

UNITED NATIONS EUROPEAN OFFICE

Geneva, Switzerland - 1947-1951

At the close of World War II, the League of Nations was no longer a viable international organization and the fledgling United Nations organization consisted of many of the same representative members. These members took action during the United Nations first General Assembly in London, England to secure the properties of the League of Nations for exclusive use of the United Nations. A plan outlining site and property rights was proposed and approved by Switzerland and the League of Nations during its last General Assembly in 1946. The agreement granted the United Nations all existing League property for its new offices and Geneva, Switzerland became the permanent seat of the United Nations European Office (UNEO) as of January 2, 1947.

Postal services for the new organization were provided by Swiss authorities at a substation within the Palais des Nations, initially using overprinted League of Nations issues as an interim measure. This practice changed on April 1, 1947 and regular Swiss issues were used until February 1, 1950. Postmark devices also changed the text within the working daters to indicate the origin as the 'Nations Unies' instead of the 'Société des Nations'. Special services such as registration were offered without change. An additional agreement with Switzerland provided for 20 regular Swiss values to receive provisional overprints for exclusive use of the European Office in Geneva, as had been done for the League. These issues were only valid on official mail originating from the Palais des Nations.

Exhibit Scope

This exhibit documents the postal transition from the League of Nations to the United Nations European Office. Covers with corner cards (stationery) featured in this exhibit are official mail of the respective organizations and originated from offices within the Palais des Nations.

Combinations of stationery types, markings, stamps and cancel devices are the means used to document the changes between organizations. Most covers have an 'office of origin' cachet (small rectangular box with letter codes) which was used for individual departmental postal accounting purposes by both the League and UNEO.

This exhibit contains original research. Important items have dark blue mattes.

Exhibit Plan

League of Nations
League of Nations Transition
Postmark Device
Postal Service
Provisionally Overprinted Issue
Origin (Accounting) Cachets
Diplomatic Pouch Service
Permanent Offices in the Palais

Exhibit Highlights

April, 1946: Interim period - League postal issues. Featuring:

League of Nations stationery and service stamps used by the United Nations European Office.

January, 1947: Formation period - Swiss postal issues. Featuring:

Genève postmark with reverse accent mark (error used approximately 14 days).
Genève 10 postmark used as postage due cancel on British field post office mail.

February, 1950: Provisionally overprinted regular Swiss issues. Featuring:

A full plate (half sheet) of the overprint type varieties and positions.

Permanent offices housed in the Palais. Featuring:

Cover from Thomas Cook & Son office at the Palais.



Maximum card depicting the 'Palais des Nations' building