



Photographic card of the two royal princes, correctly franked at 5pf for carriage within Germany (Reduced copy above).

Card sent from Darmstadt on 17<sup>th</sup> June, correctly franked with 10pf definitive for carriage to Zurich and 10pf charity adhesive.



Card sent from Darmstadt to Diez, correctly franked at 5pf for carriage to German city and 10pf charity adhesive.



Abdruck verboten



This card is an example of a small number of cards (exact quantity unknown) which were overprinted in Gothic typeface on message side with “Zur Erinnerung an den Ersten Flugversuch des Schneider von Ulm – am 32 Mai 1811” – translated as “to commemorate the first flight test of the tailor of Ulm”. The tailor is a figure of some repute in Germany and on the date commemorated, he attempted to fly from a bridge wearing a pair of wooden wings. The majority of the cards are franked with the 20pf charity adhesive.

The address side of the card is translated “at the tourism association Ulm a. D”



Unsold cards were addressed to the charity head office “Altes Palais, Darmstadt” and carried on the final flight, to be retained as sold afterwards to continue to raise funds for the charity – sold as “flown cards”.

## Offenbach Mail

12<sup>th</sup> June 1912

The population of Offenbach was 63,372 in 1910 and it was situated on the river Main, only five miles east-south-east of Frankfurt. It is thought that the proximity to Frankfurt is the major reason that the quantity of mail flown here is considerably less than the other cities in Hessen.



Card posted on 12<sup>th</sup> June from Offenbach to Hamburg. Correctly franked with 5pf Reichspost definitive and 10pf charity adhesive.



Card posted on 12<sup>th</sup> June from Offenbach to Frankfurt. Correctly franked with 5pf Reichspost definitive and 10pf charity adhesive.



Card from Offenbach to Essen, sent on 12<sup>th</sup> June. Correctly franked with Reichspost 5pf definitive and 10pf charity adhesive.

Card from Offenbach to Offenbach, sent on 12<sup>th</sup> June. Correctly franked with Reichspost 5pf definitive and 10pf charity adhesive.



Nachdruck verboten



Photographic card from Offenbach to Karlsruhe, sent on 14<sup>th</sup> June. Correctly franked with Reichspost 5pf definitive and 10pf charity adhesive. Copy of card face in next section on Worms mail

## Worms Mail

12<sup>th</sup> June 1912

The city of Worms had a population of 43,841 in 1910 and was situated 20 miles southwest of Darmstadt. It was the 13<sup>th</sup> June before the airship flew of Worms, and dropped mail as part of "Postcard Week." From Worms, the airship flew to its home base at Baden-Oos. After the postcard week had been extended the airship took off towards Frankfurt and from there carried mail to Offenbach. The loading of mail from Offenbach was not possible to the high winds on this visit.



Local mail to Worms picked up on 13<sup>th</sup> June and off loaded at Baden-Oos and returned to Worms in normal Reichspost surface mail. Both cards correctly franked with Reichspost 5pf definitive and 10p charity adhesive.



Photographic card based on the Steinacker Royal photographs (all four shown in exhibit). Picture of the Grand Duke, the Grand Duchess and the two young princes.



Reduced copy of reverse of Steinacker card above – sent on 12<sup>th</sup> June from Worms to Lauenburg. (Correctly franked).



Card from worms to Coblenz, sent on 13<sup>th</sup> June. Correctly franked with Reichspost 5pf definitive and 10pf charity adhesive.

## Mainz Mail

12<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> June 1912

The population of Mainz was 91,179 in 1910 and it was the second largest city in Hessen. Located at the confluence of the Rhine and Main rivers, it lies 20 miles west-south west of Frankfurt.

The LZ-10-Schwaben German airship, built by Luftschiffbau Zeppelin in 1911, is regarded as the first commercially successful passenger-carrying aircraft, carrying 1,553 passengers in 218 commercial flights.

Shortly after the end of postcard week, the Schwaben was destroyed by fire at the end of a flight from Frankfurt to Dusseldorf, when the airship caught fire during a thunderstorm. Some of the crew were hurt as the airship hit the ground but all survived.



Card posted on 12<sup>th</sup> June from Mainz to Kassel. Correctly franked with 5pf Reichspost definitive and 10pf charity adhesive.

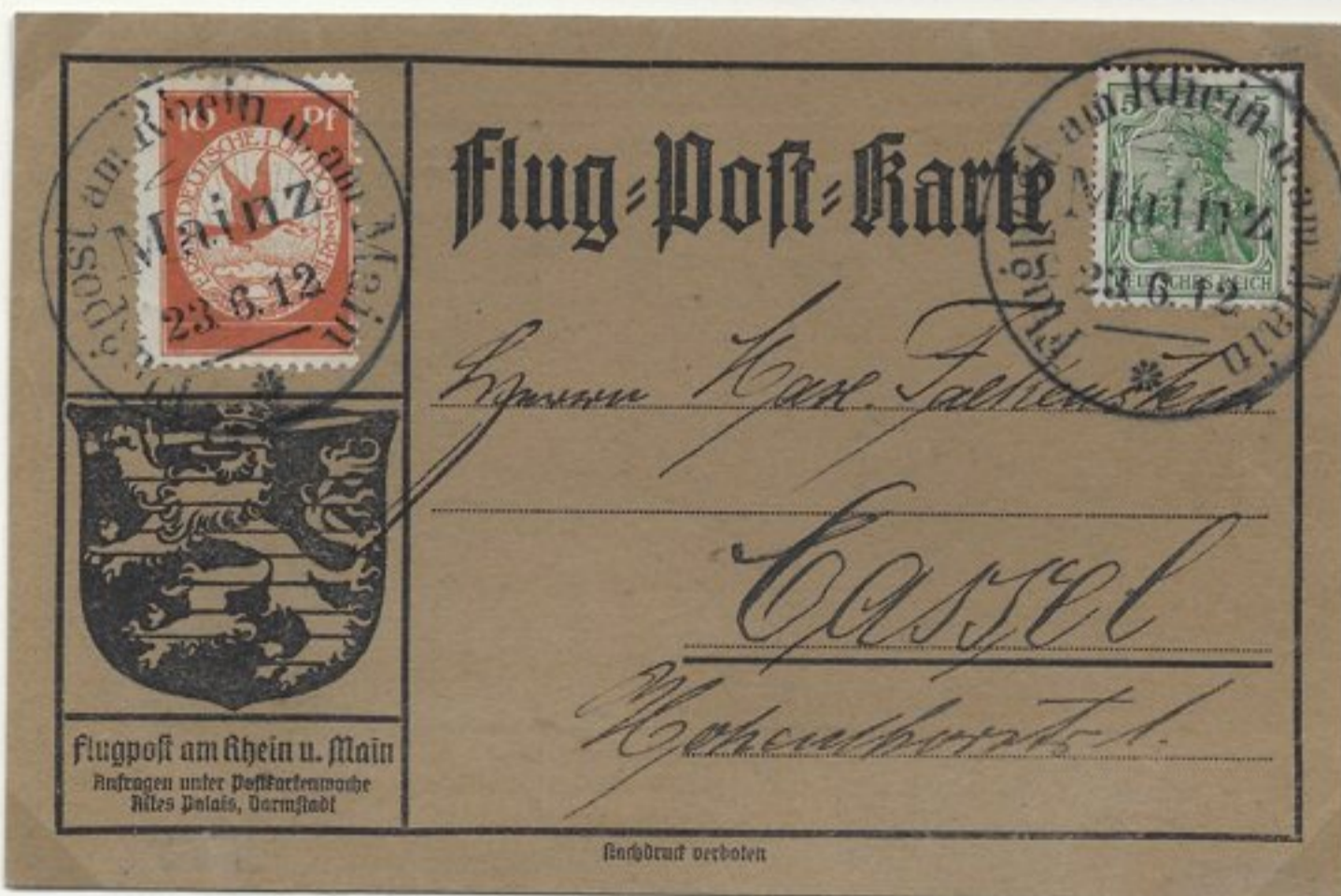


Card posted on 13<sup>th</sup> June from Mainz to Biebrich-am-Rhein. Correctly franked with 5pf Reichspost definitive and 10pf charity adhesive.



Card sent from Mainz to Nurnberg on 13<sup>th</sup> June. Correctly franked.

Card sent from Mainz to Wiesbaden on 14<sup>th</sup> June. Correctly franked.



Card from Mainz to Cassel, sent on 23<sup>rd</sup> June. Correctly franked. Final flight of Schwaben held during extended postcard week.