

The First Salamander Logo in Advertising

Perhaps corresponding to known species, frogs remain more often represented than other groups of amphibians in popular cultures. While folk perceptions of frogs remain societally positive, those of members of the Caudata are more mixed, owing to often-negative beliefs held in rural Europe and amongst indigenous peoples of the New World (Crump 2015; Das 2011). Examples include their use in witchcraft and poisoning (Shakespeare 1603–1606), as ‘the devil’s beast’ in medieval times (Cooke 1893). It also appears in works on occult and black magic (Crump 2015), as well as in mediaeval bestiaries (McCulloch 1962), and include beliefs, such as seen only when one is about to die (Kuzmin and Maslova 2003) or lead to suffering loss of worldly possessions (Froom 1982), and even affect stored beverages (Brøndegaard 1985). Positive or neutral attributes associated with salamanders include their ability to withstand fire (Aristotle 350 B.C.E.), hence, presumably the usage of the salamander motif as ancient symbol for fire and of Sulfur (Saunders 1995). This belief was validated in part by a more recent observation (Stromberg 1997) of a salamander surviving fire.

The earliest frog logo is that of Erdal, German maker of shoe-polish (Das 2020). Thus, it is perhaps not surprising that the earliest salamander logo is from the same country, adopted also by a manufacturer of footwear products, initially, shoe-polish, and subsequently, boots and other forms of footwear.

The ‘Salamander’ shoe company was co-founded by Rudolf Moos (1866–1951), of Jewish heritage, born in Buchau, located in the erstwhile Kingdom of Württemberg (now a state in southwest Germany), and educated in Ulm, Germany (Moos 2010). Notably, Moos was related to the physicist and Nobel Laureate Albert Einstein (1879–1955) from his mother’s side. Anti-Jewish sentiment in Germany, leading to World War II, lead to the sale of his business. After paying a “flight tax” of 42,000 Reichsmarks, Moos and his wife were permitted to immigrate to England.

The origins of the company’s logo have been described in Moos (2010). The initial object of inspiration was a jeweller’s advertisement from the ‘Illustrated News’, an English newspaper, for a lizard-shaped brooch. After conferring with a colleague, on 5 December 1899, the brand was registered as a trademark at the Imperial Patent Office in Berlin. The ‘Salamander’ trademark (Fig. 1) was first used between 1900–1901. In 1905, the “Schuhverkaufs GmbH Salamander” was established, with a partner, Jacob Sigle, a pioneer in the industrial fabrication of shoes (see Sturm 1967), was founded, each holding 50% of the shares (company history in Sedler and Burkhardt 2014). The name was selected for being attractive as well as recognizable in being linguistically undifferentiated amongst the major European languages. These include German, English, Swedish, Danish, and Dutch

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FIG. 1. Printed advertisements of Salamander shoes from magazines of the early 1900s.



FIG. 2. Poster stamps from Salamander S.A., issued in 1913.

(all 'salamander'), or with apparently only dialectical-level differences in French ('salamandre'), Italian, Spanish, Polish, or Portuguese (all 'salamandra'), Greek ('salamándra'), Romanian ('salamandr'), Finnish ('salamanteri'), Bulgarian ('salamandr'), and Hungarian ('szalamandra'). In the same year, the first Salamander branch was opened in Berlin, and by 1906, four more shops were added. At the company's peak, in 1909, a total of 2,800 employees churned out 2 million pairs of shoes. The major advertising campaigns for "Salamander shoes" starting during the period, included advertisements in society magazines (Fig. 1), poster stamps (Fig. 2), and postcards (Fig. 3). Poster stamps include stamp-like (with perforations) or business card-like (printed on cardboard) advertising label issued by companies in Europe and North America to promote their products, that became collectors items, from the mid-19th century till about the middle of the 20th century.

Even a cursory examination of the logo makes it clear that the species depicted is the European Fire Salamander, *Salamandra salamandra*, with the distinct spotted pattern on the dorsum, and body shape and proportions. Apart from the logo, Salamander also developed a character for a series of comic books, originally by an unknown artist (Schubel 1955),

and subsequently, the stories of Lurchi the Fire Salamander (Fig. 4) were by copywriter Erwin Kühlewein (1952 to 1964) and artist Heinz Schubel (1952 to 1972). The familiar salamander appears in booklets written in simple German rhymes for primary school children.

Salamander shoes survived World War II, and remain in production, after several changes of hands, under the current ownership (since 2009) of Ara AG (founded 1949, Langenfeld, Germany), shoe manufacturers and retailers. The salamander logo appears unexpected as recent merchandise, from postal meter marks (Fig. 5), to "Publibels," or Belgian trade postcards, bearing advertisements of governmental or commercial enterprises, in single French, Flemish, German, or even multiple language variants (Fig. 6) to cancellations on covers apart from postal cancellations that promote specific products or services of governmental agencies or private companies (Fig. 7).

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From left to right. Fig. 3. Promotional postcards from Salamander S.A. Top: Art deco postcard from Salamander S.A., issued in 1912. Bottom: Promotional postcard from 1930, showing the Salamander S.A. factory at Kornwestheim. Fig. 4. Pages from a pre-World War II comic book on Lurchi, the Salamander. The character has been associated with Salamander shoes since 1937. Fig. 5. Meter mark showing Salamander S.A. logo from a printed receipt dated 22 May 1942. Fig. 6. Two examples of Belgian trade postcards ("Publibels", No. 2057, top; No. 2349N, bottom), bearing 17 January 1966 and 1 May 1970 cancellations, respectively with the Salamander S.A. trade mark. Fig. 7. The Salamander logo from a meter mark on a commercial shipment from Kornwestheim, Germany, dated 16 February 1994.

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