

The "Nibelungen" Child Welfare Set of 1925.

"Ez wuchs in Burgonden ein vil edel magedin" - *There grew up in Burgundy a noble maiden / Such that in all the world none might be more fair / Kriemhild was she called; she became a beautiful woman / For that, many warriors had to die.* Thus begins the great *Lay of the Nibelungs* written by an Austrian poet about the year 1200 AD under the patronage of Wolfger, Bishop of Passau, and Leopold VI, Duke of Austria. The story depicted in the designs of these stamps was considered in detail in J F Giblin's *The People on Austrian Stamps*, and many translations exist of the old saga into modern English.



Seven centuries later, episodes from this epic were used by Wilhelm Dachauer as designs for a charity set that was issued on 8 March 1926. This was the third issue that Professor Dachauer had been commissioned to design and the 8g value won for him the Robert Thomson Gold Medal in Philadelphia in 1926. There were six values:

ANK	Face	Design	Number
488	3g + 2g	Siegfried and the Dragon.	1,000,000
489	8g + 2g	Gunther's voyage.	1,500,000
490	15g + 5g	Kriemhild and Brunhild.	1,500,000
491	20g + 5g	Hagen and the Rhine maidens.	1,000,000
492	24g + 6g	Rüdiger and the Nibelungs.	1,000,000
493	40g + 10g	Dietrich's fight with Hagen.	500,000

The 3g, 15g and 24g stamps were engraved by Rupert Franke (born on 30.10.1888 in Vienna) and the others by Rudolf Zenziger (born 19.6.1891 in Vienna). The issue was recess printed and line perforated 12½x12½. The stamps occur in two sizes. Modern catalogues give the picture size while some older ones state the whole stamp; all measurements \pm 0.5mm.

Name	Picture size	Overall size
Long stamp	28.5mm high x 27.5mm wide	33mm high x 31mm wide

Wide stamp	27.5mm high x 28.5mm wide	31mm high x 33mm wide
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All the values were printed in sheets of 40 (5 x 8) on high quality paper. The usual explanation for the two sizes of stamps is that the paper was wetted before printing and then dried and shrank with the grain of the paper, which depending on how it had been fed into the press affected either the length or the width of the stamps. The following tables were given by Knaipp (Austria Philatelist, July-Aug 1945) and reproduced by Bush (Bull. A.P.S.N.Y. June 1950):

	LONG STAMPS						WIDE STAMPS					
Plate Nr	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
3g	y	y	y	y	y	y						
8g	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y
15g	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y
20g	y	y	y	y	y	y						
24g	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	?	y	?
40g	y	y	y	y		y	y		y	y		

These plate numbers were located at the top of the sheet above the 4th and 5th stamps, except for the 8g plate 5 and the 15g plates 4 and 6 where the plate numbers are located at the bottom of the pane below the 36th and 37th stamps. The numbers also occur inverted and in mirror-script. Some of the values can be found with imperforate edges: 8g (left hand side); 15g (left); 15g (right); 20g (right); 24g (right); 24g (top); 24g (bottom); 40g (left). The 7g is found printed in different colours. Sets of all values exist printed in black on Japan paper. The validity of the stamps was progressively extended until 31 Oct 1938 (eg by 1926 PTVOB019 Nr 63 which restated the validity as "until further notice") when they were withdrawn along with all remaining Austrian stamps.