

# AEG Light Bulbs



AEG (Allgemeine Elektrizitäts-Gesellschaft AG, or General Electric Company) was one of the largest industrial companies in Germany in the 20th century.

It was founded in 1883 by Emil Rathenau as the Deutsche Edison Gesellschaft für Angewandte Elektrizität (German Edison Company for Applied Electricity), after he obtained the rights in 1881 to the Edison light bulb in Germany. Its original focus was on building power stations and providing electric lighting to commercial customers. In 1887 the company was renamed AEG as it expanded beyond lighting to other electrical products such as electric trolleys.

In 1888 Louis Schmidt designed the advertising poster at left, showing the Goddess of Light sitting on a winged wheel which symbolizes technological progress.



AEG's poster stamps are not dated, but the corporate logo has a documented history, which can be helpful in dating the stamps. An elaborate script monogram was adopted in 1896, so the stamp below which has a close variant of it, overprinted on a version of the Schmidt poster, is presumably from the 1896-1900 period. There is some overlap of the 1908 and 1912 logos on later stamps, but if both are present, presumably the stamp is 1912 or later.



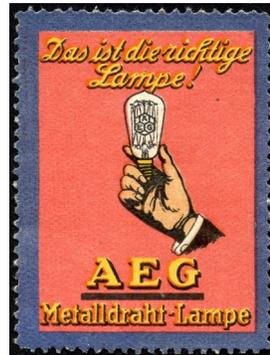
In 1907 AEG hired Peter Behrens as an artistic advisor. He was already a well known graphic artist, having designed the popular “Behrens” font in 1901. In 1908 he changed the monogram logo to one where the letters A, E, and G were in individual cells, then in 1912 designed a new logo with slanted serifs on the E, which was used for many decades. He was not only a graphic artist, but also an architect. In 1909 he designed an iconic turbine factory for AEG, which was an early example of concrete, iron and glass construction. In addition, he was an industrial designer and designed clocks, tea kettles, fans and hair dryers for AEG. Since he was a consultant for AEG, and not an employee, he continued to design for other clients throughout Europe. He also taught at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, becoming head of the architecture school. He died in 1940. To poster stamp collectors, he is best known for his designs for AEG, a number of which are shown here.



*AEG Turbine Factory 1909*



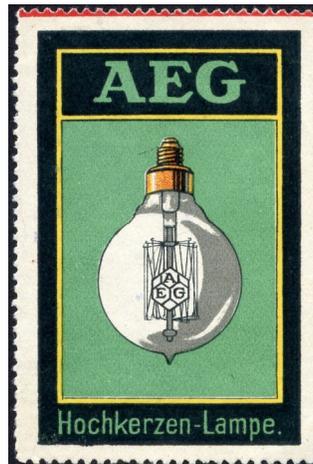
*“AEG Metal Filament Lamp” on cover from Helsinki to Humpilla, Finland 1936*



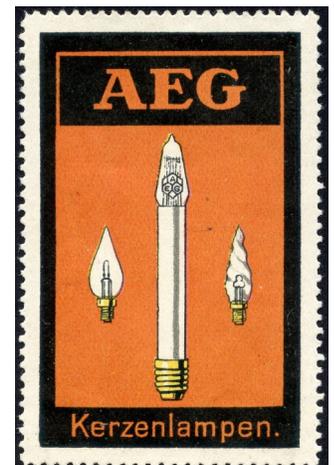
*This is the Right Lamp! AEG Metal Filament Lamp*

On these two stamps and the Finnish cover previously, the AEG is in cells on the lamp, but the crossbar of the E at the bottom is not slanted, implying these are from 1908-1912. The Finnish stamp didn't get used until 1936 however! AEG and other lamp companies would advertise their metal filaments, which lasted longer and were brighter than the early carbon filaments. Carbon filaments were gradually replaced by metal from approximately 1902-1912.

These four stamps seem to be from the same time period, since the E crossbar is now slanted, but it is slanted back to the left instead of forward as in most AEG graphics - still most probably 1912 or later. Corporate histories do not mention the backward-slanted E. The blue and red stamp is separate from the other three, which appear to be part of a series given the similar fonts at the bottom.



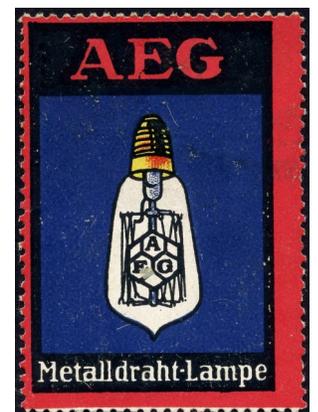
*High Candle Lamp*



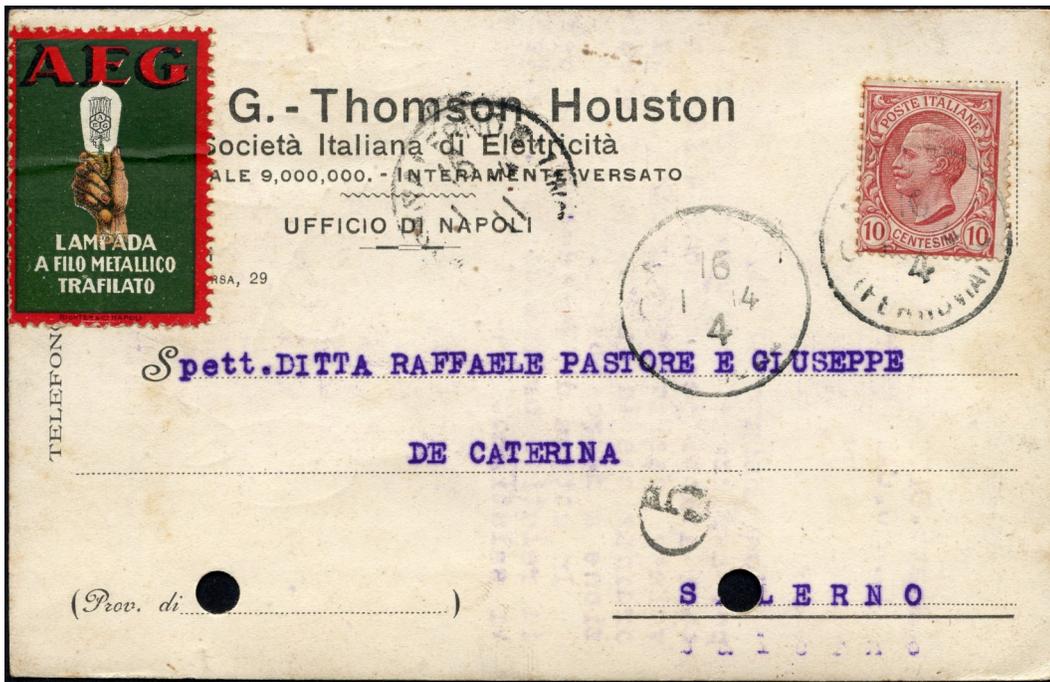
*Candle Lamps*



*Flashlight*



*Metal Filament Lamp*



A 1914 postcard from an electrical company in Naples to a customer in Salerno, with an AEG Metal Filament stamp with the typical forward slanting E serif at the top.



*AEG Handlamp*



*Projection Lamps and Converters for Cinemas*

*New Price List Published*



*AEG Nitralamp*

Not all AEG stamps were designed by Peter Behrens. Above right is a truncated version of the poster by Louis Oppenheim, greatly reduced in size here. Light bulbs were made with a vacuum inside the bulb, so that the filament wouldn't oxidize and burn out. It was hard to get a perfect vacuum, and it was found that filling the bulbs with an inert gas such as nitrogen could be more effective.

AEG was a powerhouse for the German economy through most of the 20th century. Unfortunately, they aided the Nazi war effort using slave labor from concentration camps. AEG struggled financially in the 1980s and was purchased by Daimler Benz and broken up.



*AEG Nitralamp - 600-3000 Candles, 1/2 watt per candle  
Poster by Louis Oppenheim*