

The Crimean War

The Crimean War, October 1853 to March 1856, is considered to be the first modern war. It eventually involved an alliance of Great Britain, France, Ottoman Empire and Sardinia in an armed conflict with the Russian Empire. However, the war indirectly involved Austria as well as other nation states who faced the difficult task of trying to remain neutral. The war, ostensibly started over the Russian Czar's desire to protect Christians against the Muslim Turks, ended without a lasting resolution. The result of this incomplete and inclusive peace paved the way for the World Wars that followed.

Beyond the politics, the war saw important advancements in medicine, communication such as the use of the telegraph, as well as military technology including the first use of military railroads, mines, armored ships, and exploding naval shells.

This display class exhibit weaves together the historical narrative of the military conflict, including the system used for postal communications, with the broader themes that made the war of lasting significance. The use of postal history artifacts such as envelopes and letters of the era provide unique insights to many of the deeper themes. Some items shown, such as a request for more linseed meal from Florence Nightingale written by her from the military hospital in Scutari, Turkey are included when they best illustrate some of those themes.

The exhibit includes postal history of all of the participants to the extent possible as well material from affected countries. Unfortunately, letters and covers from common soldiers in the army of the Ottoman Empire are unknown. Similarly, it should also be noted that material from the Russian side of the conflict is extremely rare. In both cases, the soldiers of lower rank were largely illiterate.

The first half of the exhibit is organized first by the area of military operation, or theater, presented in rough chronological order. Within each theater of operation, material is presented by participant country. These are designated by country flag icons representing the participant. The second half of the exhibit is more focused on the military postal systems employed by the primary combatants.

The exhibit is ordered as follows:

1. Baltic Theater
2. Danube Theater
3. Black Sea Theater
4. Minor Theaters
5. British Military Mails
6. French Military Mails
7. Sardinian Military Mails
8. Turkish Military Mails
9. Russian Military Mails



1855 patriotic cover with flags of the allies and battles of "Alma" and "Inkerman" named

The Danube Theater

Some of the most significant maneuvering between Turkey and Russia to gain political and military advantage took place early in the war and centered in the Danubian Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, now part of Romania. Austria, considered non-belligerent participant, sent a significant force to Moldavia and Wallachia to stabilize the area and create a buffer zone.

Russia issued demands of Turkey in May 1853 that were refused by the Porte. The Russian Danube Army then began to occupy Moldavia and parts of Romania thinking that Austria would remain neutral. Turkey then declared war on Russia in October 1853.

On 14 June 1854 Austria signed an agreement with the Turkish Porte aimed to oust the Russians from the Balkans. The convention of Boyaciköy allowed Austria to temporarily occupy the Principalities. This action convinced the Russians considered that a war with Austria would be inevitable if they remained in the Principalities and they began leaving.

Bucharest was evacuated by the Russians on 1 August 1854 and on 8 August, the first Ottoman forces entered the town. The peaceful occupation of the Principalities by the Austrians effectively removed the danger of war continuing in the Balkans.

Russia: Michael Gorchakov



Turkey: Omer Pasha



Austria: Johann Count Coronini



10 October 1855 "FELDPOST N° 2." origin postmark on newspaper wrapper prepaid with blue "Mercury" printed address band to Feldpost No. 2 at Bucharest corrected in manuscript to Jassy
the only reported newspaper wrapper use

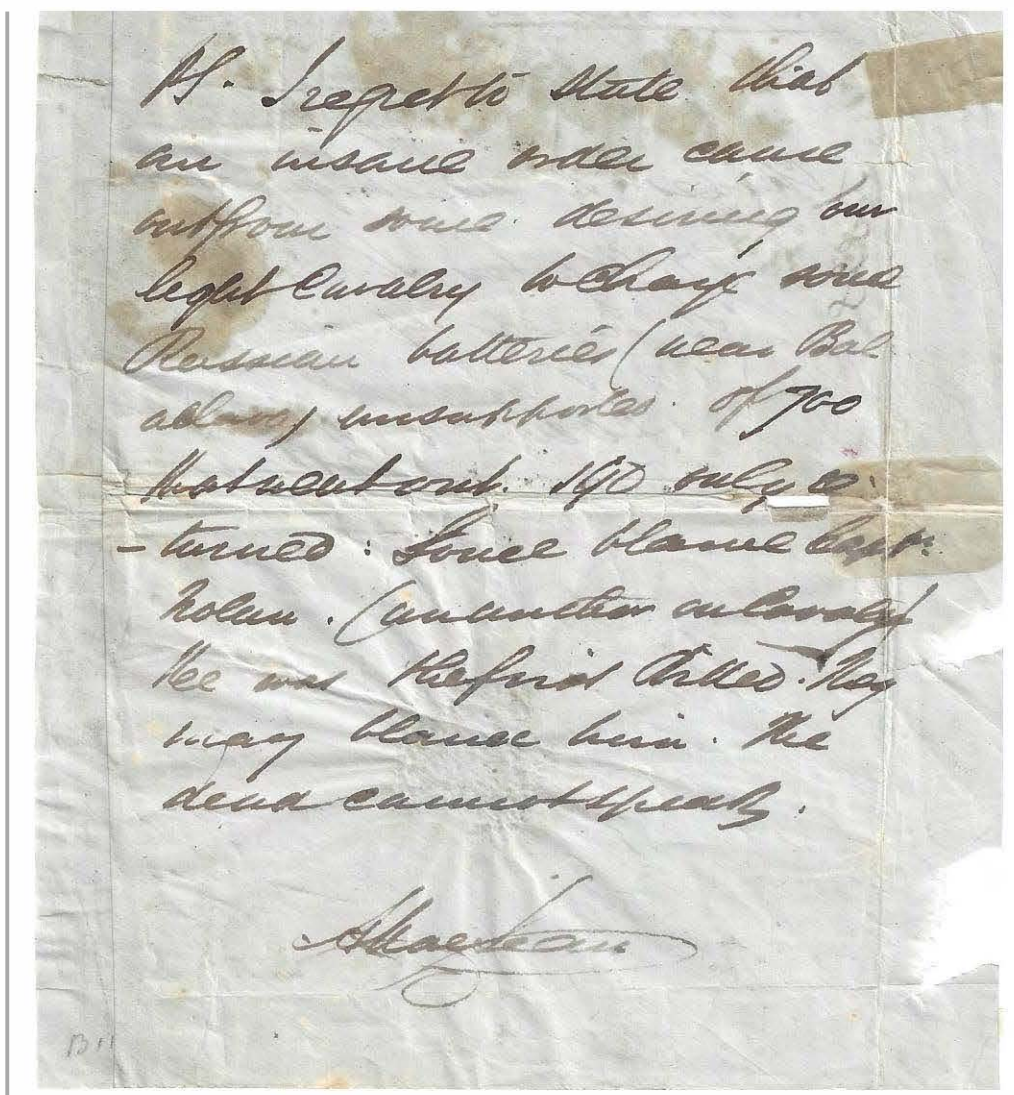
The Feldpost office number 2 marking was used at Jassy from November 1854 until the Austrian troops were withdrawn in 1857.



The Charge of the Light Brigade



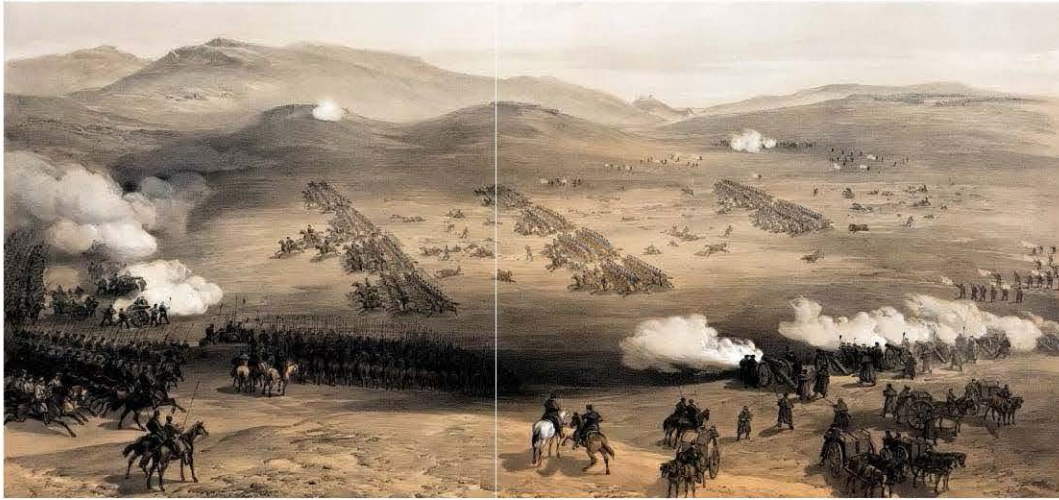
PS - I regret to state that the assault order came out from some desiring our light cavalry to charge some Russian batteries unsupported. Of 700 that went out, 190 only returned. Some blame Capt. Nolan. He was the first killed. They may blame him. The dead cannot speak. A. MacLean



Postscript to letter from A. MacLean with vivid summary of the disastrous charge of the Light Brigade at battle of Balaklava on 25 October 1854, posted at British Army Post Office (see following page) possibly the most important artifact of the Crimean War in philatelic hands



The Charge of the Light Brigade



Half a league half a league,
Half a league onward,
All in the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred:
'Forward, the Light Brigade!
Charge for the guns' he said:
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

'Forward, the Light Brigade!
Was there a man dismay'd?
Not tho' the soldier knew
Some one had blunder'd:
Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do & die,
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.



reduced image (75% of original) of address panel of sheet shown on previous page, two 1d stamps missing
3 November 1854 Post Office British Army datestamp, 17 November London arrival

The Charge of the Light Brigade was a charge of British light cavalry led by Lord Cardigan against Russian forces during the Battle of Balaklava on 25 October 1854. Due to miscommunication in the chain of command, the Light Brigade was sent on a frontal assault against an artillery battery with excellent fields of defensive fire. The order to attack was carried out by Captain Louis Edward Nolan. His reasons for the misdirection are unknown because he was killed almost immediately (as mentioned in this postscript).

In response to the order, Cardigan lead his command of about 670 of the Light Brigade straight into the valley between the Fedyukhin Heights and the Causeway Heights. In his poem, "The Charge of the Light Brigade" (1854), Tennyson famously called this basin "The Valley of Death." The brigade was not totally destroyed, but reported 118 men killed, 127 wounded, and 60 taken prisoner.



Prisoner of War Mail



The loss of the H.M.S. *Tiger*



reverse (reduced)



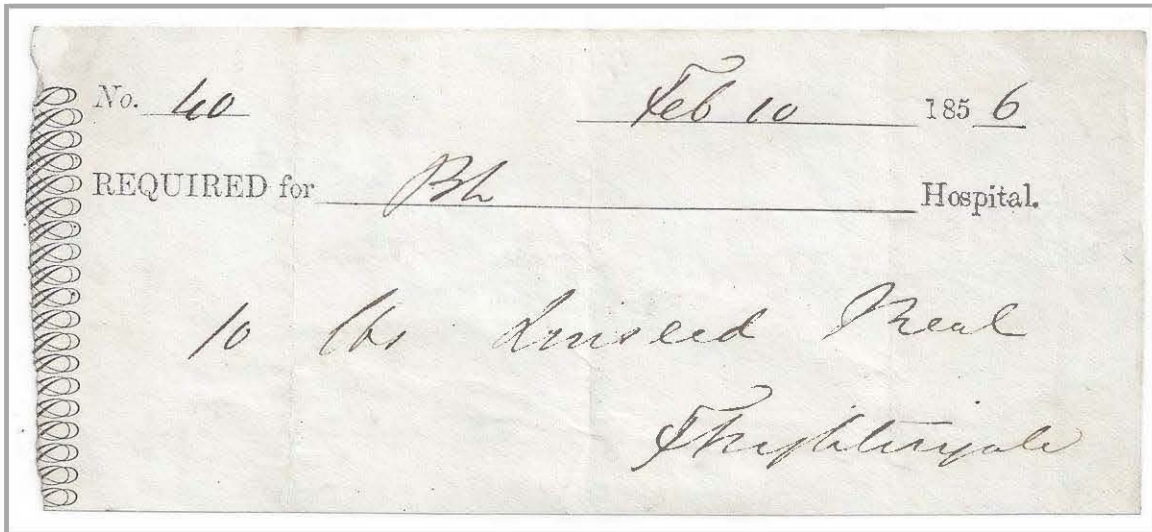
May 1854 Cashel, Ireland inner envelope addressed to Edmund Lawless onboard HMS *Tiger* at Malta
12 May 1854 HMS *Tiger* lost, addressee taken as prisoner and removed to Odessa Quarantine station
16 May 1854 in the flag of truce mail exchanged from HMS *Furious* and HMS *Inflexible*
23 May 1854 Odessa Quarantine datestamp on reverse and delivered to prisoner Lawless
the earliest of the Lawless correspondence covers, the only reported Prisoner of War uses

On May 12, 1854, the HMS *Tiger* ran aground in fog near Odessa. When HMS *Niger* and HMS *Vesuvius* attempted to assist, she was bombarded by Russians firing from the cliffs and surrendered. Captain Giffard and three others died while 24 officers, including Assistant Surgeon Edmund Lawless, and 201 seamen, were taken prisoner.

Only two Royal Navy ships were taken during the Crimean War. Other than the four Lawless correspondence covers shown, no prisoner of war mail from the Crimean War is reported.



Florence Nightingale Requests Linseed Meal for Hospital



10 February 1856 "Bh" (Barrack Hospital, Scutari) partially printed for request for 10 lbs. Linseed Meal, signed by Florence Nightingale



Florence Nightingale tending patients at Scutari Barracks Hospital

Florence Nightingale is considered to be the founder of modern professional nursing. During the Crimean War she trained and managed a group of nurses that tended to wounded soldiers. She became known as "The Lady with the Lamp" as she made her rounds of the hospital each night.

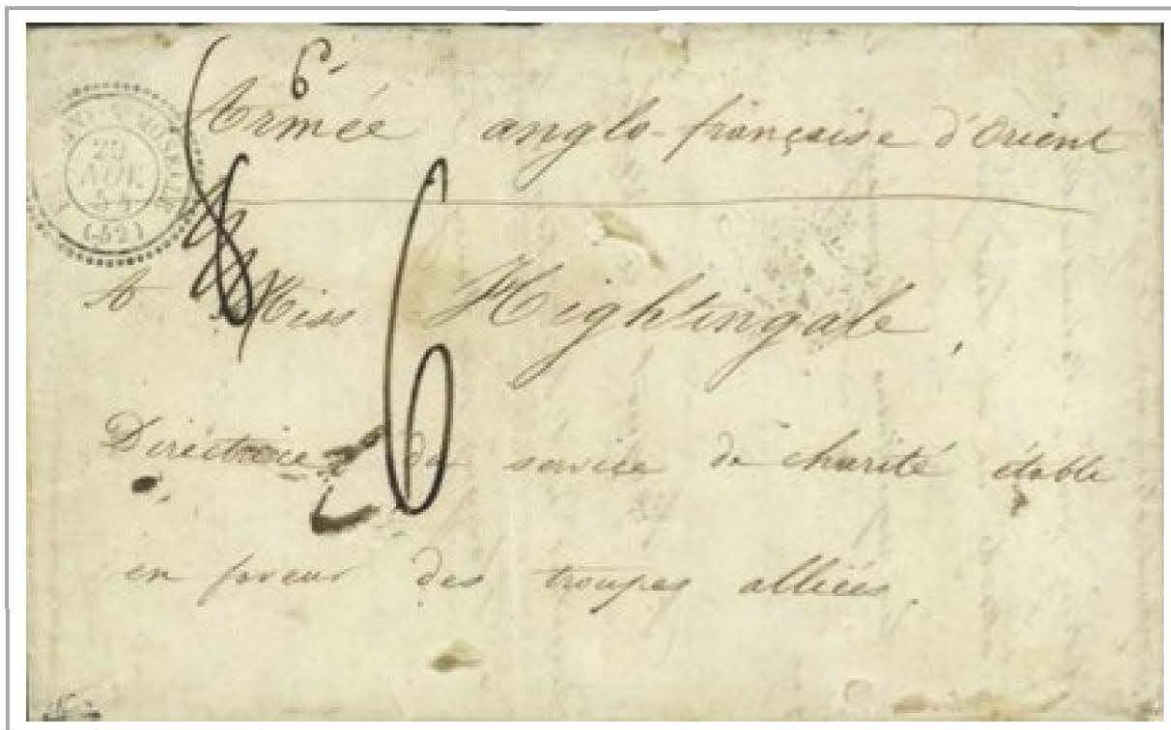
Her team found that poor care for wounded soldiers was being delivered by overworked medical staff in the face of official indifference. Medicines were in short supply, hygiene was being neglected, and mass infections were common, many of them fatal. There was no equipment to process food for the patients.



Inbound Letter to Florence Nightingale from France



Florence Nightingale receiving the wounded at Scutari Hospital.



20 November 1854 Flagny, France letter to Florence Nightingale, Anglo-French Army of the Orient as "Director of service charity for the allied troops"

4 December 1854 "ARMÉE D'ORIENT B^{AU} G" arrival backstamp

lengthy letter (in French from an admirer, F. Jacquot [de Vallois]: as an author of religious works & headmaster, who has read about her work in the newspapers and claims to share her great interest in schools and good works in general, he invites her to visit when she is in transit back to England one day.

Nightingale arrived at Scutari Barracks Hospital in early November 1854. After Nightingale sent a plea to *The Times* for a government solution to the poor condition of the facilities, the British Government commissioned Isambard Kingdom Brunel to design a prefabricated hospital that could be built in England and shipped to the Dardanelles. The result was Renkioi Hospital, a civilian facility that, under the management of Dr Edmund Alexander Parkes, had a death rate less than 1/10th that of Scutari.

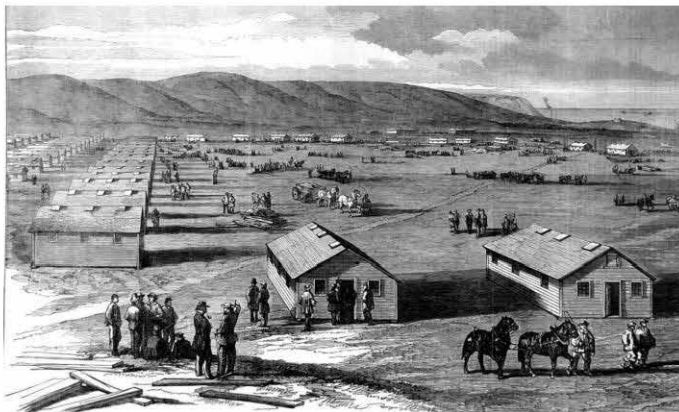


The British-German Legion



6 December 1855 Rothenfels, Bavaria to Folkestone, England, prepaid 23 kr rate addressed to George Dodel, III Regiment of the British German Legion

two reported examples of mail to the British German Legion



Great Britain raised a British-German Legion of two regiments of light dragoons, three Jäger Corps, and six regiments of light infantry with a total of some 10,000 troops. The first German legionaries arrived in England in May and June 1855 and were soon sent to Shorncliffe Camp near Folkestone (shown left). After taking an oath of loyalty to the Queen, the men were to serve until one year after the termination of the war. They received the same as their British counterparts.

The British-German legion, under Baron Stutterheim and Brigadier Woolridge, was sent to Constantinople and Scutari briefly in December 1855 and January 1856. The Legion was soon disbanded and most went to the Cape of Good Hope to settle as they had broken German law by enlisting.

Black Sea Theater
Sevastopol Aftermath



After the Russians abandoned Sevastopol on 11 September 1855, they withdrew their remaining forces to the interior of Crimean peninsula to the north east of Sevastopol. On 29 January 1856, about the time the cover below would have been received, the Russian guns bombarded occupied Sevastopol in what was the last of the conflict in that region of Crimea.



24 December 1855 (5 January 1856) Moscow to Bakhchysarai, Crimea (central peninsula, NE of Sevastopol)
20k blue postal stationery entire, small tail, first watermark
addressed to General Butermain, Central Command of the South Army with note to forward by courier

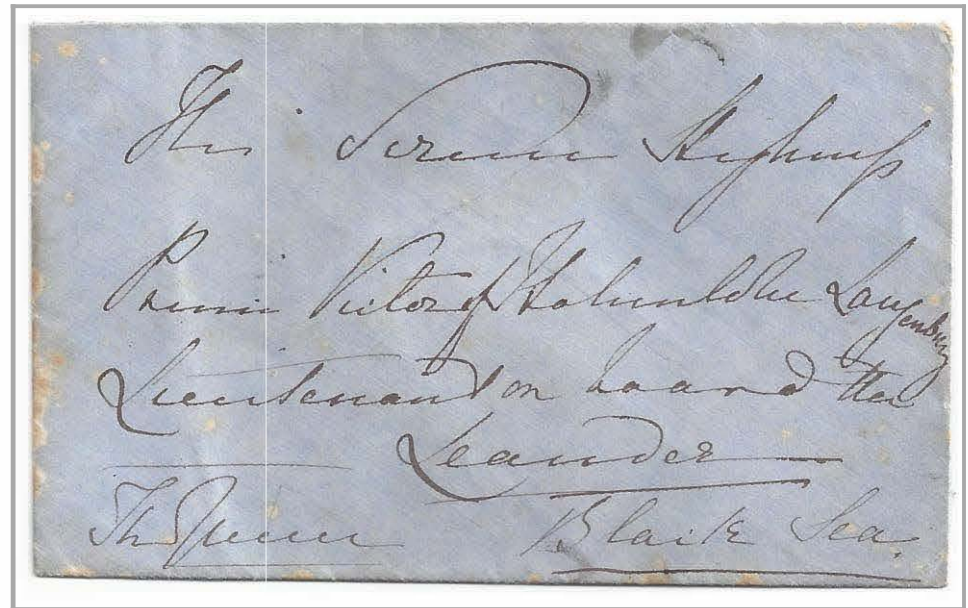
fewer than five reported examples of this 20k blue entire
the only reported Crimean War related use, ex Fabergé



Cover franked "The Queen"



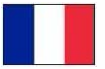
The Queen



(ca. November 1855) "The Queen" franked cover, addressed and franked by Queen Victoria to her Nephew "His Serene Highness Prince Victor of Hohenlohe, Lieutenant on board the *Leander*, Black Sea" Queen Victoria's red wax seal on reverse, probably transmitted under cover in diplomatic bag **the only reported example**



Prince Victor of Hohenlohe was the son of Queen Victoria's half-sister. He saw a good deal of action in the Crimea and is known to have been on HMS *Leander* in November 1855. He had been slightly wounded in action in 1854. (colored miniature of Prince Victor from the Queen's collection)



Endorsed by Emperor Napoléon III



Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte was the only President (1848–1852) of the French Second Republic and, as Napoleon III, the Emperor (1852–1870) of the Second French Empire. He was the nephew and heir of Napoleon I. He was the first President of France to be elected by a direct popular vote.

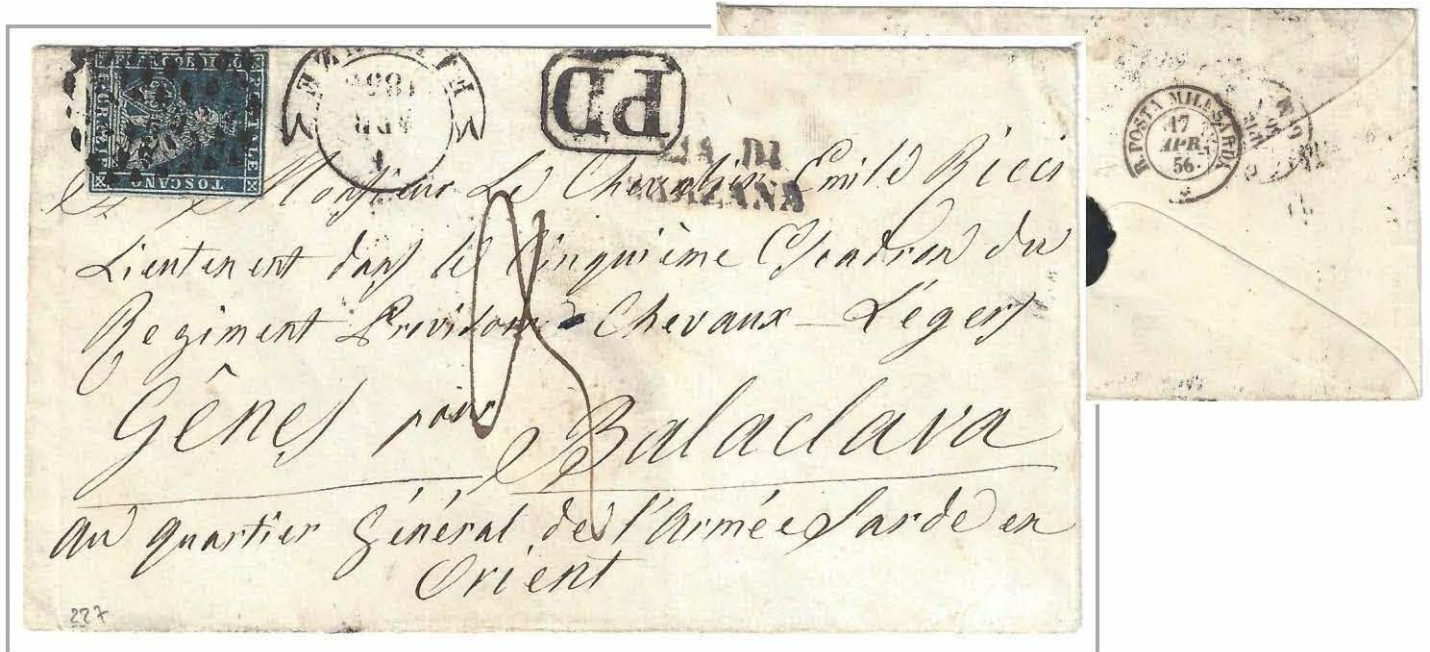


"Cabinet de l'Empereur (2)" cursive handstamp on cover to the Army of the Orient endorsed "L' Emperor" addressed to General Bosquet, Commander of the 2nd Corps 19 January 1855 Paris Franchises datestamp and "CHARGE D'OFFICE" handstamp four red wax seals with "DIRECTION GÉNÉRALE DES POSTES" text around edge

The addressee, General Pierre Bosquet, was a noted commander during the Crimean War. Witnessing the British charge of the Light Brigade at the battle of Balaklava, he remarked "It's magnificent, but it is not war."



From Black Sea Theater / From Modena



1 April 1856 from Firenze, Tuscany, cover prepaid 6cr to an Italian Lieutenant at Balaklava endorsed to the care of Quartermaster General of the Army of Sardinia in the Orient boxed "P.D." handstamp and "Via Di Sarzana" handstamp, manuscript 3 decimes due 17 April 1856 "R. POSTA MIL^E SARDA" (type 2) arrival backstamp the only reported inbound use from Tuscany with an adhesive



1855 from Modena, address leaf only, prepaid 40 cent to same Italian Lieutenant as above at Balaklava endorsed to the care of Quartermaster General of the Army of Sardinia in the Orient boxed "P.D." handstamp in blue, handstamped 3 decimes due the only reported inbound use from Modena with an adhesive



Mail related to the Turkish forces during the Crimean War is essentially unknown in philatelic hands. The Turkish forces were almost totally illiterate except for the officers. Some items, such as the cover shown on this page, remain enigmatic. The three items shown in this portion of the exhibit are all that have been reported.



7 August 1855 "ARMÉE D'ORIENT B^{AU} C^{AL}" (Constantinople) origin postmark on cover to Eupatoria
blue Turkish handstamp appears to read "Free/Superior/People Interests/ Officer/ Ottoman Empire"
cover appears to be addressed to a German doctor of Medicine in the service of the Turks
10 August 1855 "ARMÉE D'ORIENT QUART^R G^{AL}" arrival backstamp, 4 decimes double rate due

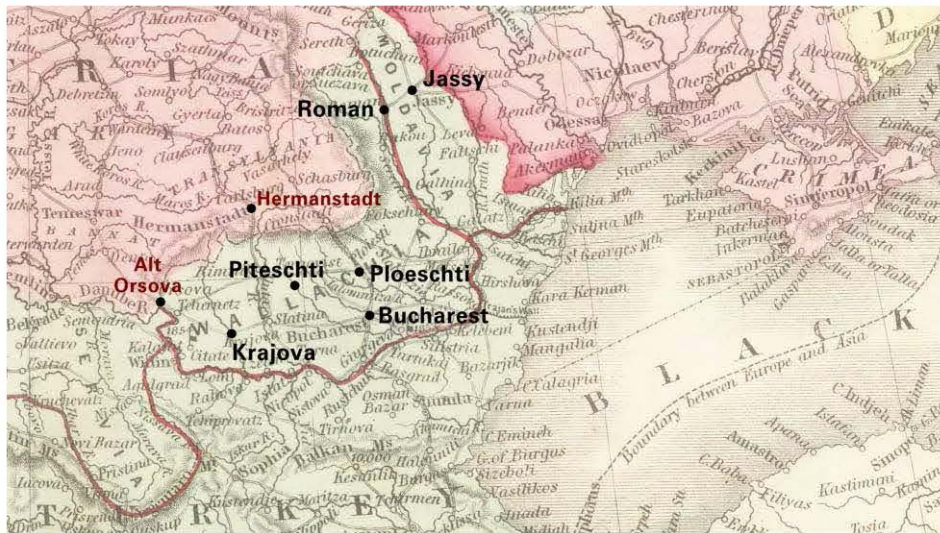


seal inscribed "Hanseatische Gesandtschaft in Constantinople" on reverse
from Hanseatic towns embassy in Constantinople

The Turkish troops defeated the Russians at Eupatoria on 17 February 1855 in an important military engagement. The victory gave the Allies total command of the sea and ensured that their forces could concentrate on Savastopol without fear of an attack on their flank. In the summer of 1855 the Turkish troops numbered 55,000 including units at Savastopol, Eupatoria and Yeni Kale.



After the brief Russian occupation ended in August 1854, the Danubian Provinces were given a new status, with a neutral Austrian administration. The Austrian military occupation lasted until the Treaty of Paris became effective in April 1857 when the forces were withdrawn.

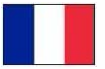


map of Austrian military post office locations and disinfection stations (dark red)



21 July 1855 registered mail use from the military post office at Piteschti (Wallachia), to Verona (Lombardy) prepaid Austria 9k postage plus 6k registry fee, disinfected with rastel punch
"K.K. ÖST. F.P. PITESCHTI" origin postmark, Hermannstadt transit and Verona arrival backstamps
fewer than five reported examples with stamps

Piteschti (now Pitesti, Romania) was occupied by Austrian troops from December 1854 until April 1857.



The Escadre De La Baltique markings

Mail from the Baltic Fleet to France in 1854 received either the boxed "ESCADRE DE LA BALTIQUE" entry marking applied in Paris (about 10 known in red, one known in blue) or the double circle "CORPS EXP^{RE} DE LA BALTIQUE" payeur datestamp (3 known in black).

Rates - A rate of 20 centimes prepaid, or 30 centimes unpaid, for military letter mail, per ¼ ounce, was in effect throughout the war.

ESCADRE DE LA BALTIQUE



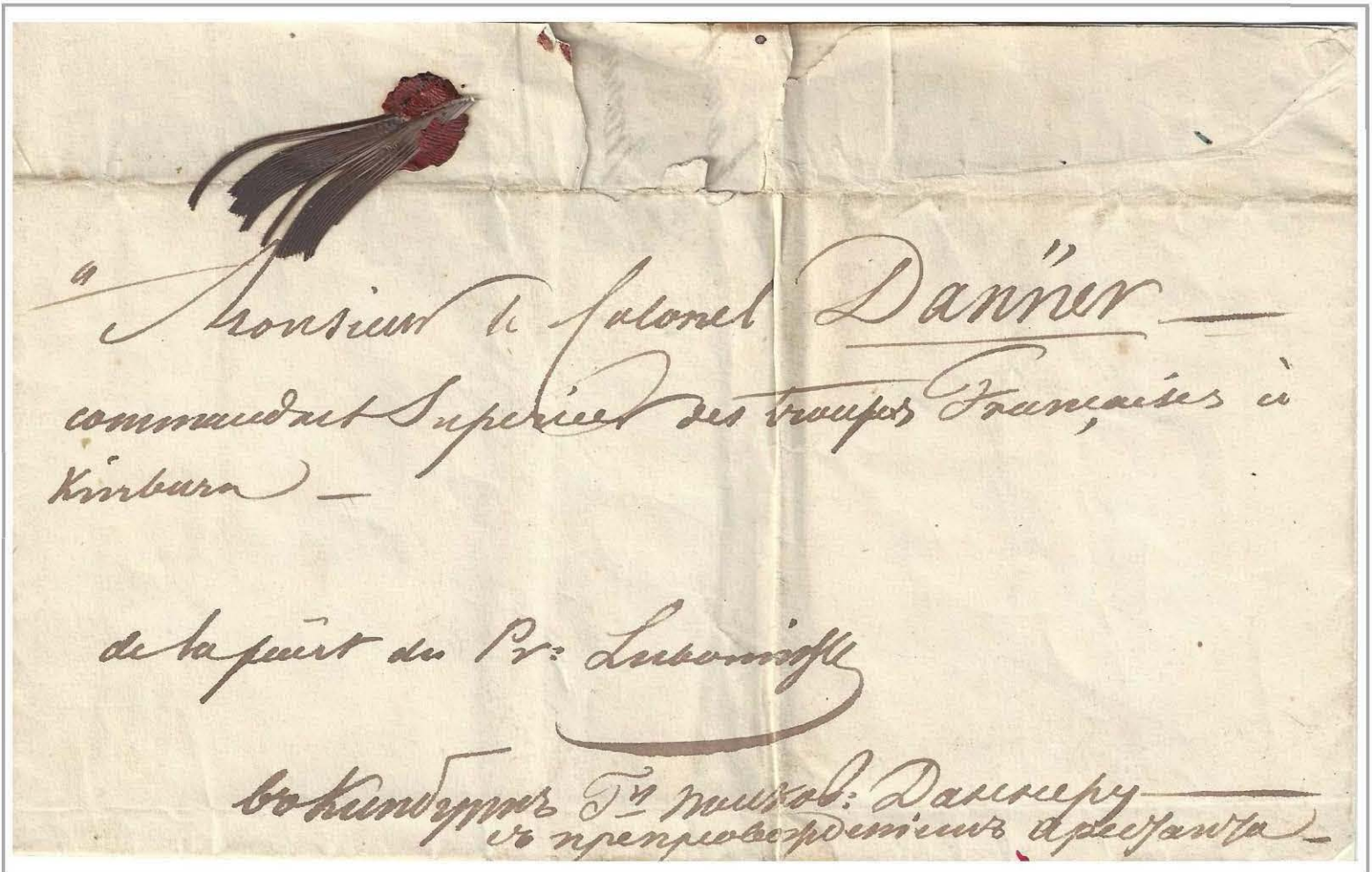
July 1854 cover from French Fleet near Stockholm enroute to Åland Islands used to France
boxed ESCADRE DE LA BALTIQUE handstamp in blue, "30" centimes due handstamp
29 July 1854 Paris transit backstamp
the earliest reported example of this marking
the only reported example of this handstamp in blue

On 30 July 1854 the ships which brought the first division of the French troops were seen entering the waters around the Åland Islands. French General Baraguay d'Hilliers came in the *Reine Horten* while other ships brought the troops.

The French Army landing for the attack on Bomarsund took place on the 8th of August, at two points on the island, near Bomarsund. On 8 August 1854 the Allied forces of 11,000 French artillery troops and the British fleet encircled the fortress of Bomarsund. The artillery attack commenced on 10 August. The French stormed Fort Tzee (West Fort) on 14 August, and on the next day, the British took Fort Nottichafer (East Fort). The defenders surrendered on 16 August after which the Allies destroyed the fortress.



Through-the-Lines
Feather Letter from Russian Commander to French Commander
Written on the Day News of Peace Arrived



4 April 1856 feather letter from Russian Prince Lubomirski, Russian Headquarters of the Southern Armies to Colonel Danner, Commandant of the French troops at Kinburn carried in haste, black feather requesting carriage night and day, **accompanied return of an American**

Letter mentions: "One must always make amends in this world - you sent me the other day 2 wayward beef which had straggled to you. So Today, in revenge, I am sending you an animal of a man who presented himself to the post of my Cossacks. Says he is an American. My Lord - he seems to me to have all the talons of a bad marine because he prefers to march."

The Peace Treaty was finally signed on March 30 1856 and news arrived at Kinburn on 4 April 1856, the day this letter was written.

According to the published letters of Jean F. J. Herbé (aide to Colonel Danner at Kinburn): "On the 4th of April, a new courier brought us the official news of the conclusion of peace. The Colonel called immediately and ordered me to advance ahead of our lines until I could hand over to the Colonel of the Cossacks Lubomirski the letter which he entrusted to me and by which he announced to him the conclusion of the peace."