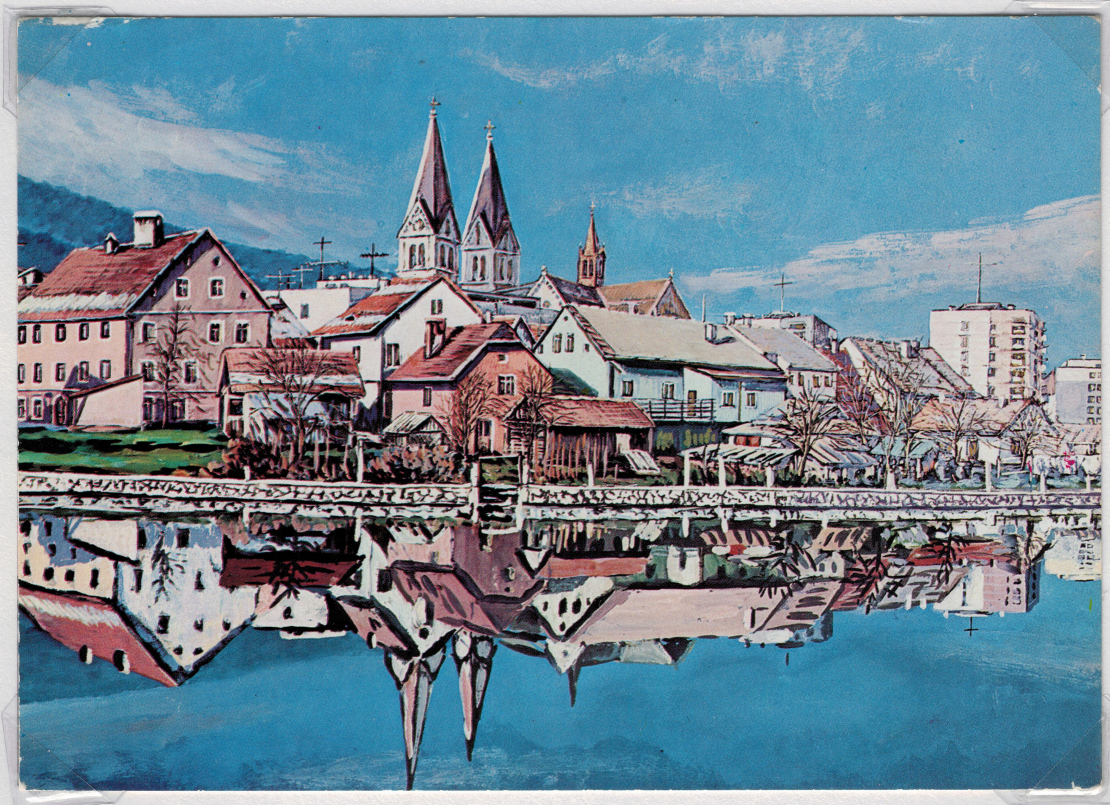


# History of the Gottschee through Postmarks and Stamps

This is a one frame Display Exhibit that will discuss and illustrate the history of a group of ethnic Germans called the Gottscheers. The history will be discussed with the use of stamps and postmarks from the region.



This postcard shows the landscape and buildings of the City of Gottschee.

## PLAN

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## 1.1 The Beginning of Gottschee

Gottschee was founded at the end of the 13th Century and was carved out of the uninhabited mountain forest in what is today the south central part of Slovenia.



**Location of the Gottscheer Region shown in Modern Day Slovenia**

The county of Gottschee was colonized by the Corinthian counts of Orenburg with settlers from Carinthia and Tyrol, it has also been shown that some other settlers emigrated from Austrian and German Dioceses of Salzburg, Brixen and Freising. The settlers cleared the vacant land and established towns and villages that are still inhabited today. This area was also a strategic area for the Holy Roman Empire and had already had many fortifications and castles that has been built in year 800; the purpose of this area was to defend from Turkish invaders that would travel from south of the region.

In 1350, the emperor had allowed 300 families from Thuringia, Germany to inhabit the land and this was the basis for the population of Gottschee County and was a German speaking colony island in an area surrounded and inhabited by Slovenians.

In 1471 Gottschee received the municipal charter and the city seal. About 100 Years later Gottschee was owned by the Hapsburg Archduke Carl. During his ownership the production of a land register was created and it produced the statistics of the land, number of villages, names of owners and taxes.

In 1641, Wolf Engelbrecht of Auersberg bought the county of Gottscheer. In 1770, Maria Theresa ordered a count of all males in order to be drafted into the Austrian army. With that same census all urban and rural dwelling were counted and recorded.

## 1.2 Gottschee under Austrian Empire Rule

In the late 1800's, the Gottschee community consisted of an area of 331 square miles. Within this region there was 176 organized villages and these were organized into 19 townships and 18 parishes. The population was about 26,000. During this time period, just as seen in many other European countries, the area saw a large emigration to the United States. Many of the Gottschee people immigrated to Cleveland, OH, Brooklyn, NY and Canada. During this time in history the Gottscheer people were members of the Austrian Empire.



This early example of a post mark on a 45Kr Austrian Stamp. This is a Single Circle or Einkreisstempel and was used prior to 1900.

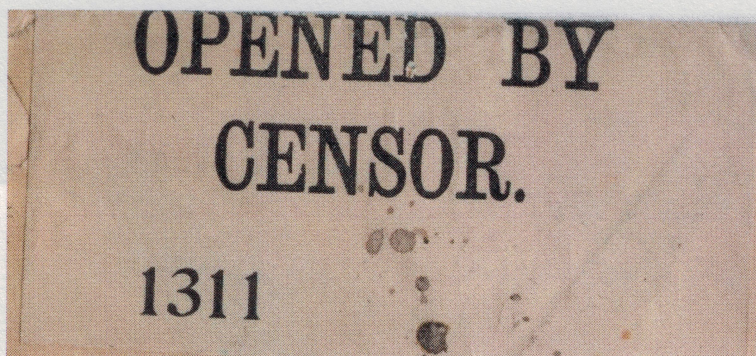
## 1.2 Gottschee under Austrian Empire Rule

This correspondence card was typical of the area. Even while under Austrian Rule many items were also printed with Slovenian Writing for the non-german speaking areas. The Gottschee Postmark on this 5 Kr. stamp is Striped Lozenge or Schraffenstempel and was introduced after 1900.



Many villages from from the main Town of Gottschee had post offices, such as this postmark from Alltag.

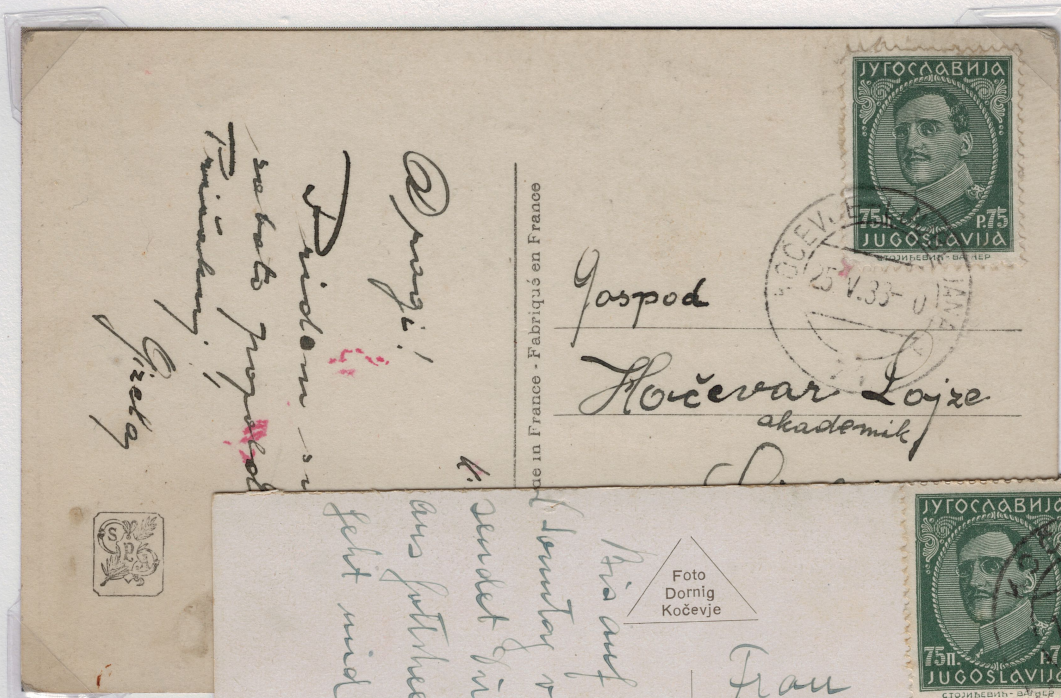
## 1.2 Gottschee under Austrian Empire Rule



This letter sent from Altlag, Austria, of the County of Gottschee, is interesting since it was sent in 1916. This was in the middle of World War I and while many family and friends remained in communication they were subjected to their mail being checked by the government. The stamp "ÜBERPRÜFT" allowed the recipient to know that it was checked prior to departure from the post office in Austria.

### 1.3 Gottschee under Yugoslavian Rule

The year 1918 brought a change to the area. With the end of World War I, the Austrian Empire was dissolved as well as the Duchy of Carniola and with that Gottscheer became part of the province of Slovenia which was now part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. The residents of Gottschee were forced to become citizens of the newly formed Yugoslavia and were required to translate all important documents (Birth Certificates, Marriage Certificate, etc.) into Slovenian. The school systems changed and did not allow the teaching of the German Language and all correspondence and communication with officials was done in Slovenian. All of the towns and villages now had their names changed to the Slovenian equivalent, in this case, Gottscheer would now be known as Kočevje.



This 1930 postmark clearly shows the new postmark with the Slovenian name Kočevje



This 1934 postmark clearly shows the new postmark with the Slovenian name Kočevje

### 1.3 Gottschee under Yugoslavian Rule



Since the Gottschee People considered themselves Ethnic Germans, many of them went to fight for the Germans during the war. This postcard is a correspondence from Maria Zeidler's son back to their mother.

## 1.4 Gottschee under Italian Occupation of WW II

During World War II the Gottschee people began a period of time that the loss of their homeland began. As with many areas that were being taken over by the Germans, Gottschee consisted of those ethnic Germans that welcomed Hitler's entry and the Partisans that were the rebellion force that resisted Hitler's entry. April of 1941 the Germans and Italian armies began to invade Yugoslavia. An agreement between Italy and Germany at this time gave Italy control of the Gottschee area. With this the Italian officials integrated Italian Stamps into circulation and had placed an overprint that stated Province Ljubljana in both German and Slovenian. Since the Italian Troops were only in the area for 9 months these stamps are not commonly found with postmarks.



Italian Stamps issued during Italian Occupation contained an overprint that stated "Pokrajina Ljubljanska" and "Provinz Laibach", both Slovenian and German for the Province of Ljubiana that contained the county of Gottscheer. These stamps were only authorized for postal use in the region denoted by the overprint.



## 1.5 Gottschee under German Occupation of WW II

After the expulsion of the Italian troops the German Government has occupied the area. In order to better organize the Third Reich many citizens of the Gottschee Villages were removed from their homeland and relocated to Rann about 50km from the Gottscheer city center.



## 1.5 Gottschee under German Occupation of WW II



After the Italian expulsion from the area the German Officials rapidly produced a series of German Stamps with pictures of the surrounding areas of the Gottschee County. This 1.25L stamp image is of the main church from the center of the City of Gottschee. Since these stamps were issued towards the end of the war these stamps are also hard to find with legitimate postmarks.

## 1.6 Post-War Yugoslavian Rule of Gottschee

At the end of the war the area was ravaged and signs of the destruction that war takes on were everywhere. While many of the residents remained to rebuild and live in the area, a large majority left the area and fled to Austria. Furthermore, many of the former Gottschee citizens, now refugees, would later emigrate to Germany, Austria, United States and Canada. The area of Gottschee would now become part of the Yugoslavian area of Slovenia. Once again with the exit of the German Officials the area again would take on its Slovenian Name of Kočevje.



With the exit of the German Government and the institution of the officials of the Tito Partisans a newly developed postage stamp was needed. The first step was to convert the Laibach stamps issued by the German Government and use a Overprint denoting that it was now Slovenia of the Yugoslavia Country.



## 1.6 Post-War Yugoslavian Rule of Gottschee



Once the Government became more established they began to issue stamp denoting Yugoslavia and the postmark remained in the Slovenian Language and displayed Kočevje.

## 1.7 Gottschee under Slovenian Rule

Slovenia gained its independence from Yugoslavia in 1991. Today the area of the former county of Gottschee is known as Kocevsko, Slovenia. The city of Gottschee is known as Kočevje. All of the other villages that were organized with Gottschee originally also have taken on their Slovenian names.



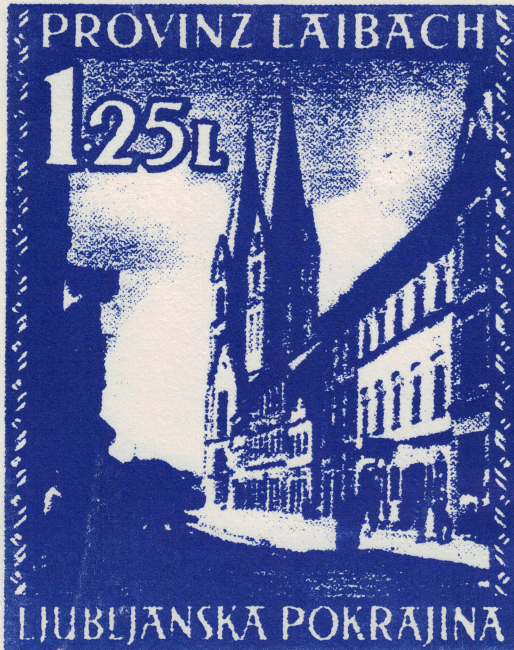
## 1.8 The recent support of Gottscheer Culture

While many aspects of the history of the Gottschee people are filled with sadness, especially with the exiling of the people from their homeland, it is seen that you can remove the Gottscheer from Gottschee, but not the Gottschee from the Gottscheer. When the Gottschee people left their homeland at any point during the history of the country they took their dialect, Gottscheerisch, and cultures with them. They ensured that this part of their culture would be passed on to generations that follow. Many of the Gottschee people inhabit areas of New York, Cleveland and Ontario in North America. Many other members stayed in Europe and can be found in Austria, Germany and Slovenia. Philatelically items are introduced that show how the culture is still alive and the unity of coming from a common homeland are represented in postal items from various countries.



These stamps issued by the Slovenian postal system depict the traditional dress of the people in the area of Gottschee prior to 1900. The description provided by the Slovenian Postal Service talks about how this was traditional wear of the Gottschee people during that period of time

## 1.8 The recent support of Gottscheer Culture



**Gottscheer Conbention**  
**Toronto, Canada 1977**

This cachet cover was issued for the 1977 Gottscheer Treffen hosted in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. A Gottscheer Treffen is an annual gathering of the Gottschee people. People come from all different countries to help celebrate and embrace the culture they left behind or that of their ancestors.

## 1.8 The recent support of Gottschee Culture



This postage stamp and First Day Cancel was issued by the Austrian Postal Service, as a Private Issue, to commemorate the 5th International Gottscheer Treffen held in Bad Aussee, Austria. The Gottscheer Treffen allows the people of Gottscheer Heritage to gather to celebrate their culture and heritage.