

Postal History of the 1862-67 European Intervention in Mexico

Background: Mexico's suspension of international debt payments precipitated a small military intervention in January 1862 by the combined forces of Spain, France and England. When it became clear that France had greater ambitions in Mexico, Spain and England withdrew in late April 1862. The French 7,000-man army was repulsed at Puebla on May 5, 1862, so it was quadrupled in size and moved from Vera Cruz to the capture of Puebla and Mexico City in May-June 1863. Five months later, French columns left Mexico City and moved throughout Mexico to a number of strategic points. The French retreated from northern Mexico in April 1865 and began a complete withdrawal in late 1866. The last French troops departed from Vera Cruz in March 1867.

Geography: The map shows the French strategic locations in green. The two central points of the French occupation, Mexico City and Vera Cruz, are highlighted in red.



Scope and Study: The French “Corps Expéditionnaire du Mexique” fieldpost began operations on March 31, 1862 and bureaus were assigned to the moving columns as well as to fixed locations in Mexico. This exhibit shows letters from all 14 French fieldpost bureaus, and traces their movements. Also included are rare letters from the short-lived Spanish and English expeditions, as well as rare letters from the French prior to the commencement of the fieldpost.



Spanish fieldpost “Division Espedicionaria a Mejico” postmark applied at Vera Cruz in February 1862

Allied Concentration: January-September 1862

Spanish Forces at Vera Cruz



The Spanish occupied the Vera Cruz post office in December 1861 and used an existing "Correos Vera Cruz" postmark on Spanish Antilles stamps that they brought from Cuba. They departed in late April 1862.



Processed at Spanish-controlled Vera Cruz post office – Spanish Antilles 1857 1 reale stamp
Passed through British Vera Cruz office on March 4 - 8 décimes due in Bordeaux on April 2



Docketed from Vera Cruz on March 1, 1862 – Estraordinario courier service to Mexico City

Allied Concentration: December 1861 - September 1862

Spanish fieldpost service



The Spanish fieldpost service for the expedition was created on November 14, 1861 and used a special "Division Espedicionaria a Mejico" postmark. It began operations at Vera Cruz in December, but was discontinued when the Spanish forces left Mexico in late April 1862.



March 1862 letter from Captain Hubert Castex, ADC to Général Lorencez at Orizaba
Given to Spanish fieldpost service – postmarked “Division Espedicionaria a Mejico”
RMSP steamer left Vera Cruz on April 2 – arrived in Southampton on May 14
“GB 1^F 60^C” debit to France – doubleweight 16 décimes due in Paris on May 15

Fewer than ten examples of this postmark on cover are known

Allied Concentration: January-September 1862

British forces at Vera Cruz



Spain and England disembarked the bulk of their forces at Vera Cruz on January 9, 1862. The British force consisted of 700 marines. The Spanish and British decided to leave Mexico on April 9, and departed by the end of that month.



Docketed March 1, 1862 by Lt. Jacob Silver, Royal Marines - aboard HMS *Mersey*
Endorsed JMS at lower left - *Mersey* was at Vera Cruz from January 6 to April 8
Prepaid 6d officers' concession rate - postmarked on March 31 arrival in London
RMSP steamer left Vera Cruz March 4 - arrived in England on March 30



**Disembarkation of Spanish Troops at Vera Cruz
(February 8, 1862 London *Illustrated News*)**

Allied Concentration: January-September 1862

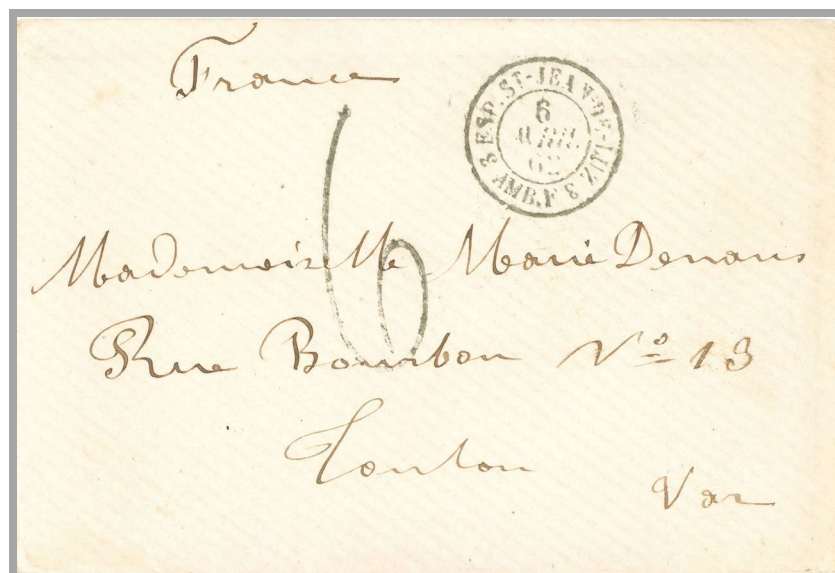
French mail prior to the start of the fieldpost



The French landed 2,400 men at Vera Cruz on January 9, 1862 and were reinforced by 4,500 men in March-April. The "Corps Expéditionnaire du Mexique" fieldpost service was formed to support them, but was not operational until April. The French advanced inland to Puebla, where they were defeated on May 5, 1862. They then retreated to Orizaba to wait for further reinforcements.



Dated at Vera Cruz on January 20, 1862 by an artillery officer- 30 centimes due
Carried by French warship *Aube* to Toulon on March 5 - "Colonies Fra. Toulon" entry



Dated at Cordoba on March 5, 1862 - Spanish warship from Vera Cruz to Spain
April 6 "Esp. St-Jean-de-Luz" French entry mark - 6 décimes due

Allied Concentration: January – September 1862

Start of the French fieldpost service



The first two military postal agents (*payeurs*) disembarked at Vera Cruz on March 30, 1862. Charles Giraud was assigned to Bureau A at army headquarters and began processing mail the next day.

The March 1862 Postal Circular #245 set rates to or from France: 20 centimes (30 centimes if unpaid) by French packet or 50 centimes (60 centimes if unpaid) by British packet, all per 7.5 grams. These military rates required a military postmark or a military address. Unfranked letters were sent by the fastest route. A 20 centimes British packet rate was available to enlisted men.



Dated at Tehuacan (near Orizaba) on March 24, 1862 by an artillery officer
Postmarked on March 31, 1862 at Bureau A in Vera Cruz – inverted year date
RMSP steamer left Vera Cruz on April 2 – letter arrived in Toulon on April 30
Rated for 30 centimes due even though carried by British packet

Earliest possible French fieldpost marking

Allied Concentration: January – September 1862

Central fieldpost Bureau B at Vera Cruz



Edmond Pontailé was assigned to Bureau B at Vera Cruz on March 31, 1862. It was the central postal bureau, responsible for dispatching and receiving the twice-monthly packet mails.



Posted May 2, 1862 at Bureau B – '53 10c and 40c franking cancelled CEM B
RMSP steamer left Vera Cruz on May 2 – letter arrived in Toulon on June 4



Posted unpaid on July 15, 1862 at Bureau B by frigate captain Henri Hocquart de Turtot
Carried by the 3rd French packet from Vera Cruz on July 15 - 30c due on August 14 arrival

Allied Concentration: January – September 1862

The CGT French packet service



The Compagnie Générale Transatlantique (CGT) began a monthly service between St Nazaire and Vera Cruz on April 14, 1862. The four initial steamships carried postal agents who used name-of-ship transit postmarks until "Ligne B" postmarks were introduced in August 1865.



Posted at Bau A in Mexico City on December 10, 1865 – 20c French packet rate
Carried by CGT steamer *Nouveau Monde* from Vera Cruz on December 16
Used **provisional "Corresp. D'Armées Cacique"** postmark instead of Ligne B postmark

Only known example of this military correspondence ship-name postmark

Campaign for Mexico City: October 1862 – June 1863

Increase of the French expeditionary force



After the May 5, 1862 defeat at Puebla, Napoléon III increased the size of the expeditionary force to 28,000 soldiers, under Général Forey. They arrived in Vera Cruz in October-November 1862 and moved inland in two pincers toward Orizaba and Perote.



Sent by Charles Giraud, fieldpost agent at Orizaba – Bureau A had moved there in April
1-franc doubleweight British packet rate – 1853 blue 20c (I) and rose 80c stamps
Postmarked on May 26, 1862 at Bureau A – **small-letter CEM A cancel**
RMSP steamer left Vera Cruz on June 13 – letter arrived in Phalsbourg on June 30

Small-letter CEM A cancel was only used from April to August 1862

Campaign for Mexico City: October 1862 – June 1863

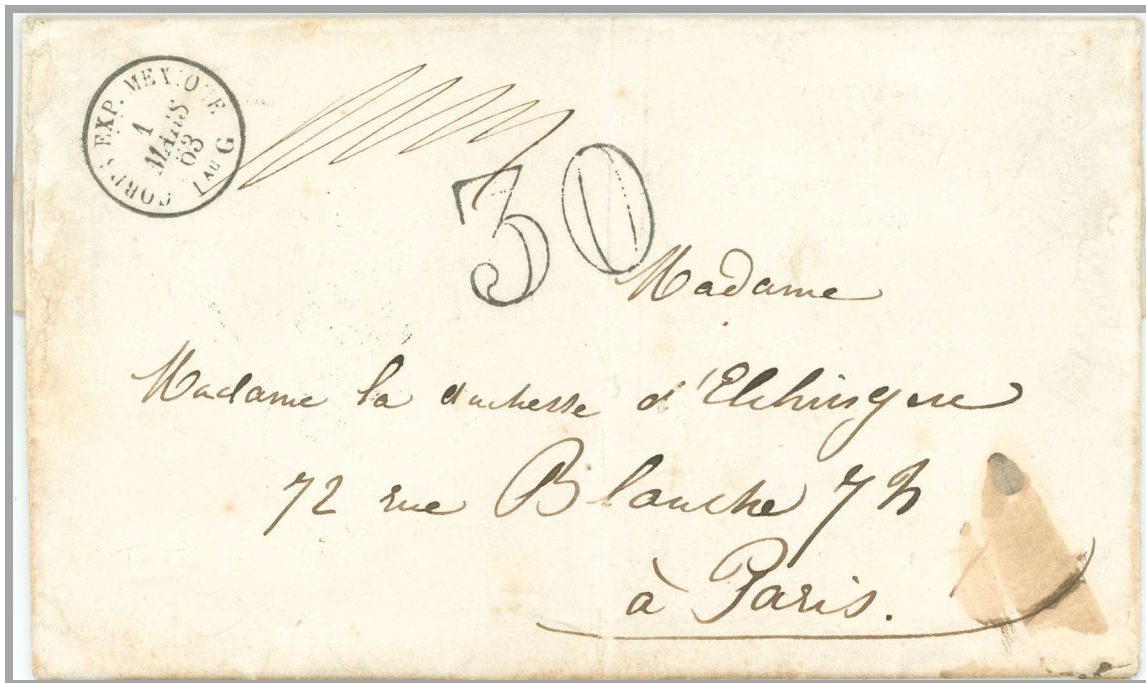
Advance on Puebla



In June-December 1862, seven additional payeurs were sent to support Forey's enlarged force in Mexico. Two were assigned to Bureaus D and F in support of Bazaine's column via Perote, and two opened Bureaus C and G in support of Douay's column via Orizaba. Both columns converged on Puebla.



Posted March 1, 1863 at Bureau F near Puebla – '53 20c franking cancelled CEM F
CGT steamer left Vera Cruz on March 16 – letter arrived in Dié on April 14



Posted March 1, 1863 at Bureau G near Puebla – from Captain Ney, escorting Général Forey
Carried by French packet from Vera Cruz on March 16 - 30c due on April 13 arrival

Campaign for Mexico City: October 1862 – June 1863

Siege of Puebla from March 16 to May 17, 1863



Forey's army besieged Puebla from March 16, 1863 until it surrendered two months later. That opened the door to the capture of Mexico City. Bureaus F and G stayed with the 1st and 2nd Divisions, while Bureau D remained with the Puebla garrison and Bureau C stayed at Orizaba.



Docketed "Devant Puebla le 30 avril" from a captain in the 2^e Zouaves of the 2nd Division
Postmarked on May 2, 1863 at Bureau G - '53 20c stamp cancelled CE_ G (missing "M")
CGT steamer left Vera Cruz on May 17 - letter arrived in Voreppe on June 17



"Siège de Puebla" by Jean-Adolphe Beaucé (1870)

Occupation of Mexico City: June 1863

Re-positioning of the French fieldpost



After the capture of Puebla, Bureau A entered Mexico City on June 10, 1863. Bureaus F and G also moved there with the 1st and 2nd Divisions in June. Bureaus B, C and D remained at Vera Cruz, Orizaba and Puebla. Bureau E moved to Mexico City where it was suspended.



Posted June 25, 1863 at Bau F in Mexico City – from Captain de Fayet, ADC to Douay
Carried by French packet from Vera Cruz on July 16 – arrived August 15 in Ecos



Posted April 15, 1863 in Paris – CGT steamer arrived in Vera Cruz on May 17
Directed to Cordoba - June 2, 1863 **Bureau A transit postmark**

Reserve Brigade at Orizaba: April 1863 – November 1864

Bureau C at Orizaba



The Reserve Brigade (7th Regiment and Foreign Legion) was based at Orizaba to protect the route to Vera Cruz. Bureau C was transferred there to service them and any transit mail.



Posted July 20, 1863 at B^{au} C in Orizaba – prepaid 50c for RMSP steamer
6 décimes due crossed out – letter arrived August 29 in Nimes



Posted August 25, 1863 at Bureau C – prepaid 20c soldier's rate for RMSP service
Endorsed by 7th Regiment officer on reverse – steamer left Vera Cruz on September 1
October 4 “Corps Exp. D'Italie 2^e Division” arrival mark in Rome, Italy

Garrison at Puebla: May 1863 – March 1865

Bureau D at Puebla



The 1st Zouaves initially garrisoned Puebla under the command of Général Brincourt. Bureau D was based there to service the garrison until the Austrian Brigade took over in March 1865.



Posted January 25, 1864 at Bureau D in Puebla – prepaid 20c soldier's rate for RMSP service
From sergeant in 1st Zouaves – soldier's rate not accepted - 4 décimes due on March 2 arrival



Posted June 19, 1863 at Bureau D in Puebla – prepaid 50c in '53 Issue stamps
RMSP steamer left Vera Cruz on July 2 – letter arrived July 31 in Lyon

Postal Operations at Mexico City: June 1863 – December 1866

Bureau A at Mexico City



Bureau A was situated at army headquarters in Mexico City. It also became the central postal bureau (replacing Bureau B at Vera Cruz) in December 1864.



Posted October 27, 1864 at Bureau A in Mexico City – prepaid 50c by '62 Issue stamps
RMSP packet from Vera Cruz on November 1 – letter arrived November 30 in Lyon



Posted March 29, 1864 in Cherbourg – prepaid 1-franc doubleweight rate by '62 Issue stamps
RMSP steamer arrived April 27 in Vera Cruz - May 1 **Bureau A transit postmark** on reverse

Postal Operations at Mexico City: June 1863 – December 1866

Bureau A at Mexico City



Posted August 21, 1864 at Bureau A in Mexico City – prepaid 20c for CGT service
From postal agent Jean-Baptiste Perrin at Mexico City – **provisional "X" cancels**



Posted February 28, 1865 in Paris – prepaid triple weight RMSP rate by '62 stamps
Addressed to financial payeur Yvelin de Béville at Mexico City (died February 12, 1865)

Postal Operations at Vera Cruz: June 1863 – February 1865

Closure of Bureau B



In December 1864, it was decided to sort incoming mails at Mexico City rather than at Vera Cruz, so the payeurs there were sent to Mexico City, and Bureau B was closed in February 1865.



Posted August 31, 1864 at Bureau B in Vera Cruz – underpaid 30c for RMSP steamer 4 décimes due (60c unpaid RMSP rate less 20c paid) – arrived September 29 in Paris



Posted January 31, 1864 at Bureau B – prepaid 50c RMSP rate by '62 Issue stamps RMSP steamer left Vera Cruz on February 1 – letter arrived March 1 in Ste Hermine

Northern Column: July 1863 – December 1864

Bureau F with the 1st Division



Part of Général de Castagny's 1st Division occupied Toluca in July 1863 and the rest left Mexico City on November 1 for Morelia. Bureau F accompanied the column, made up of the 7th and 20th Chasseurs Battalions, the 3rd Zouaves, and the 51st and 95th Regiments.



Map showing the movement of de Castagny's Division from Mexico City to Matehuala



Docketed June 22, 1864 at Queretaro from the Major of the 95th Regiment's 2nd Battalion
Postmarked June 23 at Bureau F – '62 Issue 10c and 40c stamps cancelled "CEM F"
RMSP steamship left Vera Cruz on July 2 – letter arrived July 30 in Voreppe

Northern Column: July 1863 - December 1864

Occupation of Toluca from July to November 1863



The 51st Regiment, the Chasseurs d'Afrique and Bureau H occupied Toluca (west of Mexico City) on July 5, 1863. Some of the detachment's mail was processed at Bureau F in Mexico City. They rejoined the 1st Division in November at Acámbaro.



Dated October 3, 1863 at Ixtlahuaca (north of Toluca) by a cavalry officer
Postmarked October 3 at Bau H - '62 20c stamp paid CGT rate - cancelled "CEM H"
Steamship left Vera Cruz on October 15 - letter arrived November 10 at Paris



Docketed from lieutenant in the 51st Regiment at Toluca - prepaid 50c RMSF rate
Postmarked on July 13, 1863 at Bureau F in Mexico City - "CEM F" cancels
Steamship left Vera Cruz on August 1 - letter arrived August 29 in Strasbourg

Northern Column: July 1863 - December 1864

Occupation of San Luis Potosi



Aymard's 7th Chasseurs Batallion and 62nd Regiment occupied San Luis Potosi on January 14, 1864. Two months later fieldpost agent Orion opened Bureau J there. It closed in August 1864 when Aymard left for Monterrey.



Dated January 19, 1864 at San Luis Potosi by artillery officer in the 1st Division
Processed January 26 at Bureau A in Mexico City - no fieldpost bureau yet at San Luis
RMSP steamship left Vera Cruz on February 1 - letter arrived March 2 at Toulon



Postmarked on May 22, 1864 at Bureau J in San Luis Potosi - "CEM J" cancels
RMSP steamship left Vera Cruz on June 1 - letter arrived June 28 in Paris

Northern Column: July 1863 - December 1864

Bureaus K and L at Zacatecas



In April 1864, payeur Vasseur opened Bureau K at Zacatecas. Vasseur also processed some mail from nearby Durango until he moved there in November 1864. Bureau L replaced Bureau K at Zacatecas during November-December 1864.



Processed October 24, 1864 at Bureau K in Zacatecas - CGT steamship left November 17
From a corporal in the 95th Regiment at Durango - 30c due on December 16 at Paris



Docketed December 13, 1864 from 95th Regiment at Zacatecas- "CEM L" cancels
RMSP steamship left Vera Cruz on January 1 - letter arrived January 31 in Voreppe
Fewer than ten Bureau L letters are known

Western Column: October 1863 – December 1864

Bureau G at Zamora/Morelia from Dec. 1863 to Dec. 1864



Douay's 2nd Division left Mexico City on October 22, 1863 for Queretaro. They left Bureau G at Zamora in mid-December and continued via Uruapan and Zacatecas to Guadalajara. Bureau G stayed at Zamora during this period, until moving to Morelia in December 1864.



Map showing the movement of Douay's 2nd Division from Mexico City to Guadalajara



Sent from Leon by a soldier in the 1st Battalion of Chasseurs à Pied
Processed through Bureau G at Zamora on January 15, 1864
1862 10c and 20c stamps cancelled "CE G" (missing M) – arrived March 2

Southern Column: July 1864 – February 1865

Siege of Oaxaca



The Foreign Legion was detached from the Reserve Brigade and joined Mangin's 2nd Brigade at Puebla in March 1864. It was part of the Oaxaca expedition that left on July 1864 and besieged Oaxaca until its surrender on February 5, 1865.



Dated at Huautla (north of Oaxaca) by ADC to Général Mangin on March 16, 1865
“I profit from a letter being sent by General Mangin, with whom I still am, to send this one”
Carried by courier to Vera Cruz and postmarked there on March 28 – prepaid 50 centimes
Bureau B had closed in February 1865, so no French fieldpost was present in Vera Cruz
Franking not recognized – 8 décimes British packet postage due in Paris on April 29

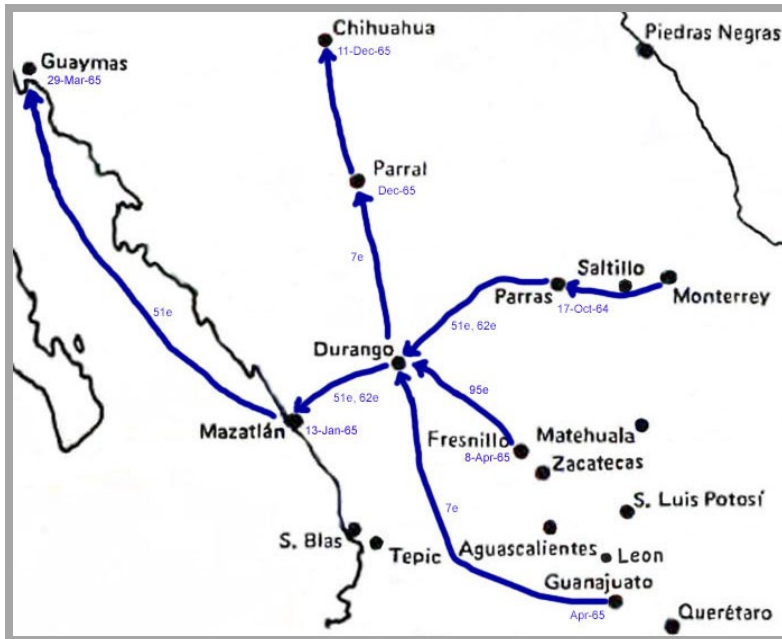
Very little French mail passed through the Mexican post office

Operations in the Northwest: January 1865 – November 1866

Bureau K at Durango



De Castagny's column and Bureau F advanced from Monterrey to Durango in November 1864, and then to Mazatlán in January 1865. Bureau K moved from Zacatecas to Durango on December 7 and replaced Bureau F there until February 1865.



Map showing the French operations in the Northwest



From the 62nd Regiment's 1st Battalion at Durango – based there until April 1865
 Postmarked February 1, 1865 at Bureau K – '62 10c and 40c stamps cancelled "CEM K"

Operations in the Northwest: January 1865 – November 1866

Movements of Bureau F



Bureau F moved with Castagny from Monterrey to Durango in November 1864. On December 18, they left for Mazatlan, leaving Bureau K at Durango. Bureau K followed them to Mazatlan in February, so Bureau F returned to Durango in March 1865.



Posted February 20, 1865 at Bureau F at Mazatlan – **endorsed “G^{al} de Castagny”**
Routed via Panama to San Francisco on March 3 – carried overland to New York
Inman steamer left New York on April 8 - letter arrived on April 20 in Paris
Unpaid double-weight 16 décimes due annulled for military franchise

Fewer than ten fieldpost letters via San Francisco are known

Operations in the Northwest: January 1865 – November 1866

Fieldpost operations at Durango



The French considered Durango a strategic point, so a fieldpost was maintained there. Bureau F re-opened at Durango in March-April 1865. When Bureau G arrived in May with the 95th Regiment, Bureau F closed until July 1865, when it re-opened at Durango until its evacuation in November 1866.



Posted November 6, 1865 at Bureau F at Durango – franking cancelled “CEM F”
Quadruple-weight 2 francs British packet rate plus 20c registration fee
RMSP steamer left Vera Cruz on December 2 - letter arrived January 1 in Lyon

Fewer than ten registered fieldpost letters are known

Operations in the Northwest: January 1865 – November 1866

Bureaus K and N at Mazatlan and Guaymas



Bureau K moved to Mazatlan in late February 1865, and then to Guaymas in March. Bureau N was opened in Mazatlan to replace Bureau K, but had no "CEM N" cancel and the "N" was reversed in its postmark.



Docketed from Guaymas by 51st Regiment officer – posted June 3, 1865 at Bureau K
Prepaid 20c for CGT service from Vera Cruz on July 14 – arrived August 10



Dated July 28, 1865 at Mazatlan by cavalry officer – posted August 1 at Bureau N
Double-weight '62 Issue 20c and 80c franking for RMSP service – cancelled by datestamp

Operations in the Northwest: January 1865 - November 1866

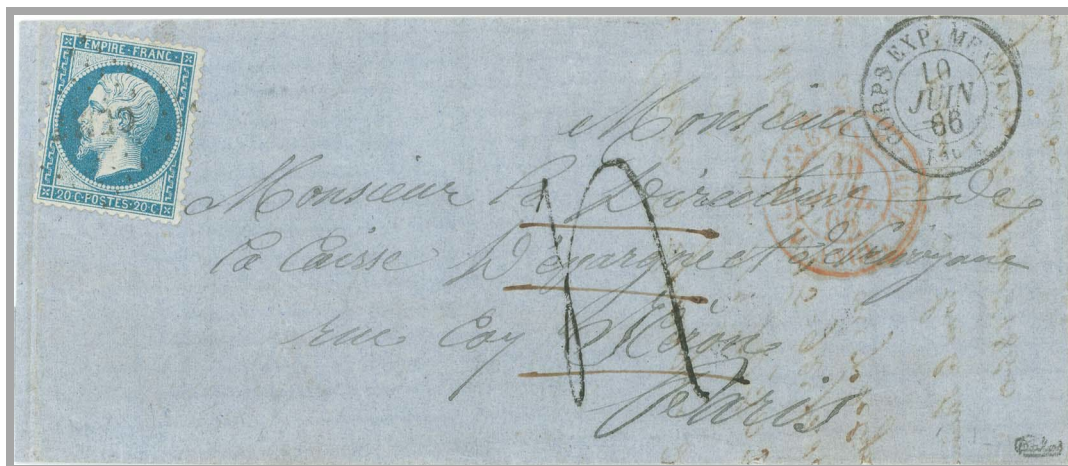
Bureau F at Durango



Bureau F re-opened at Durango in July 1865 and processed local mail as well as mail from the various columns sent north from Durango. Bureau F closed in November 1866, when the last 7th Regiment troops evacuated Durango.



From 7th Regiment officer at Mapimi (north of Durango) – processed at Durango
Red May 9, 1866 Bureau F postmark – “CEM F” cancel on 50c RMSP franking
Red June 28 “Corps Exp. Mexique v. Angl.” entry mark for British packet service



Docketed from 7th Regiment soldier at Durango – posted June 19, 1866 at Bureau F
Prepaid 20c soldier's rate for RMSP service – 4 décimes due crossed out

Operations in the Northwest: January 1865 – November 1866

Bureau L at Rio Florido



Général Brincourt left Durango on July 1, 1865 with the 95th Regiment in pursuit of President Juarez via Rio Florido on July 22. Major Billot left Durango on November 17 with 7th Regiment reinforcements and the Bureau L payeur. They reached the base at Rio Florido on December 1.



Docketed "rio florides le 9 août" from 95th Regiment – processed by payeur at Durango August 18, 1865 Bureau F postmark – "CEM F" cancel on 50c franking for RMSP service



Dated "Rio Florido le 2 Xbre 1865" – postmarked December 2 at Bureau L
From 7th Regiment battalion commander - underpaid for RMSP service – 4 décimes due
Bureau L is the rarest fieldpost bureau – fewer than ten letters are known

Operations in the Northwest: January 1865 – November 1866

Bureaus K and N at Guaymas



The 51st Regiment was at Guaymas and Hermosillo, serviced by Bureau K. They withdrew in October 1865 and Bureau K ceased operations. Bureau N received the “CEM K” cancel at that time, and moved to Guaymas in March 1866. It left Guaymas in September 1866, and Mazatlan in November 1866.



Docketed from 51st Regiment officer at Hermosillo – processed at Guaymas
September 27, 1865 Bureau K postmark – **routed via Panama and San Francisco**
Inman steamer from New York on November 11 – arrived November 25



From 62nd Regiment at Guaymas – postmarked June 1, 1866 at Bureau N (reversed “N”)
20c franking cancelled “CEM K” – insufficient prepayment accepted for RMSP service

Operations in Central Mexico: January 1865 – November 1866

Fixed location fieldpost bureaus in central Mexico



As the French pulled back to central Mexico in 1865-66, they established fixed location bureaus in strategic cities. Whenever two postal payeurs overlapped in one city, one would typically cease operations until redeployed.



French fieldpost bureaus that were active in Central Mexico



Docketed from 51st Regiment officer at Leon – posted December 22, 1865 at Bureau H
50c franking for RMSP service by '62 Issue 10c and 40c stamps – “CEM H” cancels
Steamer left Vera Cruz on January 1 – letter arrived January 31 in Strasbourg

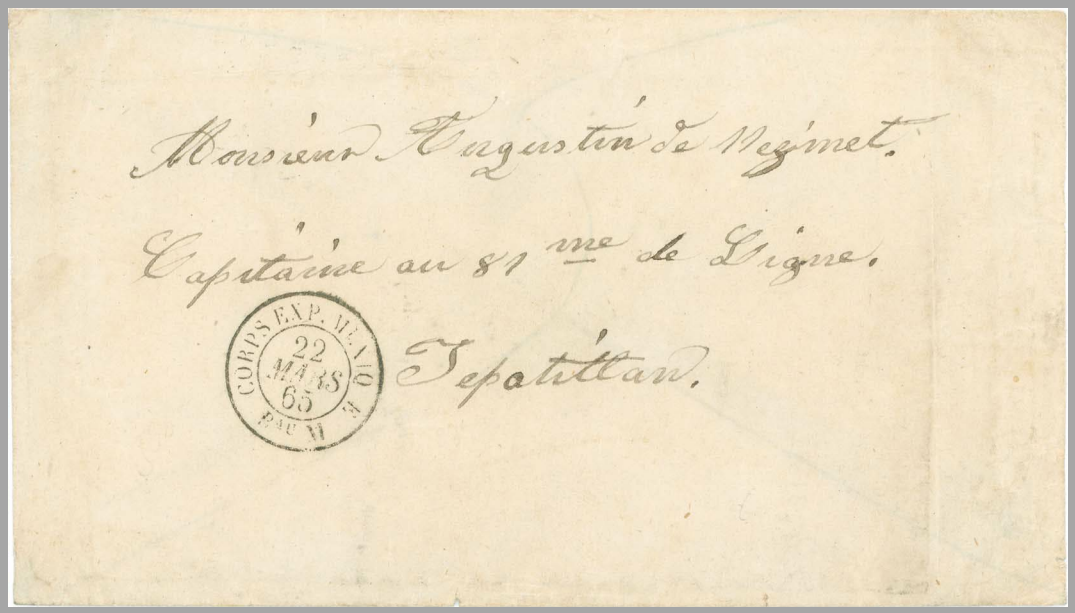
Operations in Central Mexico: January 1865 – November 1866
Bureau M at Morelia and Querétaro



In December 1864, Bureau M replaced Bureau G at the 2nd Division headquarters in Morelia. Bureau M ceased operations in October 1865 until re-opening at Querétaro in January 1866.



Posted on March 13, 1866 at Bureau M in Querétaro – prepaid 50c RMSP rate
 Steamer left Vera Cruz on April 1 – red April 30 “v. Angl.” entry postmark



Sent with a military free frank by an officer in the 81st Regiment’s 2nd Batallion at Morelia
 Posted on March 22, 1865 at Bureau M – addressed to the 1st Batallion near Guadalajara

Operations in Central Mexico: January 1865 – November 1866

Bureaus D and E at Querétaro



Querétaro was a major French center, and had postal payeurs operating concurrently there in 1866. Bureau E opened there in September 1864 and Bureau D opened there in March 1866. Both bureaus closed when Querétaro was evacuated in January 1867.



Dated December 8, 1866 in Querétaro – posted on December 9 at Bureau D
Prepaid 20c for December 13 CGT steamer – January 9 “C.E.M. v. Franc.” entry mark



From 7th Regiment officer at Durango – processed June 6, 1866 at Bureau E in Querétaro
50c franking for RMSP service cancelled “CEM E” – July 30 “C.E.M. v. Angl.” entry mark

Operations in Central Mexico: January 1865 – November 1866

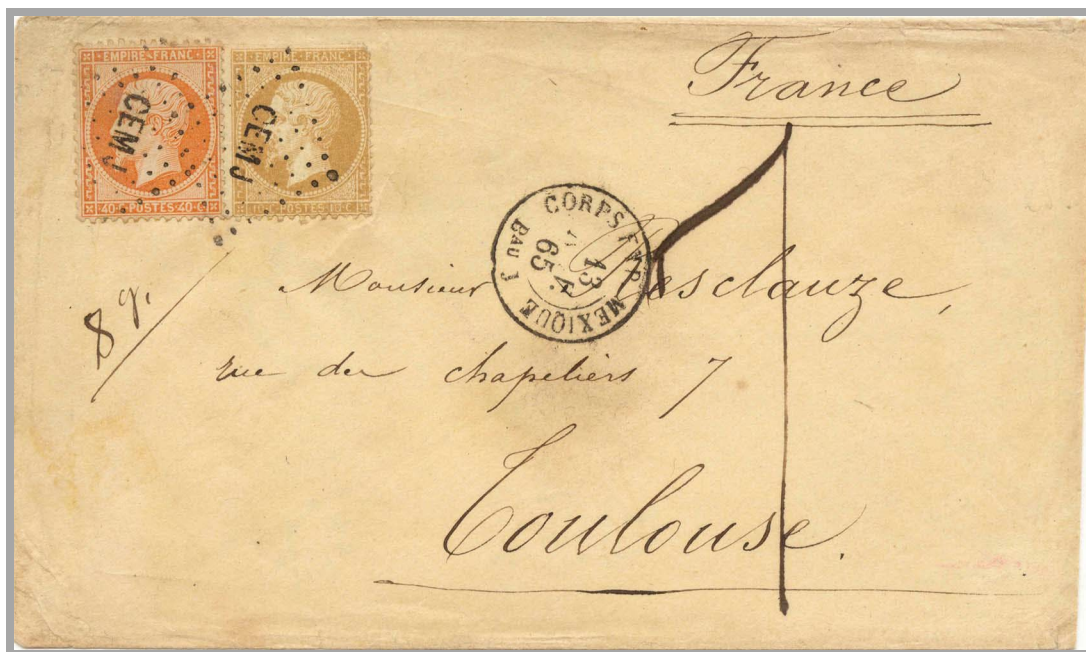
Bureau J at San Luis Potosi



Payeur Orion re-opened Bureau J at San Luis Potosi from March to November 1865. It opened there again in May 1866, and closed for good in September 1866.



From financial payeur Jaubert at San Luis Potosi – posted on April 5, 1865 at Bureau J
Prepaid 20c for April 14 CGT steamer from Vera Cruz – letter arrived May 12 in Paris



Underpaid double-weight letter posted November 13, 1865 at Bureau J in San Luis Potosi
Insufficient 50c franking cancelled "CEM J" – 7 décimes due on January 1 in Toulouse

Operations in Central Mexico: January 1865 - November 1866



Austrian Brigade in Mexico

The Austrian Brigade's three infantry battalions and two cavalry regiments were assigned to garrison Puebla in March 1865. On April 22, 1865, the Mexican post office granted them a ½ reale concessionary rate.



Sent November 11, 1865 from Stuttgart to the Austrian Brigade – prepaid 27 kreuzers CGT steamer arrived December 16 at Vera Cruz – “½” reale concessionary rate due forwarded from Puebla to Tezuitlan (northeast of Puebla) and Tulancingo



Postmarked August 4, 1865 in Tulancingo – ½ reale “Eagle” stamp for concessionary postage August 14 “Mexique” consular postmark at Vera Cruz – arrived September 11 in Stuttgart

Operations in Central Mexico: January 1865 - November 1866

Belgian Legion in the Austro-Belgian Brigade



Two battalions of Belgian volunteers arrived in Mexico between October 1864 and March 1865. They were intended to serve as Emperor Maximilien's guard, but were sent on active duty in the Michoacán in April 1865. They were entitled to the Mexican ½ reale concessionary rate.



Dated July 13, 1865 by Lt. Walton, **Belgian prisoner-of-war** at Santiago, Michoacán
Walton was captured at Tacambaro on April 11, 1865 and exchanged on December 5, 1865
Forwarded under cover to Mexico City – franked ½ reale “Eagle” stamp and posted on August 9
Private unit handstamp “**Imperio de Mexico * Corps Belge**” applied in Mexico City
French CGT steamer left August 14 – 8 décimes due in Sedan, France on September 10

Fewer than ten letters are known from the Belgian Legion

Operations in Central Mexico: January 1865 - November 1866

Foreign Legion in Central Mexico



The Régiment Étranger was sent to Central Mexico to protect communications between San Luis Potosi and Matehuala. The 6th Company of the 3rd Battalion was sent to San Luis de la Paz in February 1866 to build a telegraph line between San Luis Potosi and Queretaro. There was no fieldpost there.



Postmarked at San Luis de la Paz on May 20, 1866 and marked "FRANCA"
Franked 50c for British RMSP service – not accepted by British post office
RMSP steamer left Vera Cruz on June 1 – "GB 1^F 60^C" debit for 80 centimes
Double-weight 10 décimes (net of prepayment) due in Privas on June 29

Expeditionary mail posted at Mexican post offices is rare

Operations in Central Mexico: January 1865 - November 1866

Foreign Legion at Matehuala and Monterrey



The 1st Battalion of the Régiment Étranger and its commander, Général Jeanningros, moved from Matehuala to Monterrey in February 1866 and left on July 26. There was no fieldpost there.



Postmarked “Franco Monterrey” on June 24, 1866 – from aide to Général Jeanningros
50c franking **cancelled by provisional “X” cancels** – not accepted by British post office
RMSF steamer left Vera Cruz on August 1 – double-weight 10 décimes due in Paris



Postmarked “Franco Monterrey” on June 22, 1866 – RMSF steamer left Vera Cruz on August 1
“GB 1^F 60^C” debit to France for 80c – **Mexican postmarks are rare on French military mail**

Operations in Central Mexico: January 1865 – November 1866
Remote mail processed at Bureau A in Mexico City



Docketed from the 51st Regiment at Uruapan – postmarked on April 28, 1866 at Bureau A
 Prepaid 50c for May 1 RMSP steamer – red May 30 “C.E.M. v. Angl.” entry mark



Dated Aug. 18, 1866 by Foreign Legion officer at Matehuala – processed Sept. 7 at Bureau A
 20c franking for September 13 CGT steamer – Oct. 10 “Col. Fr. Paq. Fr. St Nazaire” entry mark

Postal Operations at Vera Cruz: December 1865 – March 1867

Re-opening of the postal bureau at Vera Cruz



In December 1865, payeur Pontailé re-opened Bureau C at Vera Cruz. A "Corps Exped. Vera-Cruz" postmark was introduced in March 1866, and the "CEM C" cancel was initially used with it.



Posted December 13, 1866 at Bureau C in Vera Cruz – from *Contre-Guérilla* officer at Soledad
"CEM C" cancel on 20c CGT franking – January 9 "C.E.M. v. Angl." (should be Franc.) entry mark



Posted March 9, 1866 at "Corps Exped Vera-Cruz" bureau – used "CEM C" cancel
CGT steamer left Vera Cruz on March 13 – letter arrived April 8 in Bordeaux

Postal Operations at Vera Cruz: December 1865 – March 1867

The “Corps Exped. Vera-Cruz” postmark



The “Corps Exped. Vera-Cruz” postmark is known used from March to October 1866. It was apparently used interchangeably with B^{au} C, since no common dates for the two postmarks are known.



Postmarked “Corps Exped. Vera-Cruz” on Oct. 29, 1866 – prepaid 50c for RMSP service
From officer in 81st Regiment at Vera Cruz – December 2 “C.E.M. v. Angl.” entry mark



Postmarked “Corps Exped Vera-Cruz” on October 1, 1866 – underpaid for RMSP service
RMSP steamer left Vera Cruz on October 2 – red October 30 “C.E.M. v. Angl.” entry mark

French Withdrawal: December 1866 – March 1867

Retreat from central Mexico



On December 28, 1866, Général Castagny and the French rearguard retreated from Leon via Queretaro and Mexico City (February 5). They reached Puebla on February 10.



Posted December 11, 1866 at Bau N (reversed) in Leon – prepaid 20c for CGT service
“CEM K” cancel given to Bau N in Nov. 1865 – February 12 “C.E.M. v. Franc.” entry mark



Posted February 10, 1867 at Bau G in Puebla – prepaid 20c for CGT service
CGT steamer left on February 14 – red March 15 “C.E.M. v. Franc.” entry mark

French Withdrawal: December 1866 – March 1867

The end of the French fieldpost service



The last four payeurs left Mexico City on February 5, 1867 and embarked at Vera Cruz on March 11. The latest known fieldpost letters are from Bau C (March 1) and Bau A (March 8 at Vera Cruz).



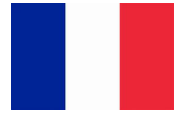
Posted on January 28, 1867 at Bau A in Mexico City by the colonel of the 81st Regiment
Doubleweight 1-franc franking for RMSP service – March 2 “C.E.M. v. Angl.” entry mark



Dated February 27, 1867 at Vera Cruz by an officer in the Foreign Legion
Postmarked on March 1 at Bau C – prepaid 50c for RMSP service – “CEM C” cancels
RMSP steamer left Vera Cruz on March 4 – red April 4 “C.E.M. v. Angl.” entry mark

Naval Mail: December 1861 - March 1867

Early mail to the French fleet



Naval ships left France from November 9, 1861 to February 9, 1862 with the first 7,000 French troops. The first ship to depart, the armed dispatch ship *Berthollet*, arrived in Vera Cruz on January 13.



Sent locally in Toulon on December 11, 1861 - '59 10c postage due stamp applied
Addressed to naval lieutenant on the *Berthollet* - had left November 9 from Brest
Forwarded to Brest with 3 décimes due, and then by French warship to Vera Cruz



Posted in Ste-Foy la Grande on January 30, 1862 - prepaid double-weight rate to Mexico
Addressed to a sailor on the dispatch ship *Forfait*, which had left Cherbourg on January 28
Carried by British RMSP steamers from Southampton to Vera Cruz on February 26

Naval Mail: December 1861 - March 1867

Military correspondence postmarks



Postal agents on the French CGT steamers were provided with name-of-ship postmarks for the mail that they processed. They were also given "Corresp. d'Armée" name-of-ship postmarks for military mail.



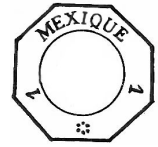
Sailor's letter processed by the *Louisiane's* postal agent at Vera Cruz on June 14, 1864
20c French packet postage prepaid – **cancelled by "Corresp. d'Armées" postmark**



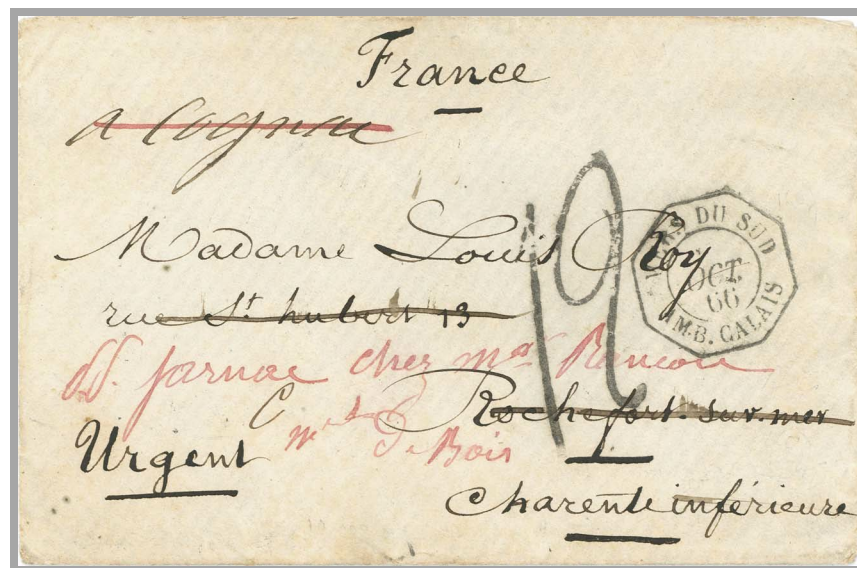
Sailor's letter processed by the *Impératrice Eugénie's* postal agent at Vera Cruz on June 14, 1865
Postmarked "**Cor. d. Armées Imp. Eugénie**" - 3 décimes French packet postage due

Naval Mail: December 1861 - March 1867

Unusual mail from naval personnel



Sailor's letter with 20c franking given to Vera Cruz post office – marked “Franco”
Passed to Vera Cruz consular agent - applied **August 14, 1864 “Mexique” postmark**
CGT steamer *Floride*'s agent added August 16 name-of-ship postmark on reverse
20c soldier's rate rejected in France – 6 décimes due (80c less postage paid)



Dated September 1, 1866 at Acapulco by the commander of the French frigate *Vénus*
Sent to Panama for RMSP steamers via Colon and St. Thomas to Southampton on October 14
October 15 **“Mers du Sud Amb. Calais” postmark** - 12 décimes postage from Panama due

Naval Mail: December 1861 - March 1867

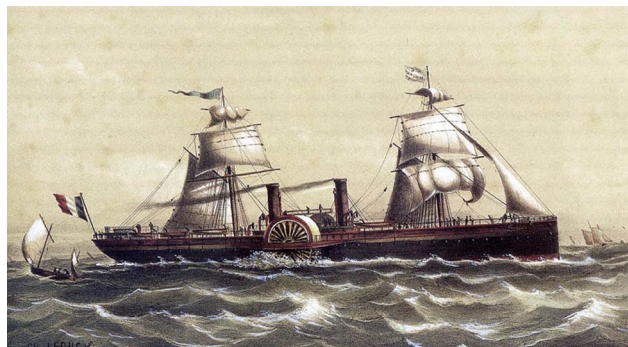
Ligne B from August 1865 to February 1867



The French Compagnie Général Transatlantique was re-organized as Ligne B in June 1865. New postmarks were issued in August to the agents on board the company's six steamers.



Postmarked "Ligne B Paq. Fr. N° 2" by the *France's* postal agent on October 24, 1865
From a mechanic on the French warship *Brandon* at Vera Cruz – prepaid 20c CGT postage
France left Vera Cruz on October 13 and stopped at St. Thomas on October 24



"Impératrice Eugénie" by Charles Leduc

Naval Mail: December 1861 - March 1867

Mail sent within Mexico



January 14, 2013 Philatelic Foundation certificate

Posted at Bureau A in Mexico City on March 13, 1866 – prepaid 20c postage
Addressed to ensign on the naval ship *Tempête* at Alvarado – docketed March 20 receipt
Letter placed in Mexican mails for direct route to Alvarado, rather than via Vera Cruz
March 14 “**Franco Mexico**” postmark – 2 reales Mexican postage paid by 4 R “**Eagle**” bisect



Posted at Bau C in Vera Cruz on February 1, 1866 – prepaid 20c postage
Addressed to the naval ship *Tempête* at Alvarado by “Voie française”
French route was overland to Vera Cruz and then by sea to Alvarado