

# Schwarzkopf Shampoo Stamps

by Michael R. Florer

You may be familiar with the Schwarzkopf brand of hair care products. The company began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and still exists today. It issued poster stamps during the years before and during the First World War.

The company's website, [www.schwarzkopf.com](http://www.schwarzkopf.com), provides a history. I will share the most relevant facts here. A German chemist by the name of Hans Schwarzkopf opened a small store in Berlin to sell drugs, dyes, and perfumes. The year was 1898. Five years later, in 1903, Schwarzkopf introduced a dry powder shampoo to be dissolved in water. It was the first product of its kind and proved extremely popular. The first liquid shampoo debuted in 1927, followed by many other innovations over the years.



Silhouettes from 1904, 1924, 1955 and 1982

The German surname "Schwarzkopf" when translated into English literally means "black head." Thus, the trademark logo of the company since 1904 has been a black silhouette of a human head on a white background. This logo has evolved over the years. In the beginning it was clearly a man but now has a more rounded, softer form that is androgynous.

The first Schwarzkopf stamps I came across were ones that I thought had monetary denominations with values in German pfennigs. I did not think of them as poster stamps and was very curious to learn how they were used. They are smaller than most poster stamps with a design size of 20 by 31 mm. I continued collecting them and discovered four types with different colors for different kinds of shampoo:

The regular shampoo stamps have a value of 20 pfennigs while the others are each 25 pfennigs..



1. Regular Shampoo in red.



2. Shampoo with chamomile extract added, in light green.



3. Shampoo with egg yolk added, in yellow.



#### 4. Shampoo with tar added, in brown.

There are also differences in the printing of the text at the bottom of the stamps:

- Three lines in white
- Two lines in black and one in white
- One line in black and two in white

I have found all three of these varieties for regular shampoo but only the first two varieties for the others

These stamps can be found with tabs at the top. The tabs have text in black or red, which are transcribed here with rough English translations:

- Zur Sicherung des Briefgeheimnisses verwende man diese Briefverschlussmarken. = *To safeguard the confidentiality of correspondence, use these letter seal stamps.*
- Shampoo mit dem schwarzen kopf ist auch mit Ei, Teer, oder Kamillen Zusatz überall erhältlich. = *Shampoo with the black head is widely available with egg yolk, tar, or chamomile added.*
- Auch mit Schwefel Lanolin Peru Tannin Kräuter Birken balsam oder Sauerstoff Zusatz erhältlich. = *Also available with sulfur, lanolin, Peru tannin, herbs, birch balm, or supplementary oxygen.*

Translating this text solved the mystery of how these stamps were used. They were meant to seal letters, as one could do with any other poster stamp.

I have never seen a full sheet and was curious about the printing format. A clue came my way when I purchased the se-tenant strip of four shown right. Notice that these all have the three lines of white text.

All of the “denominated” stamps are perforated 13½ or 14.



Another stamp that has much more of a poster stamp appearance is the black and yellow one at left. It is larger at 36 by 56 mm, imperforate, and the only one with the silhouette having a background color other than white. The text at the bottom translates as: “*The Best for the Hair, Shampoo with the Black Head!*” The text in the upper corners answers the question of why these stamps appear to be denominated. The monetary value is the price of a packet of shampoo.



Besides the German Empire, the company must have also done business in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The “denominated” stamps can also be found with values in Austrian hellers, as shown in the five examples here. I have not found as many varieties of these stamps. Interestingly, all kinds of shampoo have a price of 30 hellers, as opposed to the two different prices in pfennings.





Another series exists in the form of classic, large poster stamps. In full color, they depict members of a family washing their hair with Schwarzkopf shampoo. There are three children, two parents, and two grandparents.

What I find surprising is that on all of the stamps the powdered shampoo was mixed with water in a bowl on a table. Times have changed considerably over the past 100+ years! It is hard to imagine today, but many households in those years before the First World War must not have had indoor plumbing.

Notice that each stamp has the Schwarzkopf logo and is numbered in the upper lefthand corner. Those shown are Nos. 1 through 6. Perhaps I have the complete set. My favorite is No. 4 that presents sibling rivalry in action, as the boy is throwing suds at his sister!

The design size is 33 by 55 mm, and they are perforated 11½.

Finally, there is one more Schwarzkopf stamp to examine. It may look like a poster stamp, but it is actually a premium stamp. The text can be translated as: *Schwarzkopf Shampoo 'Bonus Certificate': In return for 50 premium certificates, you will receive a prize of two pieces of Schwarzkopf lily milk soap (valued at 1.00 Mark). Valid until 31 DEC 1916.* These must have come in or with shampoo packets when purchased. It is the only Schwarzkopf stamp with any date.

At the bottom is the company name and address; perhaps they printed their own stamps. The printed design is 31 by 48 mm, and it is perforated 11.

I hope you have enjoyed this study of the Schwarzkopf shampoo stamps in my collection. If you have other Schwarzkopf stamps not shown here, have an example of one used on a cover, or have further knowledge on this subject, I would be happy to hear from you at [mrflorer@comcast.net](mailto:mrflorer@comcast.net).



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