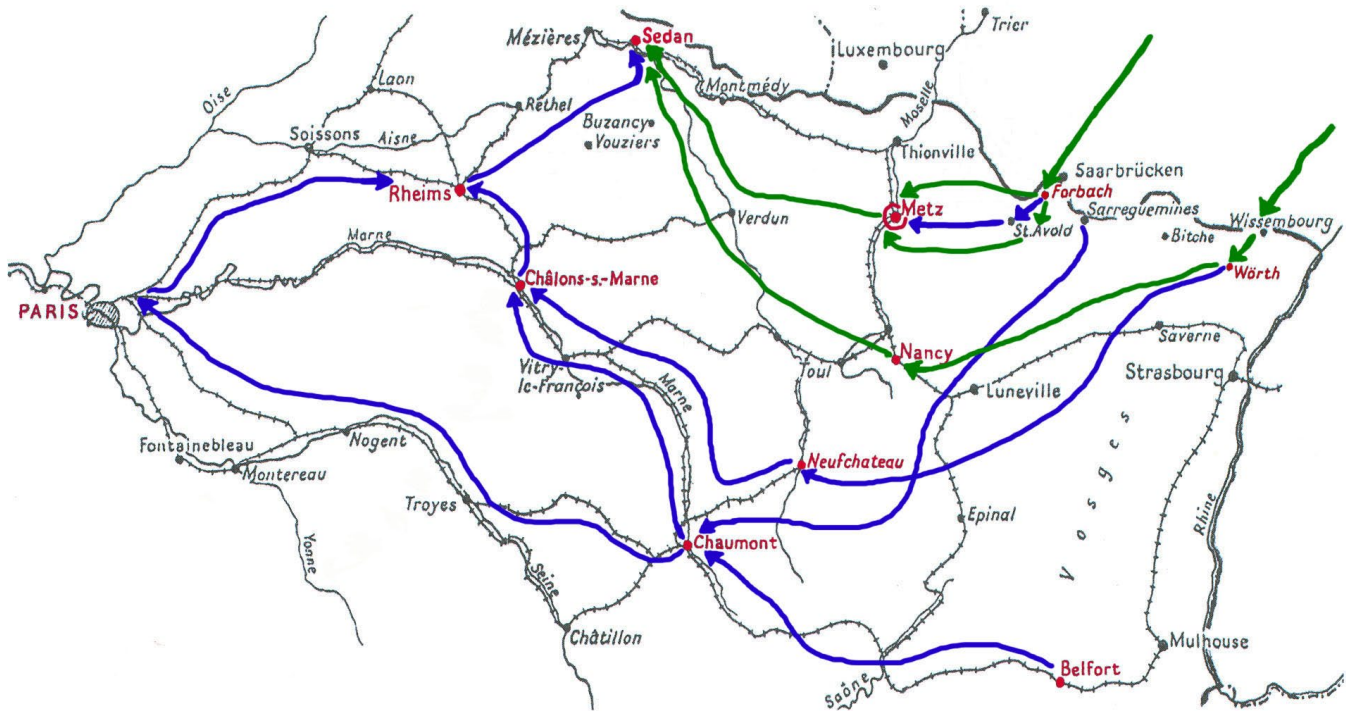


The Postal History of the Imperial Phase of the 1870-71 Franco-Prussian War

Background: On July 19, 1870, Napoléon III's French empire declared war on King Wilhelm's Prussia. On August 6, the German imperial armies decisively defeated the French imperial Armée du Rhin at Forbach and Wörth, in the opening stage of the Alsace-Lorraine campaign.



Bifurcation and pursuit of the French army (blue) by the German armies (green)

Split in two by the defeats, half of the French army retreated to Metz, where the August 19 - October 27 siege ended the Alsace-Lorraine campaign. The other half followed a circuitous retreat to Châlons-s-Marne to become the Armée de Châlons. That army and Napoléon III surrendered on September 1 at Sedan after a pursuit by two German armies in the Ardennes campaign. Thus, the imperial phase of the war included two campaigns and multiple sieges:

Alsace-Lorraine Campaign from Metz to Belfort: July 19 to October 27

Ardennes Campaign from the frontier to Châlons and then to Sedan: August 7 to September 1

Sieges of Fortified Cities by the imperial German army: Strasbourg, Metz, Neuf-Brisach, Schlestadt, Belfort and Verdun.

Postal Background: The French and Germans provided military postal services (fieldposts) at the divisional, corps and army levels. Both sides extended free-frank privileges to military personnel, so the vast majority of fieldpost mail is stampless.

Scope and Study: This exhibit traces the entire conflict through letters mailed at the French and German fieldposts, through other military-related mail, and through siege mail.

Presentation: The exhibit is organized by campaign, which is identified in the heading of each page. The military activity or siege is identified in the sub-headings. Text boxes provide historical or postal background, and greater detail is provided in the body of the page. Finally, icons at the upper right identify French or German armies, battles between them, or sieges.

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

Historical Summary: July 14 – October 27



- France mobilized its Armée du Rhin on July 14, 1870 and moved to positions on the frontier between Metz and Belfort.
- The August 6 defeats at the frontier forced the Armée du Rhin to fall back on Metz. After three large battles around Metz, the French were besieged there, starting on August 19. After one final effort to break out on August 31, the French surrendered on October 27.
- As part of this campaign, German imperial armies also besieged Strasbourg, Neuf-Brisach, Schlestadt and Belfort.
- Armée du Rhin divisions were given lettered fieldpost postmarks. The army and corps postmarks identify the unit.
- All German fieldpost postmarks identify their associated unit.



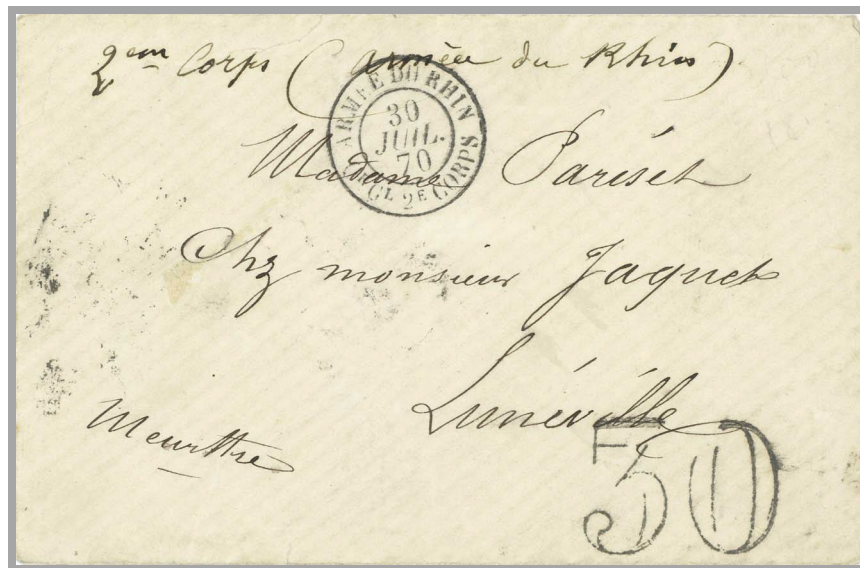
Political cartoon sent as printed matter – received military free frank per July 24 Law
Postmarked in red on August 2 at the 1st Corps' 1st Division Bureau A at Strasbourg

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

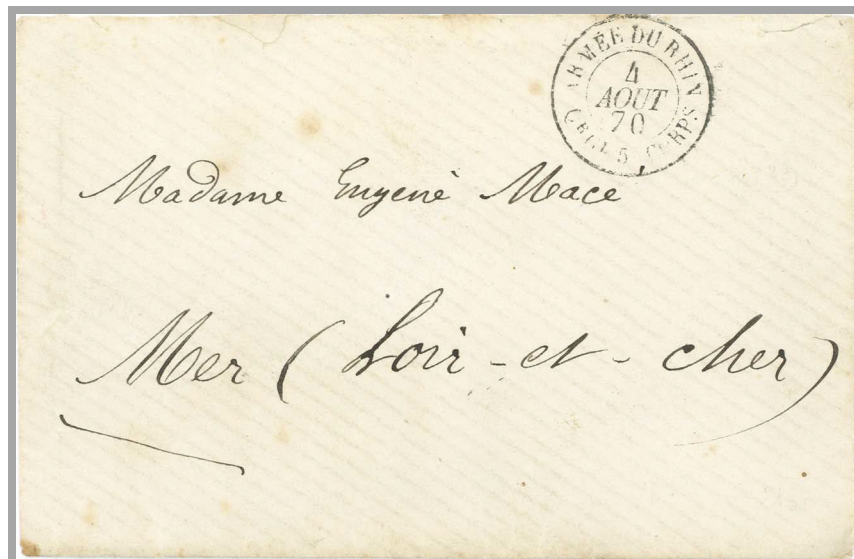
French Mobilization: July 14 - August 5



The 1st through 7th Corps and the Garde Impériale were mobilized on July 14. Some fieldpost bureaus were in operation by July 30. Virtually all fieldpost mail received a military free frank per a July 24 Law.



Posted July 30 at the 2nd Corps HQ bureau – **earliest known fieldpost date**
Lunéville incorrectly assessed 30c due (20c plus a 50% unpaid fee) on July 30



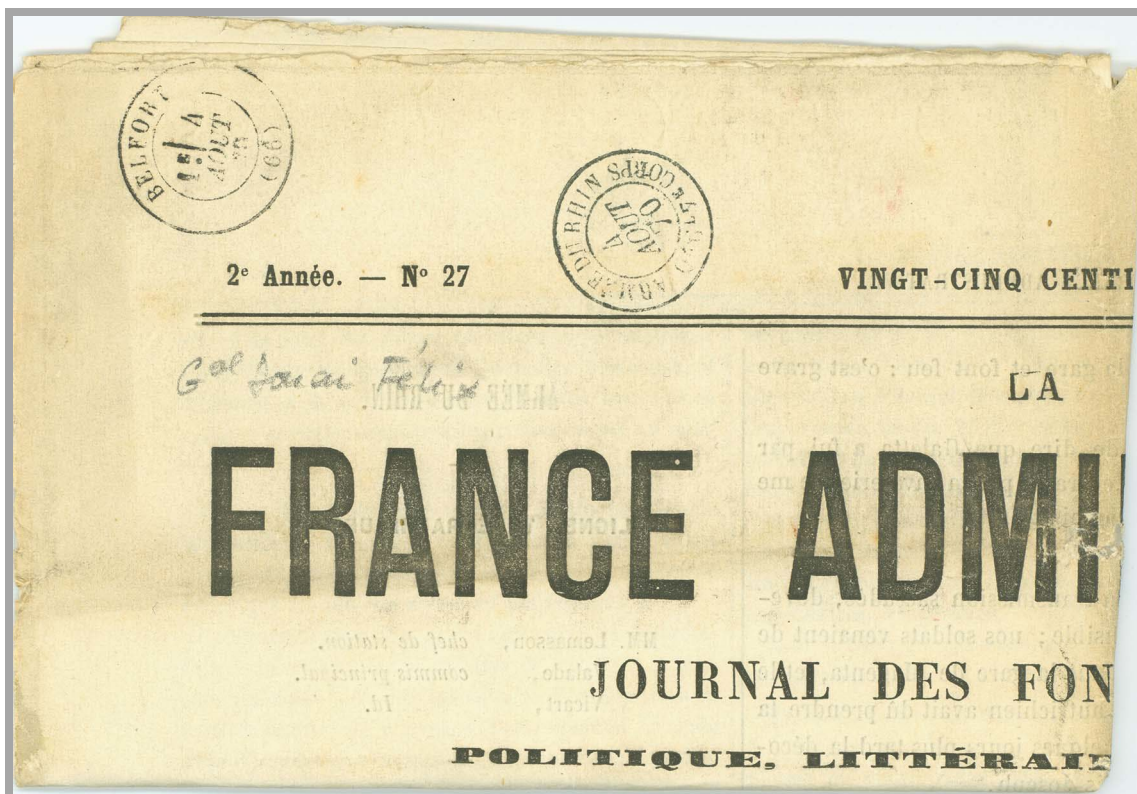
Dated August 4 at Saarguemines and posted at the 5th Corps HQ bureau
5th Corps fieldpost postmarks are **known only from July 31 to August 4**
Fieldpost materials were lost during the August 7 retreat from the frontier

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

French Mobilization: July 14 - August 5



Posted August 1 at the 1st Corps HQ bureau in Strasbourg – **1st Corps used red postmarks**



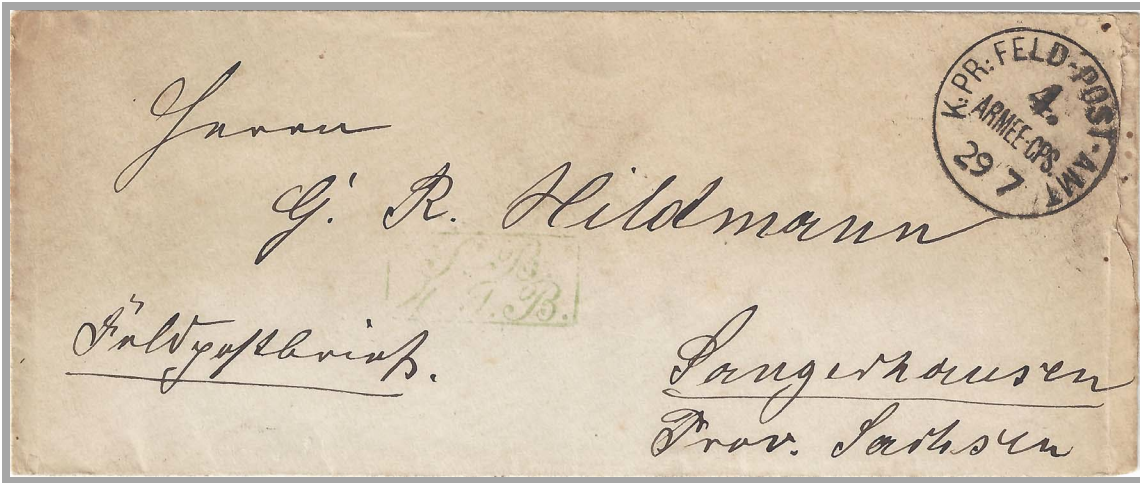
Newspaper postmarked in Belfort on August 4 – prepaid 5c per Timbre Impérial handstamp
Addressed to Général Félix Douay, commander of the 7th Corps at Belfort
August 4 7th Corps HQ postmark used upon arrival – **fieldpost arrival postmarks are rare**

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

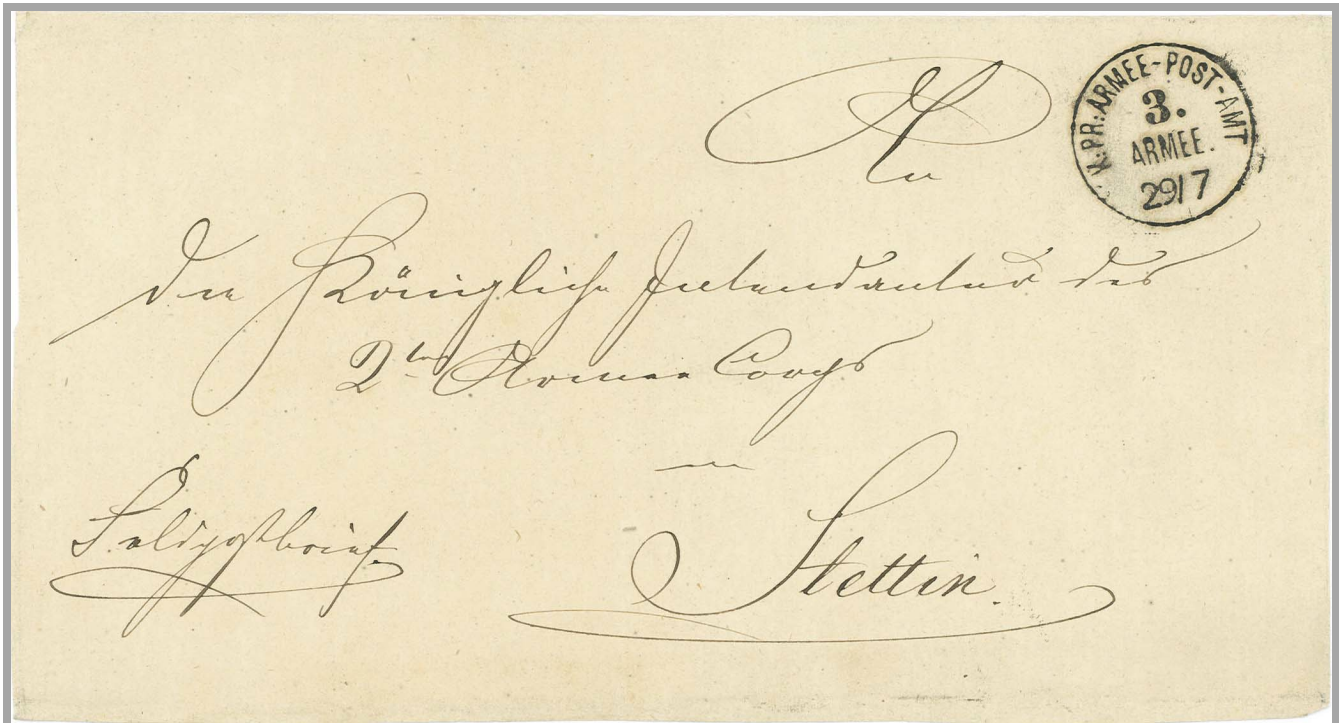
German Mobilization: July 15 - August 5



The German I, II and III Armies began mobilization on July 15, a day after the French. The fieldpost service also mobilized and was operational by July 29. Virtually all fieldpost mail received a military free frank.



Posted July 29 at the 4th Corps HQ bureau in Germany - **earliest known fieldpost date**
From the 4th Jaeger Battalion in the II Army - arrived in Langerhausen on August 1



Posted July 29 at the III Army bureau in Germany - addressed to the 2nd Corps at Stettin

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

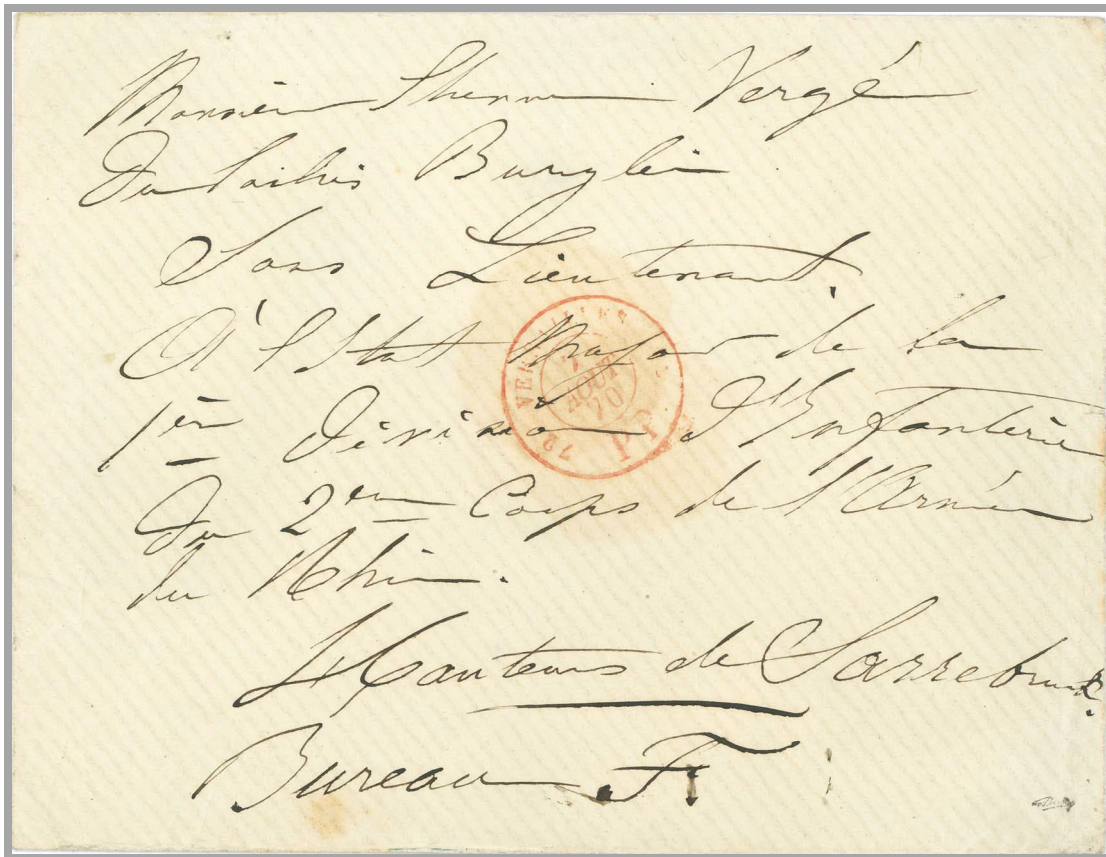
French Occupation of Saarbrücken: August 2-5



The French 2nd Corps crossed the frontier on August 2 and captured Saarbrücken, but fell back to Spicheren on August 5.



Dated August 5 at Saarbrücken and posted at the 2nd Corps' 1st Division Bureau F



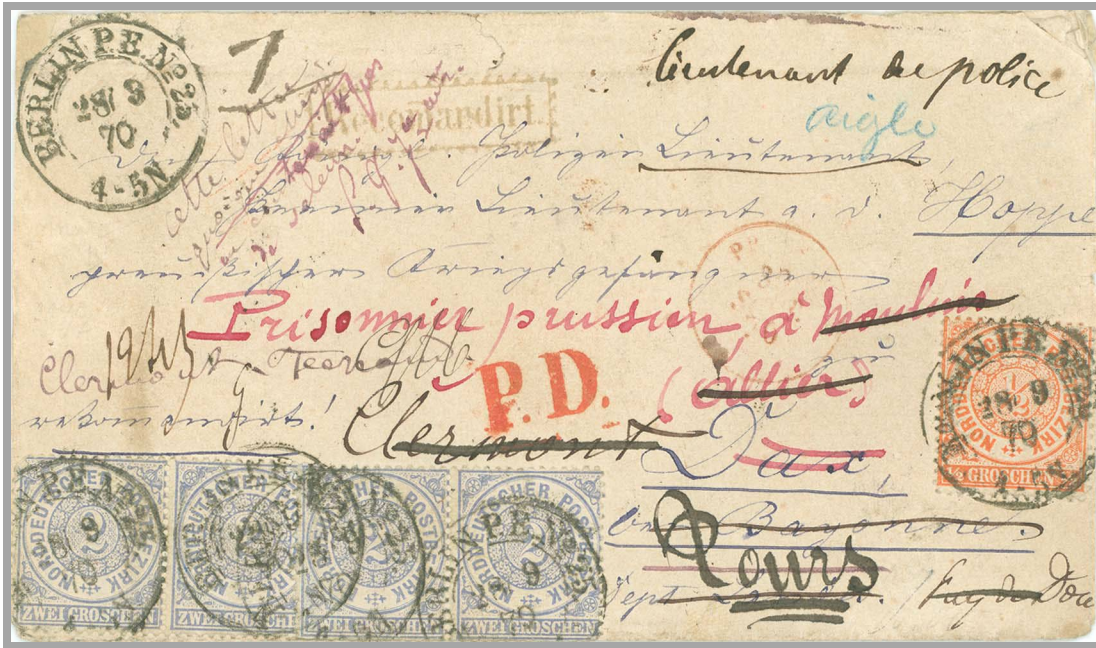
Posted August 7 in Versailles with military free frank by Princess Mathilde Bonaparte
Addressed to the 1st Division on the "Hauteurs de Sarrebruck Bureau F"

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

French Occupation of Saarbrücken: August 2-5



Sixty-three Germans were captured at Saarbrücken. During the entire war, only four thousand were captured by the French, so German POW mail is very scarce.



Registered letter posted September 28 in Berlin – entered France via Douai on September 30
Addressed to **Prussian police lieutenant captured at Saarbrücken** on August 2
Prepaid 8½ groschen with North German Confederation stamps – 4gr. registration fee
Received October 5 at Dax – forwarded six times - reached Vierzon on October 10



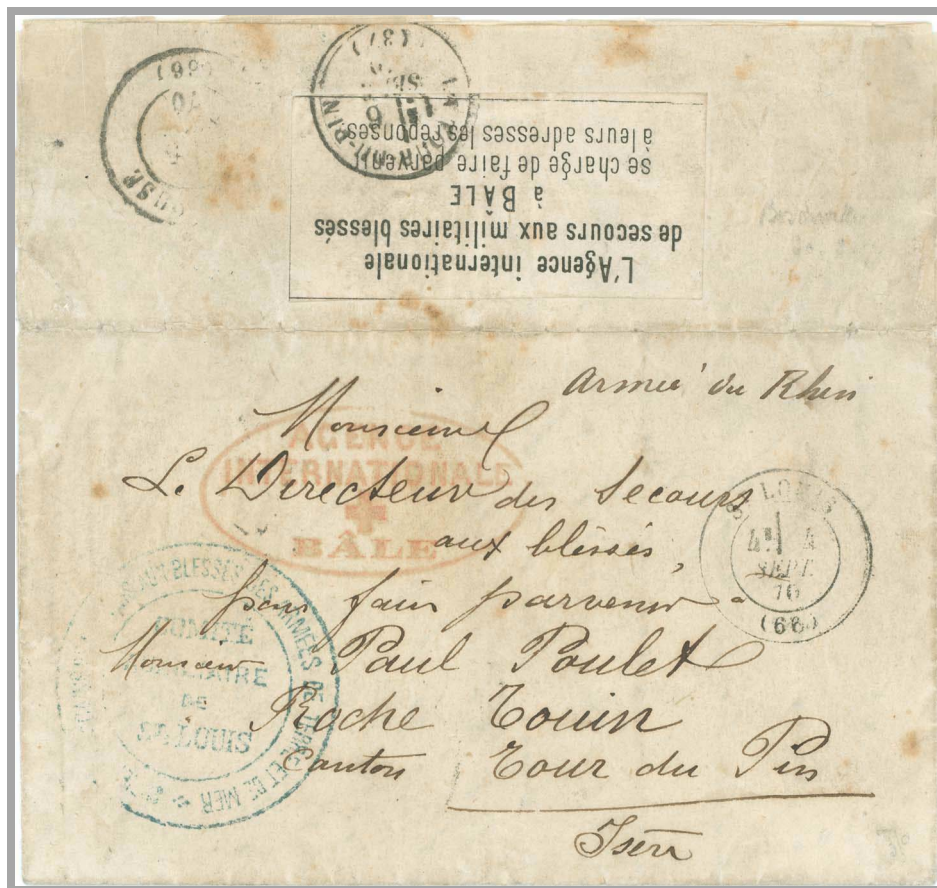
Print of the August 2 Combat at Saarbrücken

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

August 6 Frontier Battle at Wörth



The 1st and 2nd Bavarian Corps, 5th Corps, 11th Corps and Wurttemberg Division (German III Army) attacked the French 1st Corps and the 1st Division of 7th Corps. The French retreated southwest toward Nancy.



Written August 30 at Bischwiller by a wounded prisoner from the 7th Corps' 47th Regiment
He wrote that, "C'est Samedi le 6 de ce mois que j'ai été blessée dans la bataille de Voerth"
Handled by the Basel Red Cross at Basel - posted at nearby St. Louis on September 4
Response sticker applied on reverse – tied by September 6 La Tour du Pin arrival postmark

Fewer than five Bâle Response Stickers are known on cover

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

August 6 Frontier Battle at Wörth



Written near Hagenau by a wounded prisoner from the 1st Corps' 9th Cuirassiers
Lt. de Villers was wounded and captured during a cavalry charge on August 6
Handled by the Basel Red Cross - which used a **modified Geneve label** on the reverse
Posted prepaid 30 centimes at Basel on August 10 - arrived August 11 in Versailles



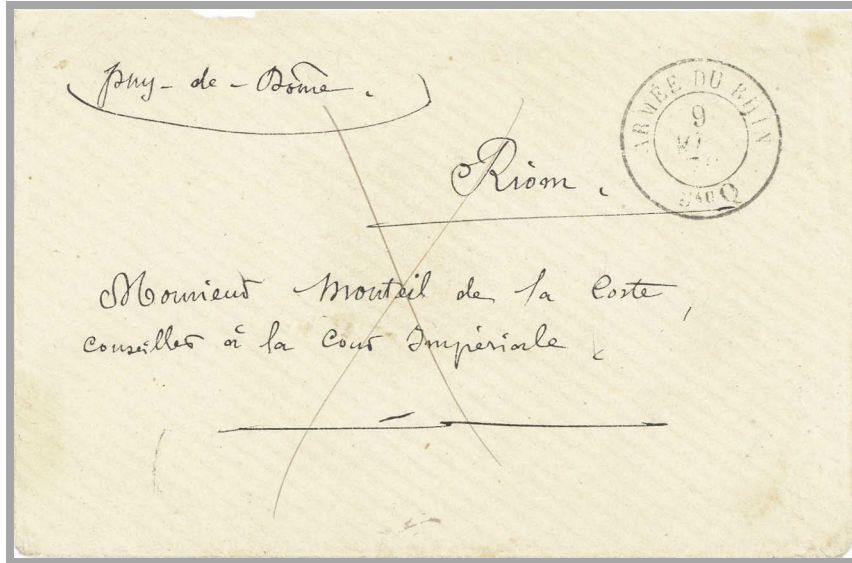
"Charge du 9^e cuirassiers" by Edouard Detaille (1874)

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

August 6 Frontier Battle at Forbach



The German 3rd, 7th and 8th Corps attacked the French 2nd Corps on August 6 at Forbach and drove them west through St. Avold.



Dated August 7 at St. Avold and posted at the 4th Corps' 2nd Division Bureau Q on August 9

Feldpost-Correspondenzkarte.

K. PR. FELD-POST-AMT
3.
ARMEE-CPS.
10 8

An
*Leutnant
 vom Regiments Wipplm Schmitt*

15'8
77-04V

*Ab-Müller
 Regt. 10* **Bestimmungsort:** *Paris*

Wohnung des Empfängers, wenn sie mit Sicherheit angegeben werden kann. *General's Egt*

1) Der obige Vordruck für die Adresse ist deutlich und vollständig auszufüllen.
 2) Die Rückseite des Formulars kann in ihrer ganzen Ausdehnung zu brieflichen Mitteilungen jeder Art benutzt werden, welche, sowie die Adresse, mit Tinte, Bleifeder oder farbigem Stifte geschrieben sein können.
 3) In den Correspondenzkarten, welche an die mobilen Truppen und Militärbeamten abgefaßt werden, muß deutlich angegeben sein: zu welchem Armeecorps, welcher Division, welchem Regimente, welcher Compagnie (oder sonstigem Truppenteile) der Adressat gehört, welchen Grad und Character oder welches Amt bei der Militärverwaltung derselbe bekleidet.

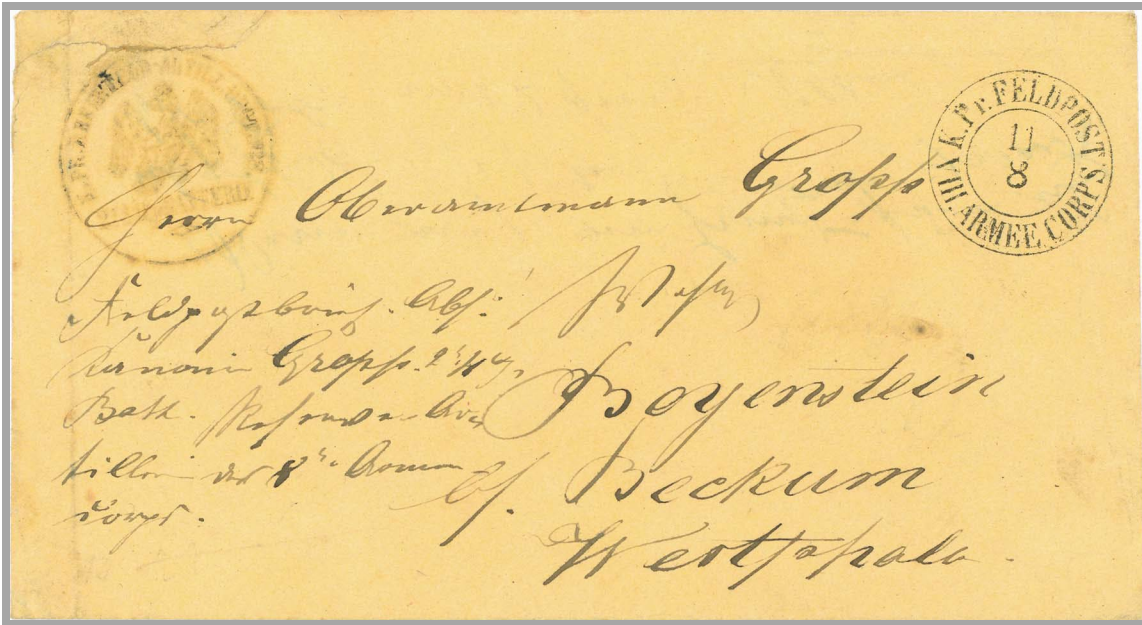
Dated August 9 at St. Avold – posted August 10 at the 3rd Corps headquarters bureau

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

German Advance on Metz: August 7-13



After the August 6 victory at Forbach, the German I and II Armies advanced west to encircle the French army in Metz.



Posted August 11 at the 8th Corps HQ bureau – from the 8th Field Artillery of the I Army
Old-style 1866 fieldpost postmark – arrived in Beckum on August 15



Posted August 13 at the 6th Cavalry Division bureau – arrived August 19 in Berlin
3rd Corps (II Army) commanding general added his sticker to the front

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

German Advance on Metz: August 7-18



The III Army advanced southwest after the August 6 victory at Wörth to approach the siege of Metz from the south. Headquarters were established at Nancy.



Dated August 18 in occupied Nancy - postmarked at III Army HQ bureau
Sent by civilian to unoccupied France - III Army was the only post in operation
Franked 20c in French postage - censored on reverse by III Army HQ staff
Routed via Prussia and Mulhouse to St. Loup on September 1



Scan of reverse at 90% - German fieldpost cancels on French stamps are rare

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

Siege of Strasbourg: August 11 – September 27



After its August 6 victory at Wörth, the III Army detached the Baden Division to capture Strasbourg. The siege began on August 11, and was reinforced by the Garde Landwehr and 1st Landwehr Divisions on August 29. After a 45-day bombardment, the city surrendered on September 27.



Dated September 5 north of Strasbourg and posted at the Garde Landwehr Division bureau
From the 2nd Garde-Landwehr Regiment – arrived September 8 in Achern



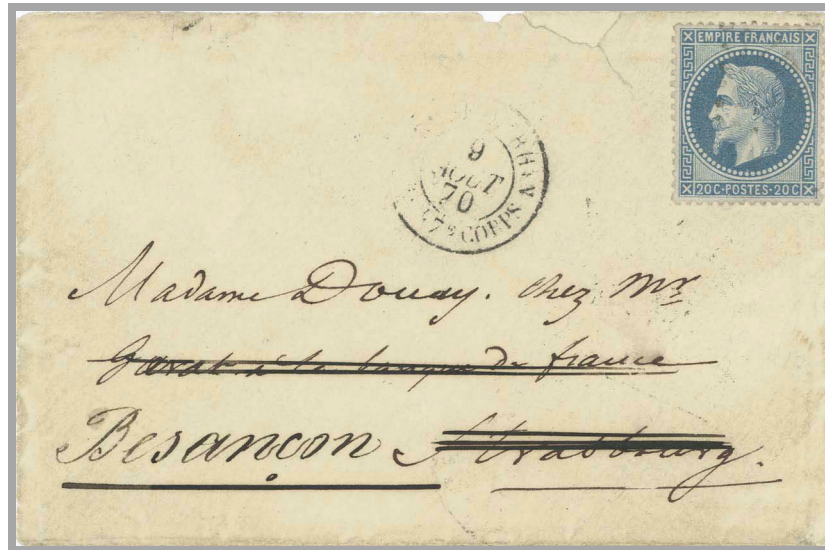
Strasbourg in ruins after the bombardment

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

Siege of Strasbourg: August 11 – September 27



Strasbourg had 17,000 men to defend the fortress. The kernel was the 87th infantry regiment, four mobilization depots and about 50 naval marines. There was no fieldpost service in the besieged city.



Postmarked August 9 at the 7th Corps headquarters bureau at Mulhouse
Unnecessarily prepaid by an 1863 Issue 20c stamp – **only known 'AR7^eC' cancel**
From General Douay, commander of the 7th Corps, to his wife at Strasbourg



(Scan of the reverse at 90%)

Arrived August 10 in Strasbourg, but Mme Douay had left so it was held
Postmarked again in Strasbourg on August 11 and trapped by the German siege
Finally forwarded after the siege to Besançon on October 8

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

Siege of Strasbourg: August 11 – September 27



The Red Cross assisted the population during the bombardment, and carried out the only known line-crosser letters or postcards.



Dated September 11 in Strasbourg by naval officer – **confided to visiting Swiss delegation**
Posted September 17 in Berne – arrived September 25 in Vendôme with 5 décimes due



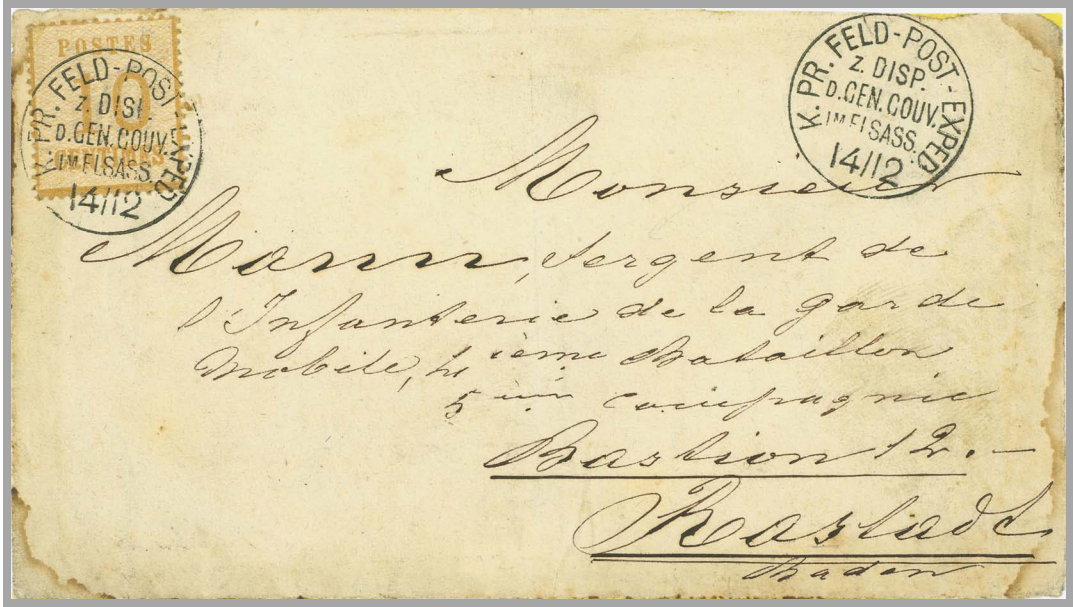
Red Cross card datelined August 20 and posted August 26 in Rastatt – marked free per “B.S.P.”

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

Occupation of Strasbourg: September 27 – March 7



The 1st Landwehr Division occupied Strasbourg after the siege under the command of the Governor-General of Alsace.



Posted December 14 at “Gen. Gouv. im Elsass” bureau in Strasbourg – paid 10c to POW at Rastatt



Posted October 15 at 1st Landwehr Division bureau in occupied Strasbourg – arrived October 18

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

French Retreat to Metz: August 7-13



The Garde Impériale and the 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 6th Corps retreated to the fortified city of Metz. Napoléon III was in command there from July 28 to August 16.



Dated August 10 at the HQ in Metz and postmarked at the "Bureau Spécial de l'Empereur"
Only known example from this bureau in this war – in operation for only 37 days



Registered letter postmarked August 13 at the 3rd Cavalry Division's Bureau AK in Metz
Required 60c prepayment – 40c registration and 20c postage – 'ARAK' cancels
Virtually all letters received a free frank – **Armée du Rhin cancels are very rare**

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

August 14 Battle of Borny



The German 1st and 7th Corps of the I Army and the 9th Corps of the II Army attacked the French 3rd and 4th Corps, and a portion of the Garde Impériale, east of Metz. The French retreated into Metz.



Dated August 14 and posted two days later at the Garde Impériale 2nd Division bureau
From the 2nd Grenadier Regiment – arrived August 21 in Sallanches



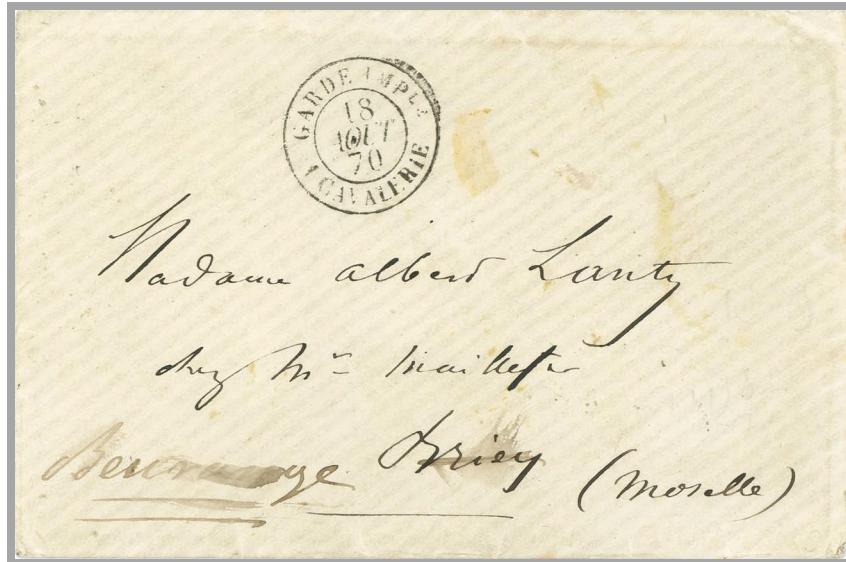
Dated October 18 at Montoy – reported the **death of a 73rd Regiment soldier on August 14**
Postmarked on October 19 at the 13th Division (7th Corps) bureau – **addressed to the USA**
Routed via Prussia and England to New York on November 8 – 22 cents due in Boston

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

August 16 Battle of Vionville



The 3rd and 9th Corps of the German II Army attacked the entire French army west of Metz. The French held the ground, but fell back on Metz.



Dated August 17 – posted next day at the Garde Impériale Cavalry bureau – arrived June 6

Feldpost - Correspondenzkarte.

4. Garde-Grenadier-Regiment **Königin**

An

Lieutenant-Loranz Schlink
Poppenhausen

Bestimmungsort: *Abbeville*
Regly Coblentz

Wohnung des Empfängers, wenn sie mit Sicherheit angegeben werden kann.

1) Der obige Vordruck für die Adresse ist deutlich und vollständig auszufüllen.
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3) In den Correspondenzarten, welche an die mobilen Truppen und Militärbeamten abgefaßt werden, muß deutlich angegeben sein: zu welchem Armeekorps, welcher Division, welchem Regimente, welcher Compagnie (oder sonstigem Truppenteile) der Adressat gehört, welchen Grad und Charakter oder welches Amt bei der Militärverwaltung derselbe bekleidet.

Dated August 16 and postmarked at the Garde-Corps Cavalry bureau

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

August 16 Battle of Vionville



The German 3rd Corps overran the French 2nd Division of the 2nd Corps at Vionville. The Germans held the battlefield after the fight.



Dated August 21 on the Vionville battlefield by a wounded French prisoner
Franked 20c French postage – postmarked August 22 at the 3rd Corps bureau
“I could not be evacuated to Metz...We are 200 or 300 wounded with the Prussians”
Routed via Prussia to northern France – arrived near Paris on August 30



Metz battle scene by Alphonse de Neuville (1881)

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

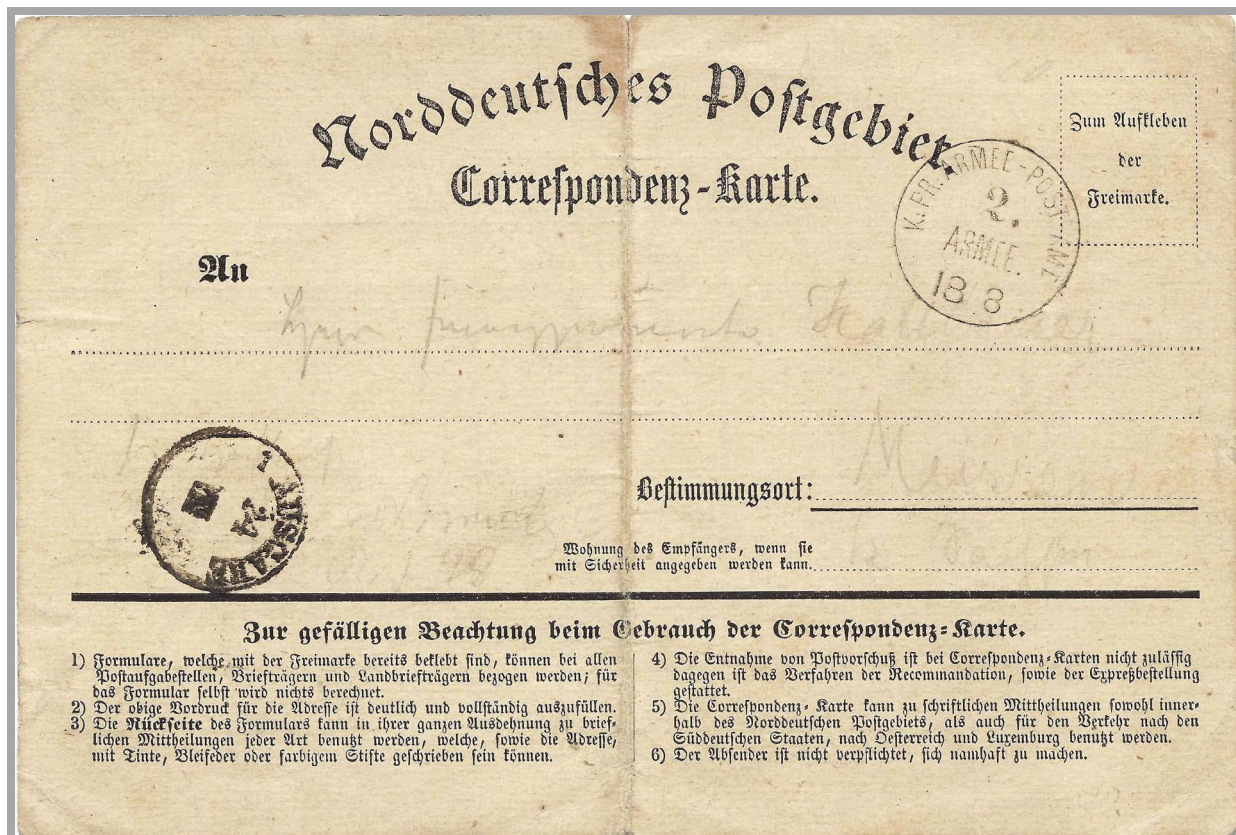
August 18 Battle of St. Privat



The German 2nd, 3rd, 9th, 10th, 12th and Garde Corps of the II Army, and the 7th and 8th Corps of the I Army attacked the entire French army. The French collapsed on the right, and retreated back into Metz



Dated August 18 and posted at the 6th Corps HQ bureau – arrived June 3, 1871



Dated "Near Metz" and posted August 18 at the II Army HQ bureau – arrived August 24

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

German Siege of Metz: August 19 – October 27



After the August 18 Battle of St. Privat, the German I and II Armies besieged Metz until its surrender on October 27.



Unusual red October 7 I Army HQ bureau postmark – blue I Army commander marking 1 décime **due on October 11 in Belgium** – forwarded to Le Mans with 3 décimes due



Postmarked September 3 at the Hessian 25th Division (II Army) bureau
Required 9 kreuzer postage paid by **2kr and 7kr North German Confederation stamps**
Arrived on September 8 in Leeds, England – red “P.D.” paid marking

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

French Defense of Metz: August 19 – October 27



The French Garde Impériale and the 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 6th Corps were trapped in Metz until their surrender on October 27.



Posted with free frank on October 10 in Metz – addressed to Général Bourbaki aide-de-camp
Received October 11 at Grand Headquarters bureau – **only known example of this postmark**



Postmarked October 16 at the postal “Bureau Central” – **franked 20c French postage**
From a cavalry officer in the 11th Dragoons of the 4th Corps – arrived April 27, 1871 in Givet

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

August 31 – September 1 Battle of Noisseville



The French 3rd, 4th and 6th Corps attempted a breakout against the 3rd Landwehr Division, 1st Corps and part of the 2nd Corps. German reinforcements from the 7th and 9th Corps pushed the French back into Metz on September 1.

Feldpost-Correspondenzkarte.

An

Monsieur Hubert

member du Conseil général

France

Bestimmungsort: *Lannion (Cotes du Nord)*

Wohnung des Empfängers, wenn sie mit Sicherheit angegeben werden kann.

1) Der obige Vordruck für die Adresse ist deutlich und vollständig auszufüllen.
2) Die Rückseite des Formulars kann in ihrer ganzen Ausdehnung zu brieflichen Mittheilungen jeder Art benutzt werden, welche, sowie die Adresse, mit Tinte, Bleistift oder farbigem Stifte geschrieben sein können.
3) In den Correspondenzkarten, welche an die mobilen Truppen und Militärbeamten abgefandt werden, muß deutlich angegeben sein: zu welchem Armee-Corps, welcher Division, welchem Regimente, welcher Compagnie (oder sonstigem Truppentheile) der Adressat gehört, welchen Grad und Character oder welches Amt bei der Militärverwaltung derselbe bekleidet.

PRUSSE
18
SEPT.
EQUETTES

K. PR. FELD-POST-AMT
7.
K. ARMEE-CORPS
13 9

MOIN

Dated September 11 at Remilly by a 4th Corps artillery captain **captured at Noisseville**
Postmarked September 13 at the 7th Corps bureau outside of Metz – blue 7th Corps censor mark
Routed via Prussia to Paris on September 18 per blue entry mark – **trapped in the Paris siege**
Carried out of Paris siege by postman Létoile on September 20 – arrived September 23



“Surprise Attack in Metz” by Alphonse de Neuville

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

Siege of Metz Balloon Service: September 5-15



The first Metz balloon service was created by military pharmacists on September 5 and lasted ten days. They launched 14 unmanned balloons, of which eight were captured. Only 25 letters are known.



Dated September 7 in Metz - **5th Pharmacists' balloon** left September 10 with 40 letters
Mail was recovered near Lille and processed there on September 19 – no Paris arrival mark
This is the only letter known from this balloon



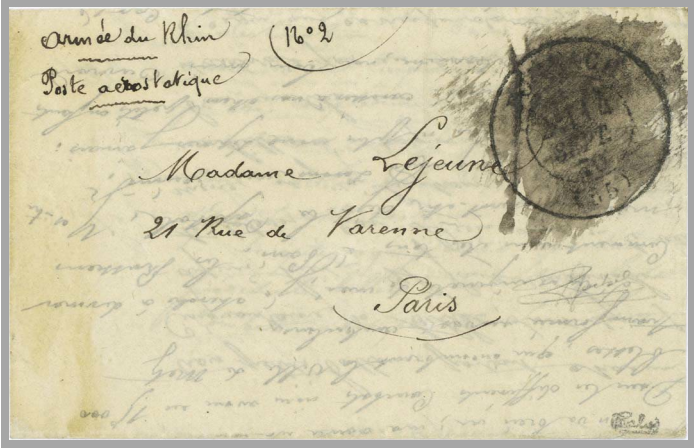
Print of a Papillon de Metz

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

Siege of Metz Balloon Service: September 5-15



Some recovered letters, or “papillons,” were forwarded inside of another envelope, or “envelope de réexpédition.” Fewer than 15 from the pharmacists’ service are known.



Dated September 8 in Metz - **6th Pharmacists’ balloon** left September 11 with 50 letters
Postmarked September 14 in occupied Forbach – then defaced to conceal French origin

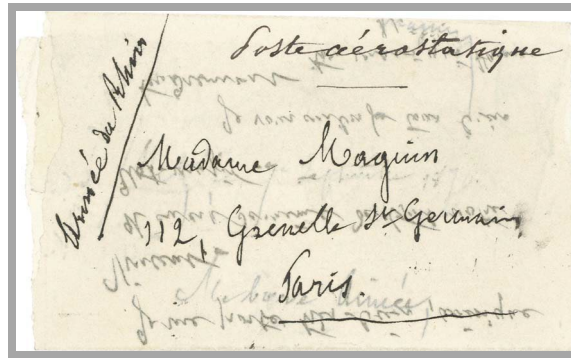


Placed in above envelope and posted unpaid on September 15 in nearby Saarbrücken, Prussia
Routed via Prussia to Paris on September 18 per blue entry mark – **caught in the Paris siege**
Carried out of siege by postmen Brare and Gême on September 21 – arrived September 23

Escaped from two different sieges

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

Siege of Metz Balloon Service: September 5-15



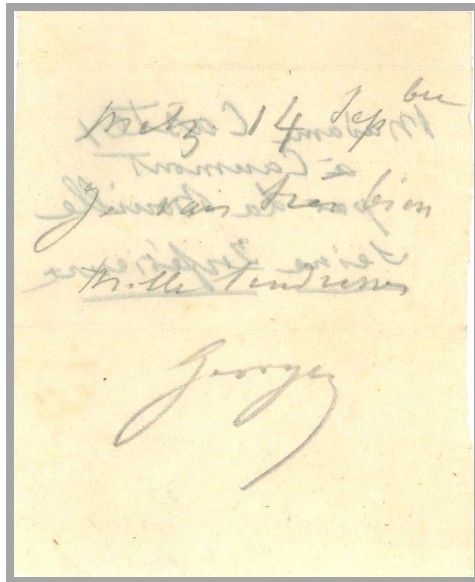
Dated September 7 in Metz - **7th Pharmacists' balloon** left September 11 with 63 letters
Captured on landing in Germany and forwarded to German headquarters at Versailles
Carried under flag-of-truce into besieged Paris on October 14 by U.S. diplomatic courier



Given to 14th Corps officer - posted October 15 in Paris with a note in the above envelope

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

Siege of Metz Balloon Service: September 5-15



Dated September 14 in Metz - **14th Pharmacists' balloon** left September 15 with 130 letters



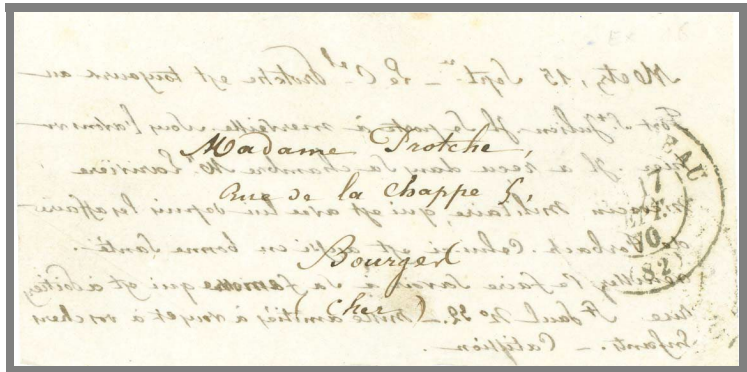
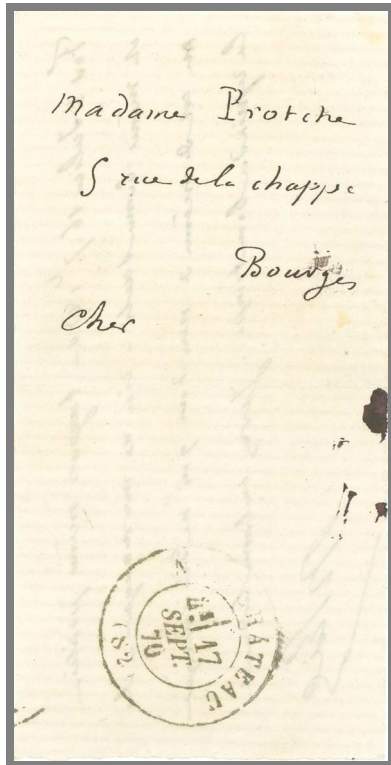
Carried to Marseille – posted September 19 in above postal envelope – arrived September 23

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

Siege of Metz Balloon Service: September 16 - October 3



The second Metz balloon service was operated by military engineers. Their first balloon left September 16 and was recovered safely near Neufchâteau. Maréchal Bazaine ended the service on October 3.

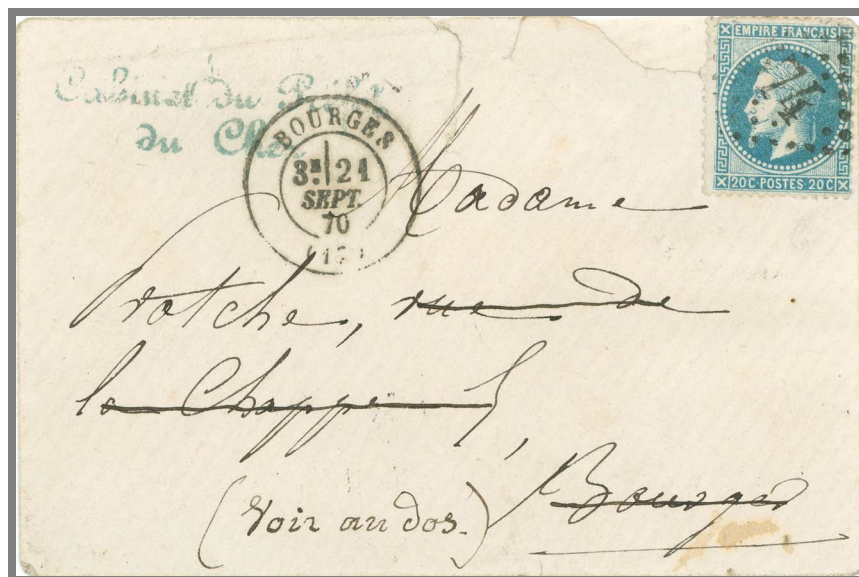


Dated September 16 from Lt-Colonel Protche (left)

Dated September 15 at Metz from Protche aide (above)

Received September 17 Neufchâteau transit marks

Both papillons enclosed in envelope (below) at Bourges



Papillons placed in above "Cabinet du Préfet du Cher" envelope for delivery in Bourges
Prepaid 20 centimes on September 21 for forwarding from Bourges to Libourne

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

Siege of Metz Balloon Service: September 16 - October 3



The 4th Engineers' balloon landed safely near Fresnes-en-Voëvre on September 21 with 30,000 papillons. Some mail was processed at Fresnes; most was processed at Tours.



Dated September 21 in Metz - September 22 Fresnes-en-Voëvre transit postmark
From George Robinson, co-inventor of the balloon service - forwarded unpaid to England
Only two papillons are known with September 22 Fresnes postmarks



Papillon placed in above British Post Office envelope - arrived September 30 with 6d due

'MUSLIN' UNDERLAY
OF A THICKNESS OF
180 MICRONS

SIEGE OF METZ

A ROBINSON ENGINEERS BALLOON

Robinson wrote in pencil a few messages
on the inside of a balloon's fabric. These
were forwarded to his wife in England under
cover of an official French postal envelope.

This balloon was launched on 20th. September.



PAPER GLUED
ON 'MUSLIN'
110 MICRONS



*Ministère des Finances
Directeur Général des Fin.*

Madame Robinson Adelaide

31 Southport

Lancashire

Angleterre

P.D.

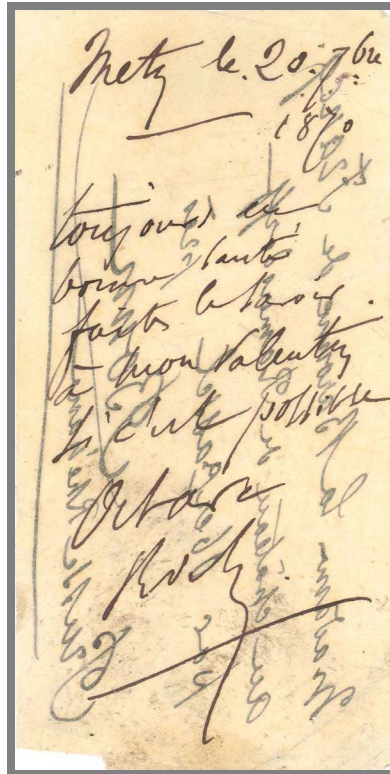
TOURNAI
1870

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

Siege of Metz Balloon Service: September 16 - October 3



Fewer than 20 papillons addressed to foreign destinations are known. Half of those were sent to Belgium or England.



Dated September 20 in Metz - 4th Engineers' balloon left September 21 with 25,000 letters
Addressed to Ober Cassel, Prussia - placed in envelope below for forwarding
Only two papillons are known addressed to Prussia



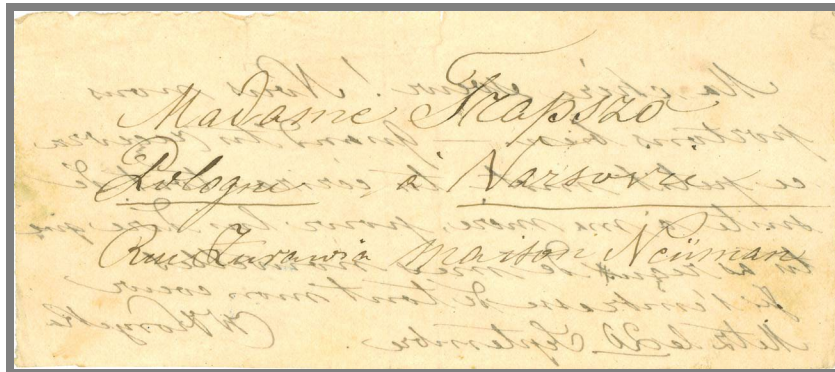
Papillon placed in envelope and posted October 2 in Dijon - arrived October 7
Rated for military free frank in France, but charged 4 groschen due in Prussia

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

Siege of Metz Balloon Service: September 16 – October 3



Dijon was designated as the exchange office for mail to the German States and Central Europe. The few papillons to those destinations were placed in forwarding envelopes at Dijon.



Dated "Metz le 20 Septembre" - 4th Engineers' balloon left September 21
Only three papillons are known addressed to Poland



Papillon was placed in above forwarding envelope - posted unpaid on October 3 in Dijon
France debited Prussia per F.42 tray marking - Prussia debited Poland 6 silbergroschen
Arrived in Warsaw, Poland on October 9 with 32 kopecks due

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

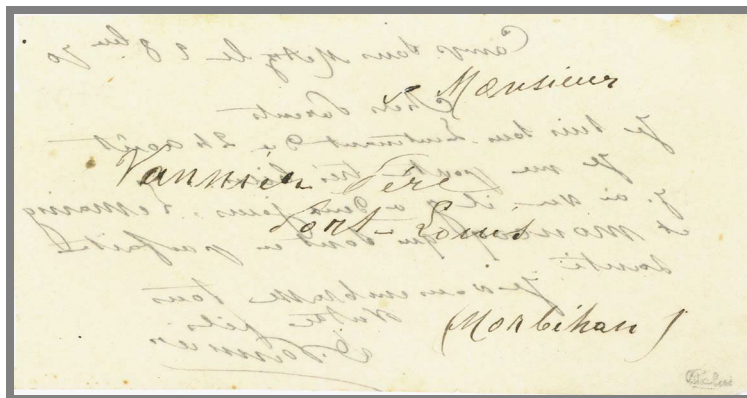
Siege of Metz Balloon Service: September 16 – October 3



After six of the eleven Engineers' balloons were captured, the service was suspended by Maréchal Bazaine on October 4 for security reasons.



Dated September 26 in Metz by George Robinson - **8th Engineers' balloon** left September 27
Landed safely near Bayonville with about 16,000 papillons - mail processed October 4 at Lille
Marked "F.S.P." for free frank in France, but rated 6 pence due in England on October 5



Dated "Camp sous Metz le 28bre 70" - **11th and last Engineers' balloon** left October 3
Balloon and 12,000 papillons were captured and confiscated by the Prussians

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

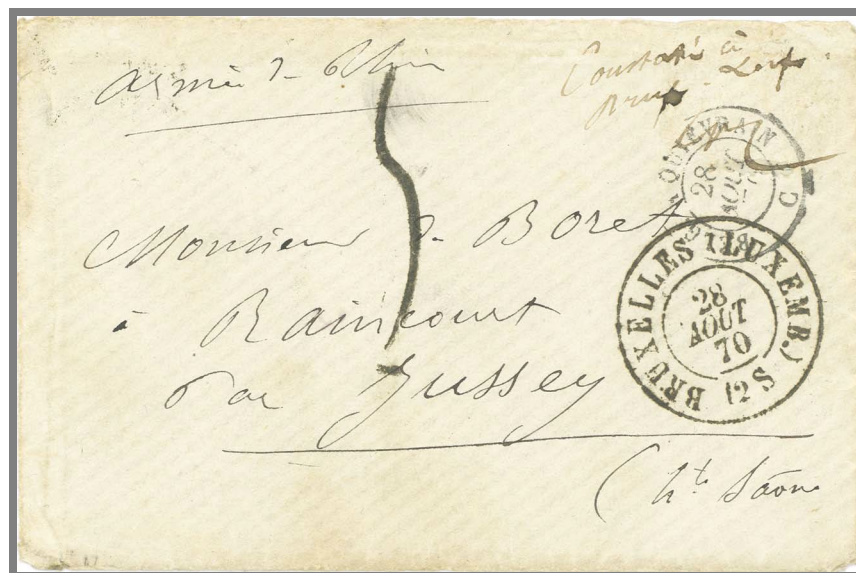
Siege of Metz Line-Crossers: August 19 - October 27



Very few line-crossers were successful in passing the strong German siege lines. Those who succeeded generally went north through occupied territory to the Belgian frontier.



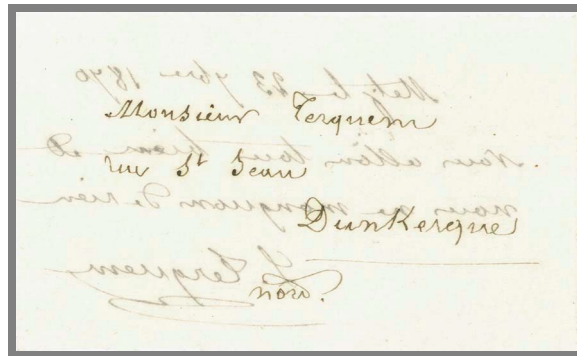
Dated September 26 at Metz by Lt.-Colonel de Narp - arrived October 3 in Douai
Flag-of-truce to Prussian 2nd Army commander - granted free frank on September 30



Dated August 20 at Metz by Colonel of 67th Regiment - given to **line-crosser via Belgium**
Posted unpaid on August 28 in Brussels - arrived August 31 in Jussey with 50c postage due

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

Siege of Metz Line-Crossers: August 19 - October 27



Dated September 23 at Metz - intended for 6th Engineers' balloon which left September 24
Placed instead inside of franked envelope below and given to a line-crosser via Belgium



(scan of reverse)

9th Brigade of Prussian 3rd Corps at Verdun **captured the line-crosser enroute to Belgium**
Sent to Frankfurt for censoring - posted there on October 3 without postage due
German postmarks are rare on French stamps

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

Surrender of Metz: October 27



Metz surrendered on October 27 and the French army began leaving for captivity two days later. This French disaster released 150,000 German soldiers for service elsewhere in France.



Dated October 31 at the French headquarters in Metz by a Garde Mobile officer
"I leave for the first stage of captivity tomorrow morning the 1st of November"
Posted prepaid 2 groschen at the newly-opened Metz post office on October 31
Routed via Prussia and Douai to Magnac-Bourg on November 8

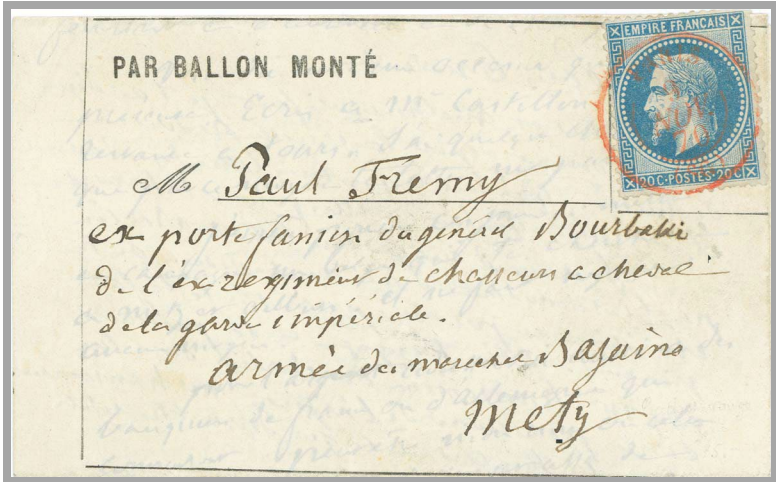


Surrender of the Armée de Metz

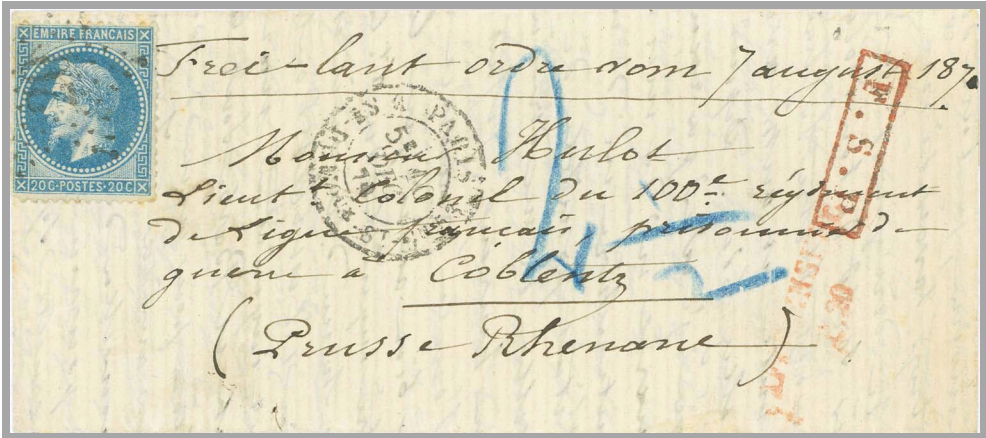
Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine
Surrender of Metz: October 27



The French military free frank caused some confusion about rates to French POWs in Germany. Fully paid rates were 30c, 40c or 50c, depending on the destination.



Posted November 6 (inverted '6' in postmark) at the Paris (SC) bureau
 Prepaid 20c balloon mail rate – left Paris November 8 on the “Gironde”
 Addressed to captured Garde Impériale cavalryman at Metz – no arrival marks

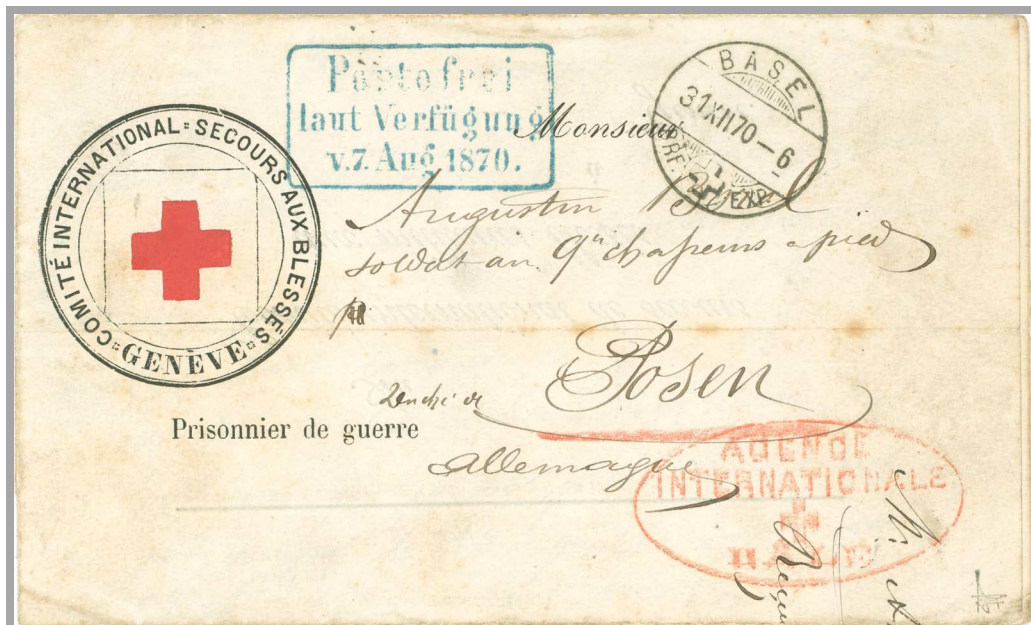


Posted December 10 in Paris – left December 11 aboard the balloon “Général Renault”
 Prepaid 20c balloon mail rate – endorsed for German free frank per “Frei” endorsement
 “F.S.P.” marking accepted 20c prepayment - addressed to captured 6th Corps Lt.-Colonel
 Germans rejected “Frei” endorsement and charged 2½ groschen postage due

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine
Surrender of Metz: October 27



Prepaid 30c in Penne on January 18 – addressed to captured 81st Regiment (3rd Corps) officer
 Routed via Basel Bahnhof (Switzerland) on January 23 – arrived January 24 in Mainz



Information request form from Geneva Red Cross – sent to captured 6th Corps soldier
 Posted December 31 in Basel, Switzerland – free frank per blue “Portofrei” marking
 Arrived January 3 in Posen, Prussia – returned on February 4 by the prisoner

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

Siege of Neuf-Brisach: October 7 – November 10



The 4th Reserve Division was formed in Baden on September 20. It crossed the Rhine on October 2 and besieged Neuf-Brisach five days later. The Germans began a bombardment on October 7, and the city surrendered just over a month later.



Posted October 28 at the 4th Reserve Division bureau outside of Neuf-Brisach
From the 3rd Reserve Ulanen Regiment – Arrived October 31 in Berlin



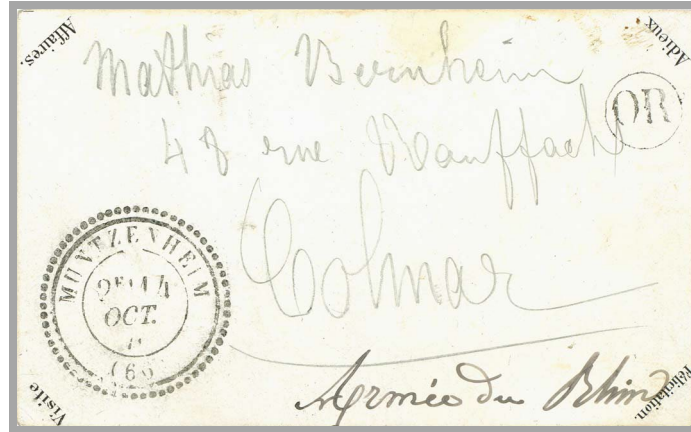
"Captured Dispatch Carrier" by Alphonse de Neuville (1880)

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

Siege of Neuf-Brisach: October 7 - November 10



Line-crossers carried messages from besieged Neuf-Brisach to nearby towns for forwarding. Most of the few surviving messages are written on cut-down stiff cards.



Carte-de-visite datelined October 12 in Neuf-Brisach – endorsed “Armée du Rhin”
Posted October 14 at nearby Muntzenheim – **fewer than 15 cards are known**



Datelined “Neuf-Brisach ce 21 Octobre” by Lt. Robert of the Garde Mobile du Rhône
Posted October 21 at nearby Mulhouse – arrived October 24 in Lyon

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

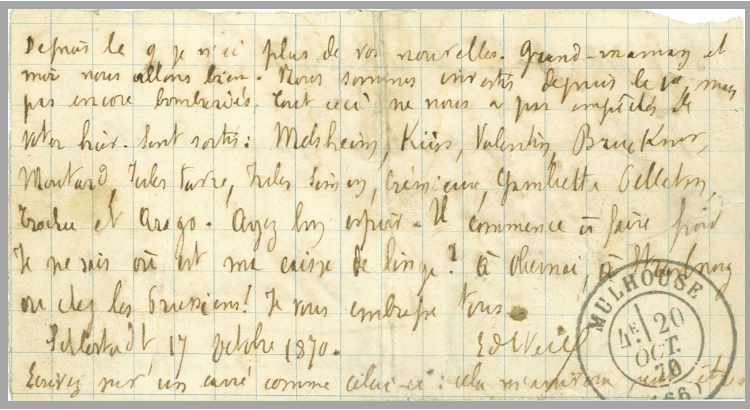
Siege of Schlestadt: October 10-24



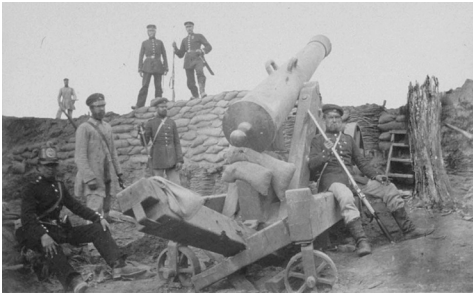
The East Prussia Brigade of the 4th Reserve Division began the siege on October 10. The German bombardment began on October 20 and the city surrendered four days later.



Postmarked October 17 in Schlestadt and prepaid 20c postage to Marseille October 20 Mulhouse transit – **only two letters are known from this siege**



Scan of reverse (90%)



German Siege Artillery

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

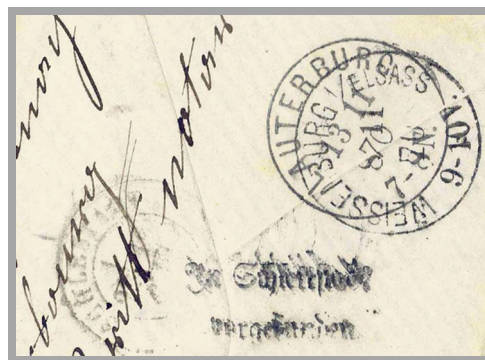
Siege of Schlestadt: October 10-24



Mail blocked by the siege of Strasbourg was held in Schlestadt during its siege, but was released after the October 24 surrender. The German cachet "In Schlettstadt vorgefunden" (found at Schlestadt) was applied and the mail was finally delivered to Strasbourg on October 30.



Posted August 15 in St. Dié des Vosges and addressed to besieged Strasbourg
Postmarked August 16 at Schlestadt - held there through the October 10-24 siege
Marked "In Schlettstadt vorgefunden" and released to Strasbourg
Forwarded to Lauterbourg on November 13 with 30c occupation postage due



Scan of reverse (110%)

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

Siege of Belfort: November 4 – February 16



The October 27 surrender of Metz released the 1st Landwehr Division from Strasbourg for the siege of Belfort, which began on November 4. After holding out for three and a half months, Belfort capitulated on February 16, 1871.



Posted December 26 at the 1st Landwehr Division bureau outside of Belfort
From a siege artillery unit – arrived December 28 in Gerabronn, Württemberg



“Entry of the Germans in Belfort” by Alphonse de Neuville (1881)

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

Siege of Belfort: November 4 – February 16



The Germans maintained a tight siege. Even so, line-crossers via France or nearby Switzerland were able to pass through the lines regularly.



Dated December 12 at Belfort - posted at the Armée de l'Est fieldpost bureau
From the secretary to the captain payeur for the Garde Mobile du Rhône in Belfort
Received a military free frank per red 'P.P.' – arrived December 19 in Lyon



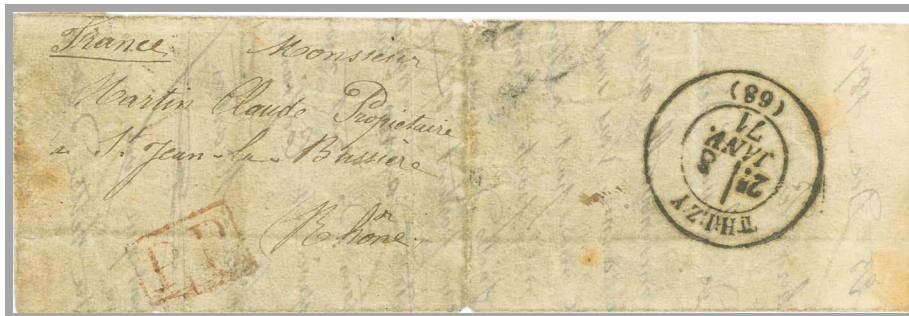
Posted with a free frank on November 4 in Belfort – arrived November 15
From a Garde Mobile du Rhône using an Armée du Rhin envelope

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

Siege of Belfort: November 4 – February 16



After the December 25-27 unsuccessful attempts, two unmanned balloons were released from Belfort on December 30. One was captured and the other was recovered in Switzerland on January 6.



Dated December 25 in Belfort – **“Je profite de l’essai d’un Ballon...”**
Red ‘P.P.’ for a military free frank – arrived January 8 in Thizy



Posted on December 25 in Belfort by a civilian using the military balloon post
Arrived January 10 in Angoulême with 30c postage due

Six letters are known from the Belfort balloon service; two have Belfort postmarks

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

Siege of Belfort: November 4 – February 16



Line-crossers carried mail across the lines to nearby French towns or to Porrentruy, Switzerland.



Dated November 22 in Belfort – carried to Porrentruy on November 24
Arrived November 27 in Belleville with 50c due – unpaid rate from Switzerland



Dated November 22 in Belfort – line-crosser left mail at Hérimoncourt on November 28
From Dr. Martel, surgeon at the Fort de la Miotte – **only known franked line-crosser letter**

Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

Siege of Belfort: November 4 – February 16



Incoming line-crosser mail followed the same routes as outgoing mail. Much less inbound mail is known.



Colonel Denfert

Dated December 1 in Mulhouse – military free frank per red 'P.P.'
Military intelligence sent to **Colonel Denfert-Rochereau, commander at Belfort**



Prepaid 30c Swiss rate at Chalon-s-Saône – **addressed to Belfort via Porrentruy**
January 17 Geneva transit postmark – docketed January 28 arrival in Belfort
To Comte de Chardonnet with the Garde Mobile de la Haute Saône

Campaign in the Ardennes

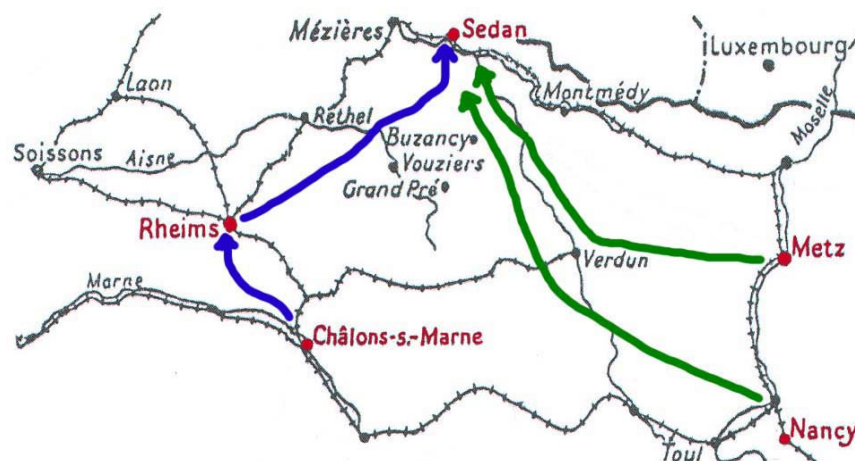
Historical Summary: August 7 – September 1



- French Armée de Châlons (1st, 5th, 7th, 12th and 13th Corps) was assembled at Châlons-s-Marne August 7-21.
- German IV Army was formed on August 19 at Metz.
- Armée de Châlons moved to Reims on August 21.
- German III and IV Armies left Nancy and Metz on August 21.
- Armée de Chalons left Reims on August 23 for Montmédy.
- German III and IV Armies swung north on August 25.
- French 5th Corps was routed northeast of Buzancy on August 30, so the Armée de Châlons retreated to Sedan.
- Armée de Châlons surrendered on September 1 at Sedan.



Posted August 19 at a 7th Corps bureau in Châlons – arrived August 20 near Paris
Unnecessary **20c franking cancelled 'P.P.'** – no fieldpost cancel was available



Movements of the French (blue) and German (green) armies

Campaign in the Ardennes

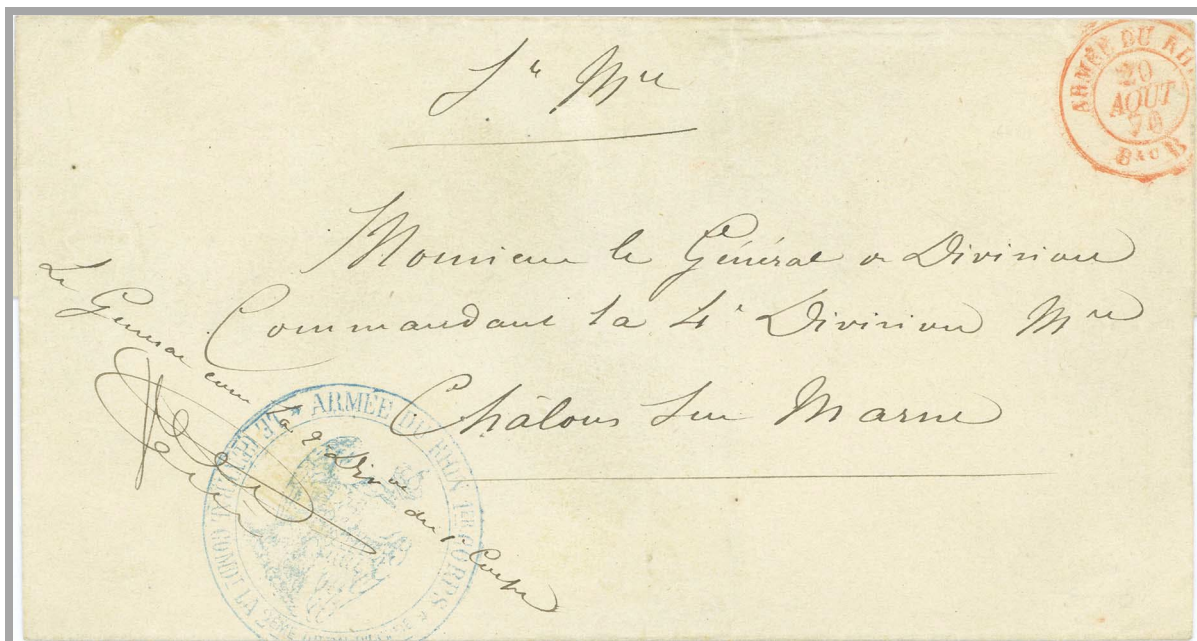
French Concentration at Châlons: August 7-21



The 1st and 7th Corps retained their fieldpost materials. The 5th Corps lost theirs during the retreat from the frontier. The newly-formed 12th and 13th Corps were not provided with fieldposts at Châlons.



Posted August 17 at the 1st Corps' Cavalry Division Bureau E at Neufchâteau – arrived August 19
The 1st Corps retreated from Wörth via Neufchâteau to Châlons on August 19



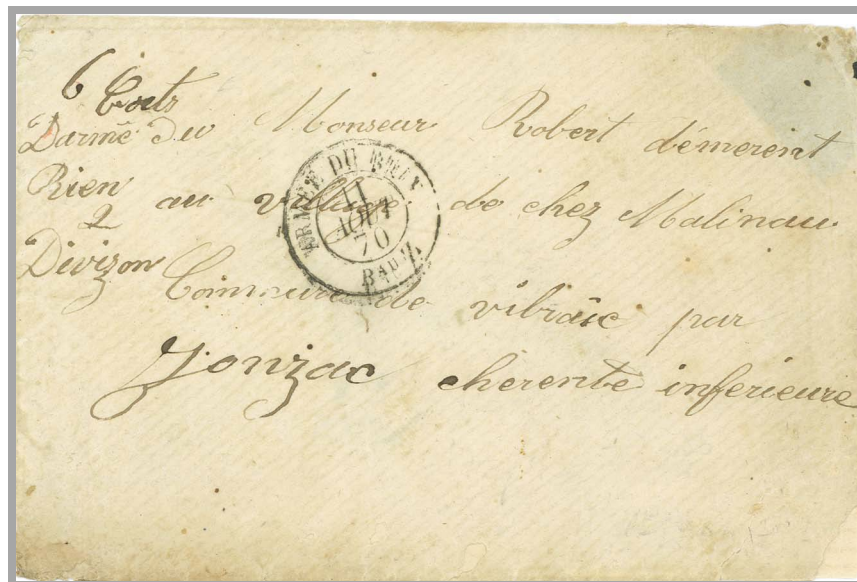
Posted August 20 at the 1st Corps' 2nd Division Bureau B at Châlons – **red postmark**
Endorsed by Général Pellé, commander of the 2nd Division – sent locally

Campaign in the Ardennes

French Concentration at Châlons: August 7-21



Posted August 18 at the 7th Corps HQ bureau enroute to Chaumont
Private 7th Corps handstamp - arrived August 21 in Arametz



Dated August 10 at Châlons camp by a soldier in the 20th Regiment
Posted with military free frank on August 11 at the 6th Corps' 2nd Division Bureau Z
2nd Division was unable to join the 6th Corps at Metz – became part of the 12th Corps

Campaign in the Ardennes

French Concentration at Châlons: August 7-21



The 13th Corps, formed at Paris in August, was built around the 35th and 42nd infantry regiments, which had been called to Paris from occupation duty in Rome on August 3. They had their own fieldpost service in Rome.



Posted July 28 at the "Corps Expédre d'Italie Rome" bureau – arrived July 30
The required 20c franking was cancelled 'CER' in red



Posted unpaid on July 26 at the "Corps Expédre Rome 2" bureau – arrived July 30
Not eligible for the July 24 free frank – 30c postage due

Campaign in the Ardennes

French Concentration at Châlons: August 7-21



When the Rome garrison was called to active duty on August 3, it became eligible for the July 24 military free frank. Such mail is known during the two-week period ending August 18, when the last troops returned to France.



Posted with a military free frank on August 4 at the "Corps Expédre Rome 2" bureau
Rated paid per 'PD' marking – arrived August 7 – **only 3 free franked covers are known**



Dated August 15 at Civita Vecchia – "nous sommes seul à Civita Va avec l'administration"
Posted with a military free frank on August 18 at the "Corps Expédre Rome 2" bureau
Latest known use from this bureau - arrived on August 21

Campaign in the Ardennes

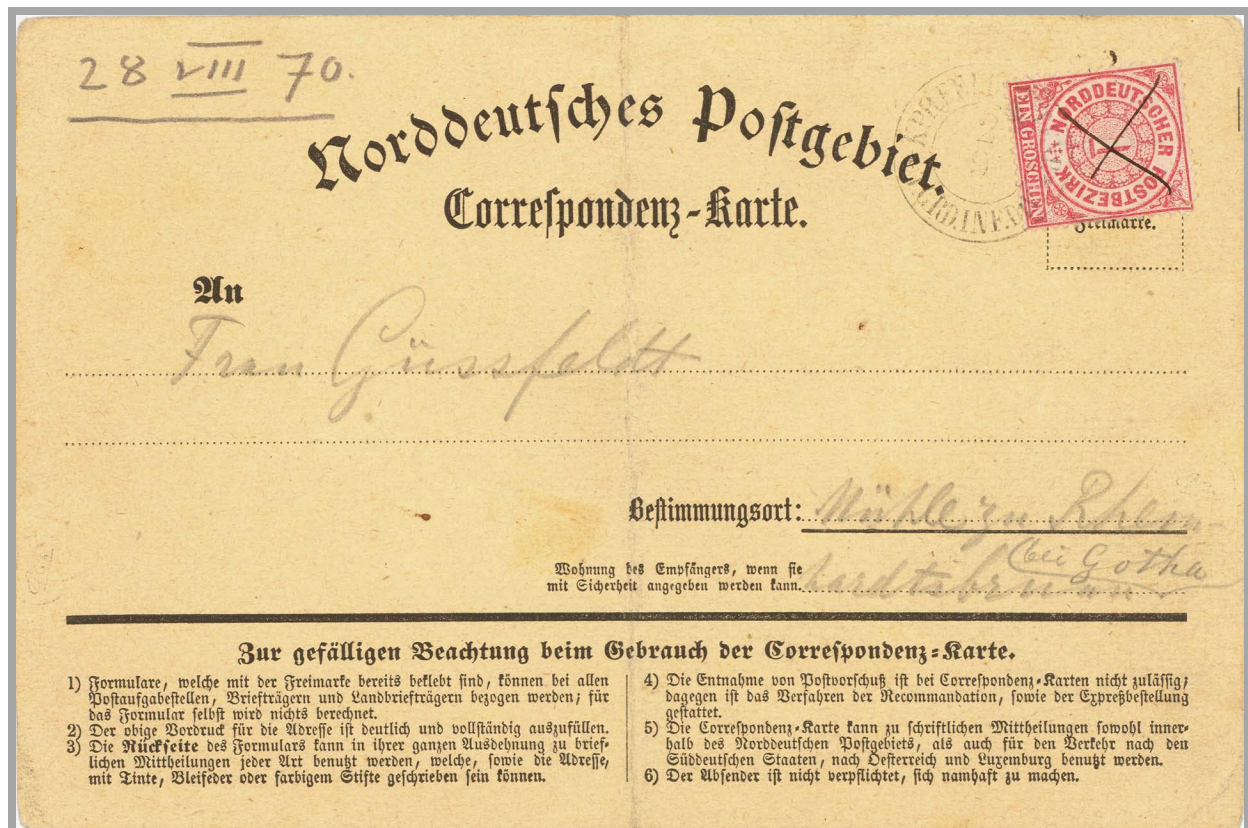
German Advance to Sedan: August 23 – September 1



The German III and IV Armies advanced from Nancy and Metz on August 23 to pursue the Armée de Châlons through the Ardennes.



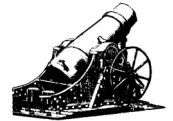
Posted August 28 at the 22nd Division (III Army) bureau – arrived August 30 in Frankfurt



Dated Clermont August 28 - prepaid 1 groschen at the 1st Garde Infantry Division (IV Army)

Campaign in the Ardennes

Siege of Verdun: September 23 – November 8



During its pursuit of the Armée de Châlons, the IV Army passed by Verdun on August 24 and unsuccessfully attempted to capture the fortress. It left a small force, which was reinforced on September 23 to begin the siege. Verdun surrendered on November 8.



Dated October 30 at Verdun – carried through the siege line to Belgium
Posted unpaid at Virton, Belgium on November 3 with 2 décimes postage due
From a sergeant in the Garde Mobile artillery – arrived November 8 in Montélimar
Only letter known from this siege



Print of the German occupation of Verdun

Campaign in the Ardennes

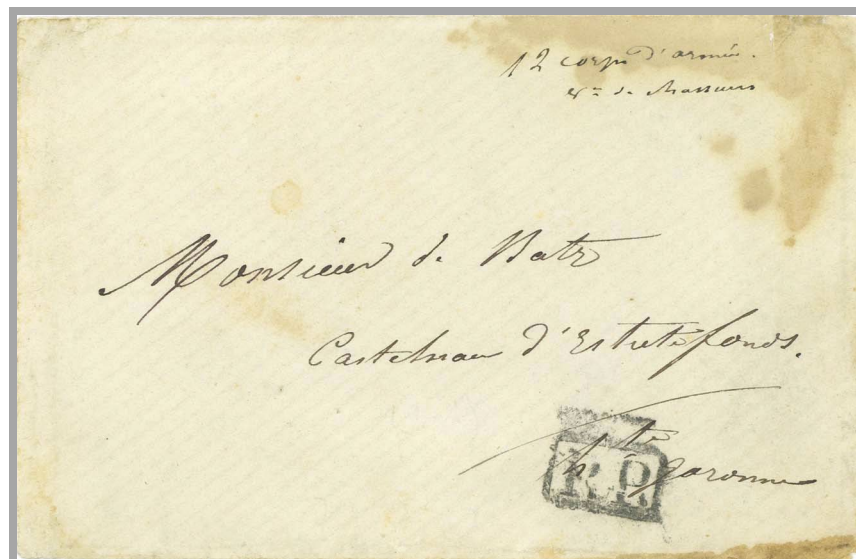
French Advance to Sedan: August 23 – September 1



On August 23, the Armée de Châlons left Reims to lift the siege of French army in Metz. The plan was to advance northeast and trap the German II Army between the two French armies.



Posted August 25 at the 7th Corps' 1st Division Bureau AF – arrived August 28
The 7th Corps was holding the southern flank at Vouziers



Dated August 26 at Reithel by a 4th Chasseurs d'Afrique cavalry officer
Taken by 12th Corps payeur to Reithel for posting with 'P.P.' – arrived August 28
The 12th Corps was in existence for only 17 days and had no fieldpost markings

Campaign in the Ardennes

French Advance to Sedan: August 23 – September 1



On August 30, the Germans routed the 5th Corps northeast of Buzancy, so the Armée de Châlons retreated north to Sedan. Their latest fieldpost postmarks are dated on August 29.



Posted August 29 at the 1st Corps' 1st Division Bureau A south of Sedan
20c franking cancelled 'IB' (Irun-Bordeaux ambulante) - arrived September 2



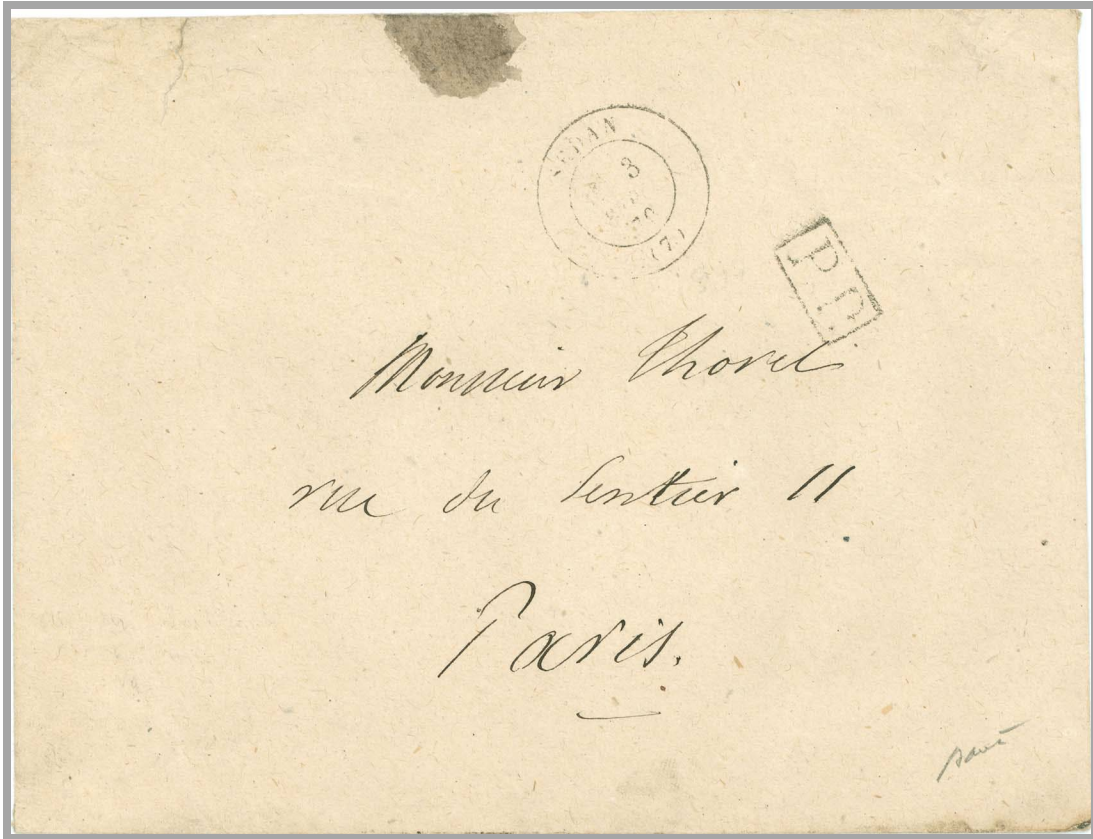
Posted August 29 at the 1st Corps' 2nd Division Bureau B – **red postmark**
The 1st Corps was at Raucourt enroute to Sedan

Campaign in the Ardennes

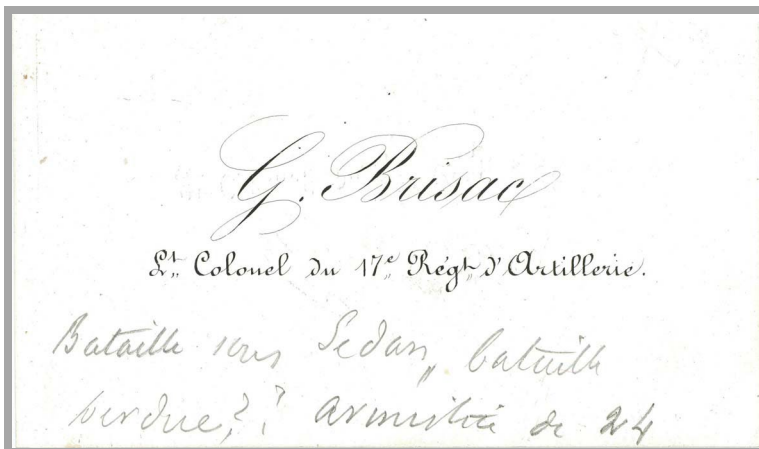
September 1 Battle of Sedan



At 5pm on September 1, Napoléon III surrendered with 110,000 French soldiers. It was one of the greatest military disasters in French history. Only the 13th Corps escaped the encirclement.



Posted September 3 in Sedan with a military free frank per the 'P.P.' marking
From captured artillery officer – smuggled November 13 to Givet for forwarding



Carte de visite with scribbled note written on September 1

Campaign in the Ardennes

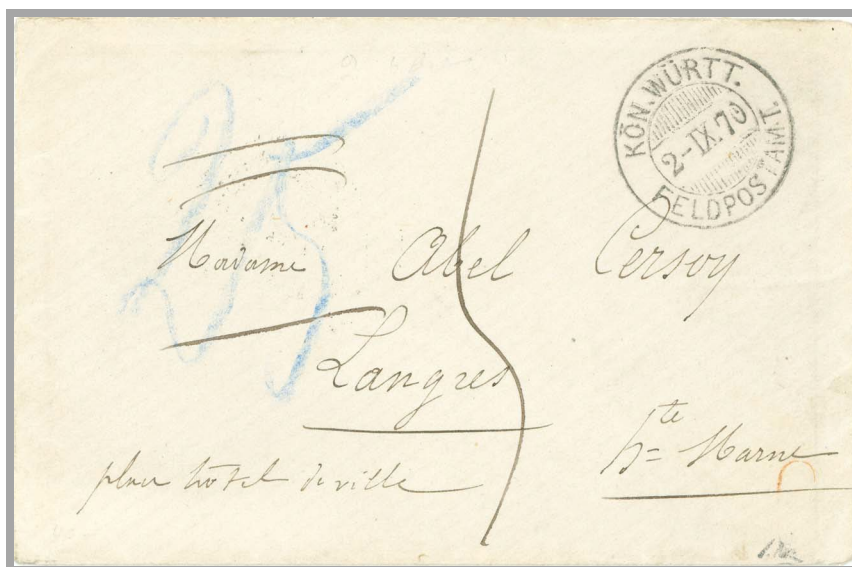
September 1 Battle of Sedan



Following the French surrender at Sedan, the German III and IV Armies collected the large number of French prisoners and made preparations for an advance on Paris.



Dated from the 10th French ambulance at Raucourt, near Sedan
Postmarked on September 2 at the 4th Bavarian Division's Bayer VI bureau
4 décimes postage due in Brussels, Belgium on September 9



Posted September 2 at the Württemberg Division's HQ bureau at Sedan
From Captain Cersoy of the 8th Lancers (7th Corps) – arrived October 7 with 50c due

Campaign in the Ardennes

Aftermath of the Battle of Sedan

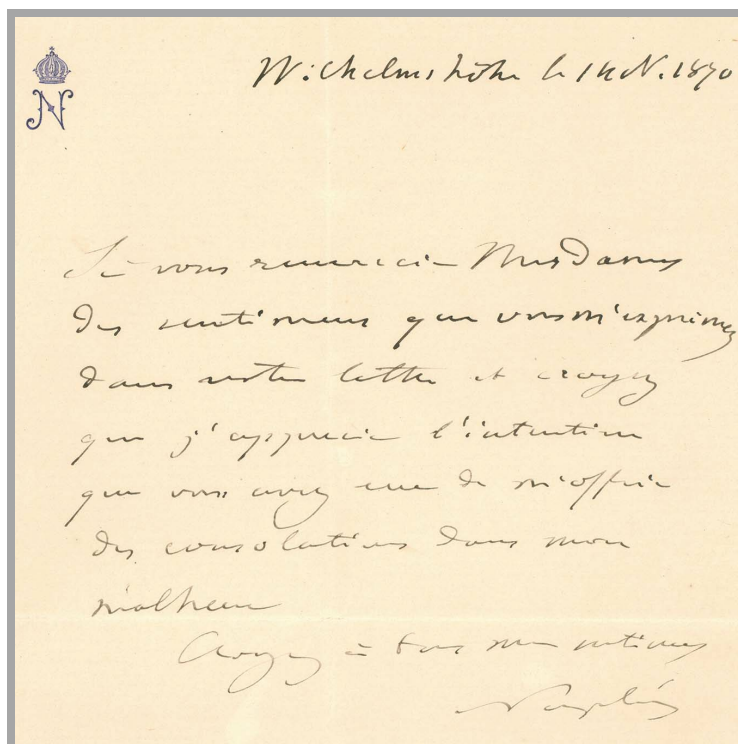


The most notable prisoner from Sedan was Emperor Napoléon III. He was taken to captivity at Wilhelmshöhe castle (near Cassel) until March 19, 1871. He never returned to his throne.



Napoléon III

Posted November 14 at Cassel - prepaid 2½ groschen in North German Confederation stamps
Letter from prisoner Napoléon III – arrived November 17 in Fareham, England



Scan of the letter at 85%

Campaign in the Ardennes

Aftermath of the Battle of Sedan



Officers of the Armée de Châlons were given the option of going into captivity with their men, or going free by giving their word not to fight again in the war. Only 550 officers gave such a parole.



Posted November 24 at the Paris (SC) bureau – left on the balloon “Ville d’Orléans”
Addressed to Général Douay, commander of the 7th Corps, captured at Sedan
Prepaid 30c rate to Mannheim – arrived December 18, but Douay had moved
Forwarded 5 times – **Coblentz and Cassel POW camp markings** on the reverse



“Bataille de Sedan” by Hubert Cloutier (1901)

Campaign in the Ardennes

Aftermath of the Battle of Sedan



A large number of French soldiers escaped capture at Sedan by crossing over the nearby Belgian frontier. Once in Belgium, they were disarmed and interned for the duration of the war.



Posted September 26 in Laeken, Belgium – prepaid 30c rate to France
From a 5th Corps soldier who escaped on September 16 – arrived October 1



Posted January 27 in Liège, Belgium – prepaid **10c concession rate** for French soldiers
From 1st Corps soldier interned in Liège – arrived February 1 in Montmarault

Campaign in the Ardennes

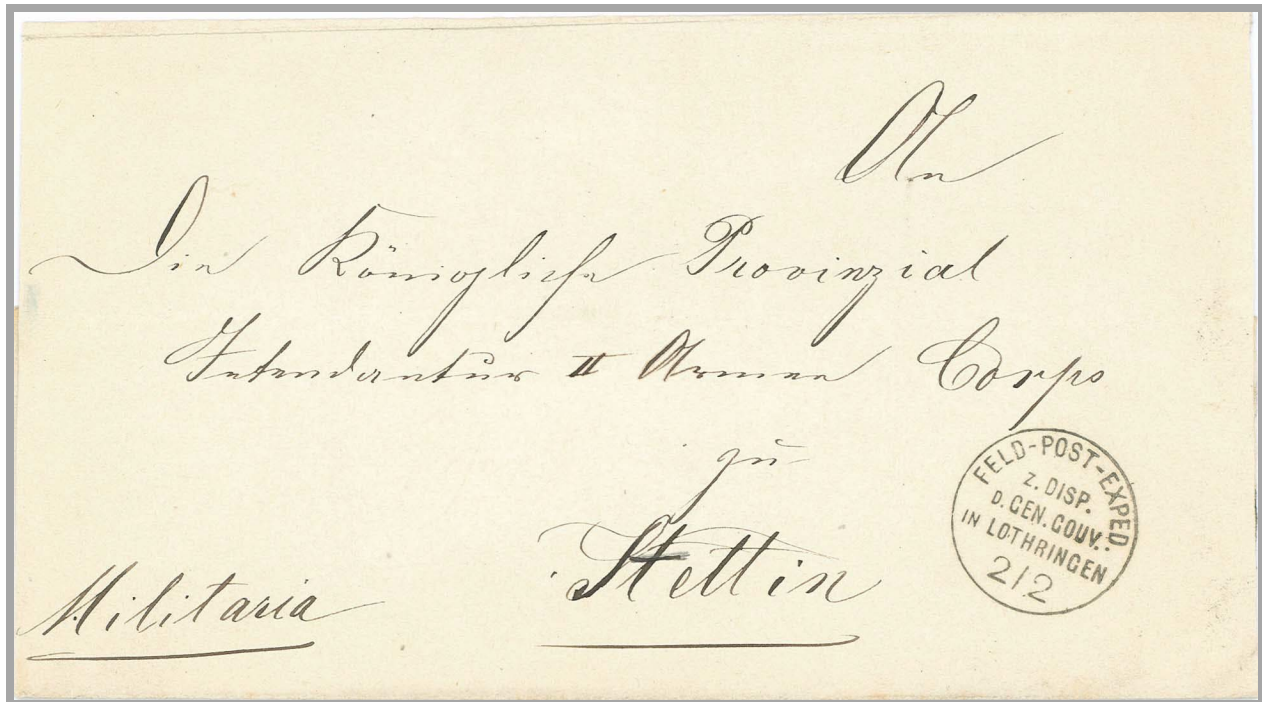
German Reserve Army: September 25 – March 7



The Reserve Army was based at Reims to protect supply lines. Mecklenburg's Corps was replaced there by the 2nd Landwehr Division.



Posted September 30 at the Mecklenburg Corps bureau at Reims – **only example known**
The Mecklenburg Corps became the 13th Corps and joined the Paris siege on October 28



Posted February 2 at the Lorraine Governor-General's bureau in Reims – **scarce bureau**
Governor-General commanded the Reserve Army at Reims - arrived February 6

Campaign in the Ardennes

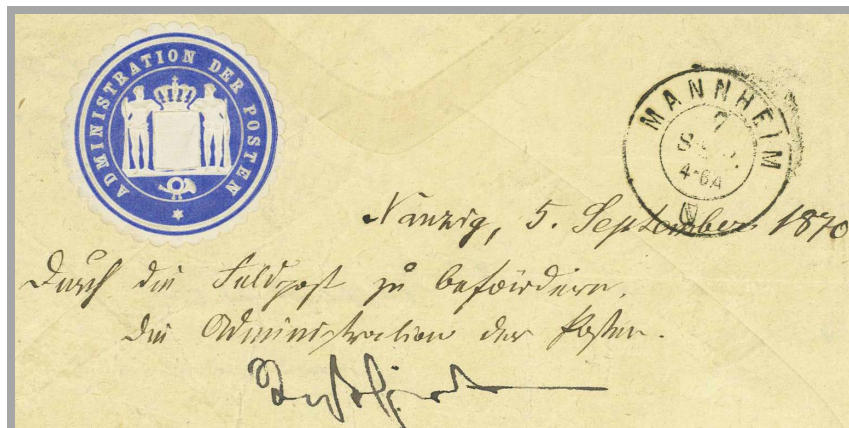
German Reserve Army: August 23 – March 7



The III Army left a reserve force at Nancy under a Governor-General. It used the 8th Corps Avantgarde fieldpost postmark.



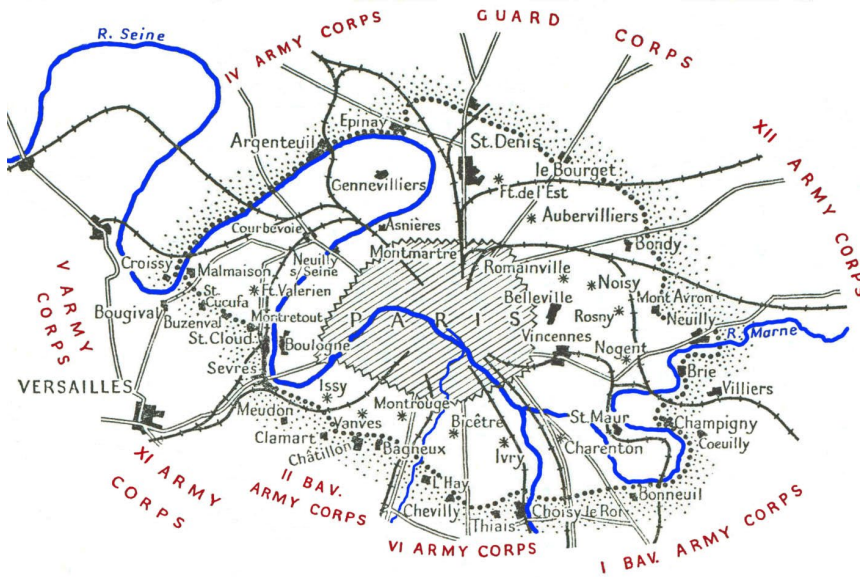
Censored September 5 at Nancy and transferred to the fieldpost administration
Franked by 10c and 20c Alsace-Lorraine Issue stamps **four days before their official issue**
Postmarked September 6 at the 8th Corps Avantgarde bureau used by the Governor-General
Arrived September 7 in Baden – **earliest known use of Alsace-Lorraine stamps**



Scan of reverse at 85%.

The Postal History of the Campaign for Paris during the 1870-71 Franco-Prussian War

Background: On September 18, 1870, the 180,000 men of the German III and IV Armies cut postal communications with Paris and began the siege a day later. Paris was protected by external forts and a 500,000-man garrison consisting of 80,000 regular army soldiers, 110,000 reservists in the Garde Mobile and 300,000 national guards. After many small combats and two failed breakouts, the Parisian army surrendered on January 28, 1871.



Map of the initial German siege positions (in red). French external forts are denoted by stars

Postal Background: The French and Germans provided fieldpost services for their regular army units. Other French military units used civilian post offices to send their mail. Mail sent outside of Paris was carried by manned balloons over the German siege line.



October 10 letter endorsed "Armée de Paris" by a Garde Mobile de la Vienne

Scope, Study and Presentation: This exhibit is organized by military unit or military activity, which is identified in the sub-headings. Text boxes provide historical or postal background, and greater detail is provided in the body of the page. Icons at the upper right identify French or German armies, or battles between them.

Campaign for Paris

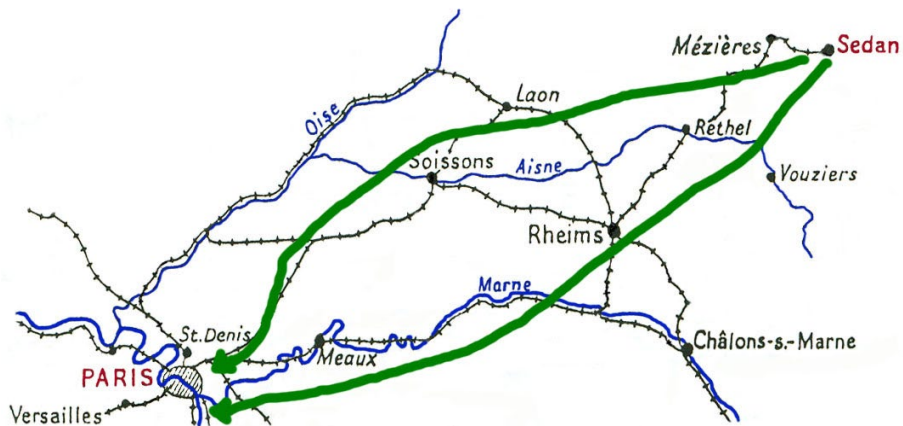
German Advance on Paris: September 3-18



The German III and IV Armies left Sedan on September 3 for an advance via Laon and Reims to Paris. On September 19, the III Army completed the siege line south of Paris, while the IV Army occupied the northern sector.



Dated near Meaux on September 16 – posted next day at the Grand Headquarters bureau
From the 10th Grenadier Regiment of the 6th Corps (III Army) – arrived September 22



Map of the advance (in green) of the III and IV Armies from Sedan to Paris

Campaign for Paris

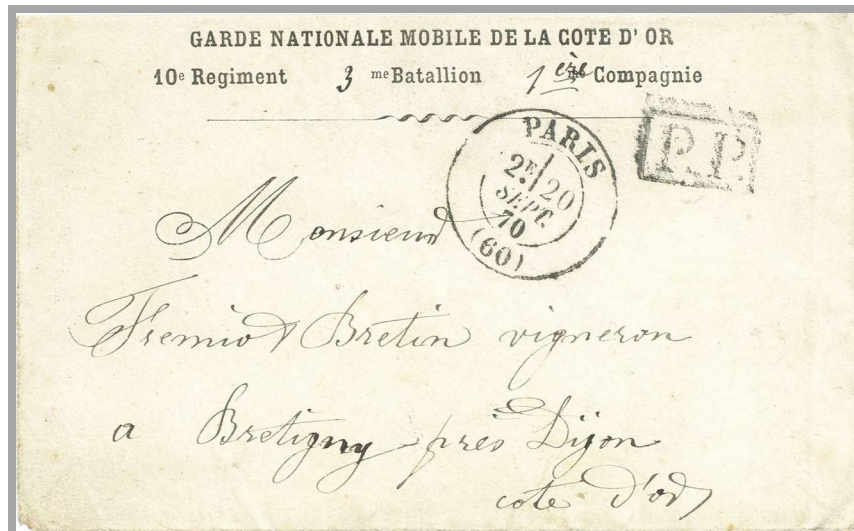
Start of the Paris Siege: September 18-19



The last rail connection was cut after 5pm on September 18, and the German investment was completed the following day. Mail posted after the 4th collection period on September 18 was trapped in the siege.



Posted unpaid on September 18 (6th collection) in Paris – rated for 30c due per Paris postmark
Endorsed from the 13th Corps at Vincennes, so re-rated for military free frank per the red “P.P.”
Carried out by postal line-crosser on September 24 – arrived September 27 near Tours



Posted September 20 at the central Paris post office with a free frank per the “P.P.”
Endorsed from a soldier in the 10th Regiment of the Garde Mobile de la Côte d'Or
Carried out by postal line-crosser on September 27 – arrived October 1 near Dijon



Campaign for Paris

French 13th Corps: September 17 – November 7

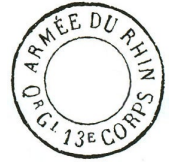
The kernel of the Armée de Paris was the 31,000-man regular army 13th Corps, which had escaped from the disaster at Sedan to reach Paris on September 6-9. Its fieldpost service began operations on September 17.



Dated September 22 in Paris by Général Vinoy, commander of the 13th Corps
Marked “Ministre de la Guerre” and given to the balloon service - prepaid 20c on the reverse
Left September 23 in **official sack of the first balloon “Neptune”** – arrived September 25



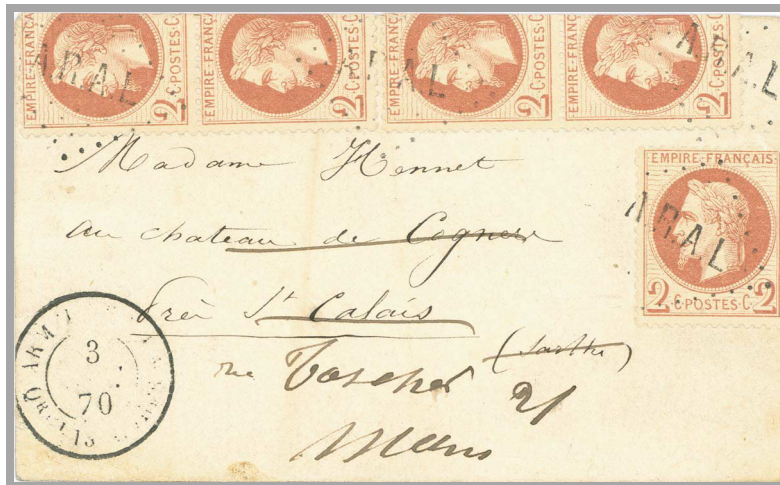
Dated September 16 at Charenton - endorsed from the 13th Corps' 1st Division
Postmarked on September 17 at the 1st Division's Bureau AL – arrived September 19
“Depuis hier nous avons avec nous des officiers du Trésor...”



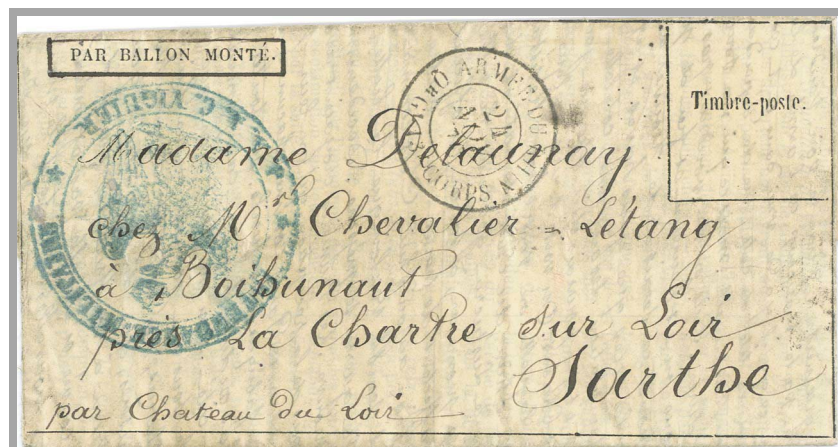
Campaign for Paris

French 13th Corps: September 17 – November 7

The 13th Corps was the last corps to be assigned “Armée du Rhin” postmarks: HQ and Bureaus AL, AM and AN for the 1st through 3rd Divisions.



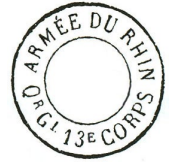
Postmarked “Armée du Rhin Qr G 13^e Corps” on October 3 - “Jean Bart #2” left October 16
Prepaid 10 centimes postcard rate by **five 1863 Issue 2c stamps** – cancelled “A.R.A.L.”
From Colonel Hennet of the artillery reserve – arrived October 24 in Le Mans



Gazette des Absents #2 newsletter posted November 24 at the Headquarters bureau
From mailbag jettisoned in the North Sea by the “Ville d’Orléans” – 20c franking lost in water
Private “Intendance Militaire” unit marking – arrived December 14 at La Chartre-s-Loir

Campaign for Paris

French 13th Corps: September 17 – November 7



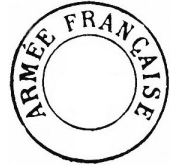
Postmarked November 6 at the 1st Division's Bureau AL - "Gironde" left November 8
Overpaid **30 centimes rate to Ireland by two 1862 Issue 20c stamps** – cancelled "A.R.13^e C"
Bureau AL used the "A.R.13^e C" cancel while the HQ bureau used the "A.R.A.L" cancel



Posted October 17 at the 2nd Division's Bureau AM - "Victor Hugo" left October 18
1863 Issue 10c and 20c stamps underpaid the **40c rate to Wiesbaden** – cancelled "A.R.A.M"
Censored at Versailles per the "**Auswärtiges Amt des Norddeutschen Bundes**" mark

Campaign for Paris

French 14th Corps: September 17 – November 7



The 33,000-man 14th Corps was the other regular army unit of the Armée de Paris. It was formed on September 9, and its fieldpost service began operations in mid-October using “Armée Française” postmarks.



Dateline Porte Maillot and postmarked “Armée Française Quart^r Gal” on November 8
Prepaid 20c for the balloon service – carried in the “Daguerre” recovered bag
Private 14th Corps headquarters marking – arrived November 28 in Périgueux



1st Division’s “Armée Française 14^e Corps A” red postmark applied at Clichy on October 29
Prepaid **50c postage to Italian Papal States** – left Paris November 2 aboard the “Fulton”
Routed via England per November 4 Calais-Paris postmark - arrived November 10

Campaign for Paris

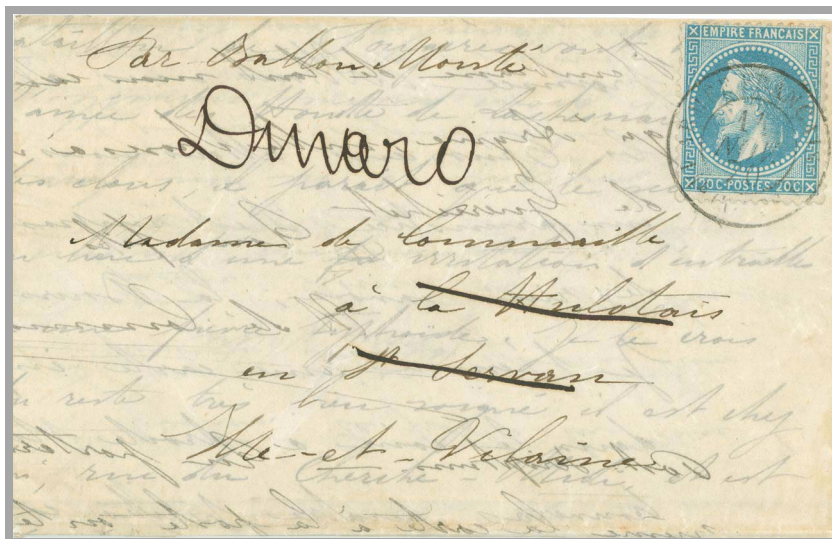
French 14th Corps: September 17 – November 7



On October 28, the 2nd Brigade of the 14th Corps' 2nd Division was detached to the 13th Corps, so the 2nd Division never received a fieldpost service. The 3rd Division received Bureau B in early November, and only one example of that postmark is known.



Dated November 1 at Ivry by a corporal in the 14th Corps' 2nd Brigade of the 2nd Division
Posted that day at the 13th Corps' 2nd Division Bureau AM at Bicêtre – arrived November 5
Prepaid 20c for the balloon service – left Paris November 2 on the “Fulton”



3rd Division's “Armée Française 14^e Corps B” postmark applied at Boulogne on November 14
From Baron de Cornaille, officer with the 14th Corps' 3rd Division – arrived November 25
Prepaid 20c balloon mail postage – left Paris November 21 aboard the “Archimède”

Campaign for Paris

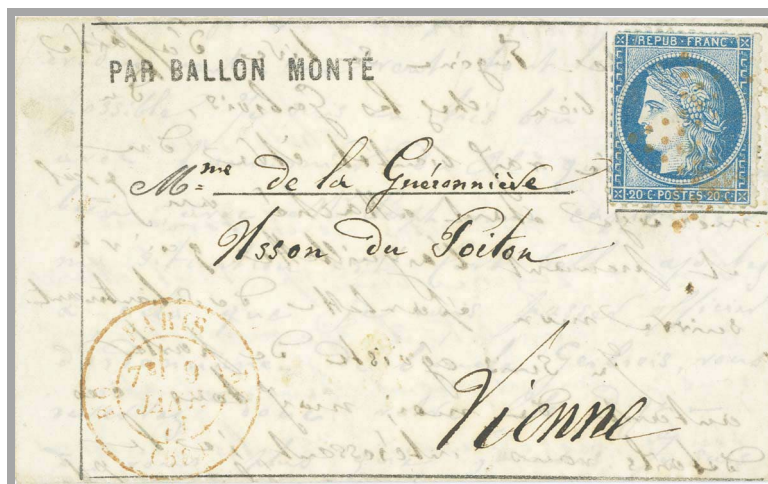
Garde Mobile: September 17 – January 27



The Garde Mobile was a reserve consisting of men who had avoided conscription into the regular army. 93 battalions from 25 departments were called to Paris to bolster the city's defenses, but were not provided with a dedicated fieldpost.



Dated December 12 at Poulangis and posted in Paris on December 15
Prepaid 20c balloon mail rate by a **10c tête-bêche pair** of the 1870 “Ceres” Issue
Private cachet of the 40th Regiment of Ain mobiles – left December 17 on the “Parmentier”



Dated January 8 at Vincennes by a lieutenant in the Garde Mobile de la Vienne
Posted at the Paris (RC) bureau on January 9 - 20c franking cancelled by red star
Left January 11 on the “Kepler” – **one of two known Paris (RC) postmarks**

Campaign for Paris

Garde Mobile: September 17 - January 27



Jules Leveillé, cabinet head with the Telegraph Service, offered priority mail handing and a free frank to mobiles from his home department of Ille et Vilaine. He took their letters directly to departing balloons, so they did not pass through the Paris post office.



Dated October 20 - endorsed "Garde mobile d'Ille et Vilaine" and to Jules Leveillé
Left October 27 on the "Bretagne" - posted October 29 at Fresnes-en-Voëvre landing spot
This balloon carried no post office mail so not many letters are known



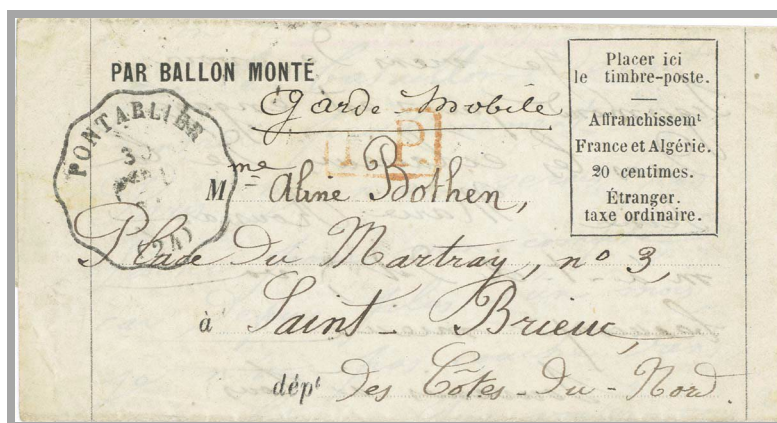
Dated November 14 at Neully and endorsed to the care of Jules Leveillé
Left November 18 on the "Général Uhrich" - posted on November 23 at Rennes
Private cachet of the 2nd Battalion of Ille et Vilaine mobiles

Campaign for Paris

Garde Mobile: September 17 - January 27



The balloon "Montgolfier" left Paris on October 25 and was captured in occupied Alsace. Two passengers escaped capture and reached free France with a small number of confided letters.



Dated October 18 at Rosny camp and endorsed "Garde Mobile"
Carried by Colonel Le Bouëdec of the Garde Mobile des Côtes du Nord
Posted October 30 at Pontarlier with a free frank per the red "P.P."



Dated October 23 in Paris and franked 20c for the balloon service
Carried by Colonel Delapierre, commander of the 62nd Regiment of Mobiles
Posted November 4 at Tours - arrived in St. Malo the next day

Campaign for Paris

Garde Nationale: September 18 – January 27



The Garde Nationale was a third-line reserve for local defense, consisting of 344,000 men in 254 battalions, half of which were combat battalions. They were not provided with a fieldpost service.



Dated December 23 in Paris and **confided to balloon builders Dartois & Yon**
Left December 27 on private balloon "Merlin de Douai" – carried no post office mail
Postmarked on December 30 at Bordeaux – 20c franking cancelled GC "3997"
Garde Nationale pilot created a special cachet for this balloon

**BALLON MERLIN DE DOUAI
CAP. GRIZEAUT, LIEUT. TARBE**

Campaign for Paris

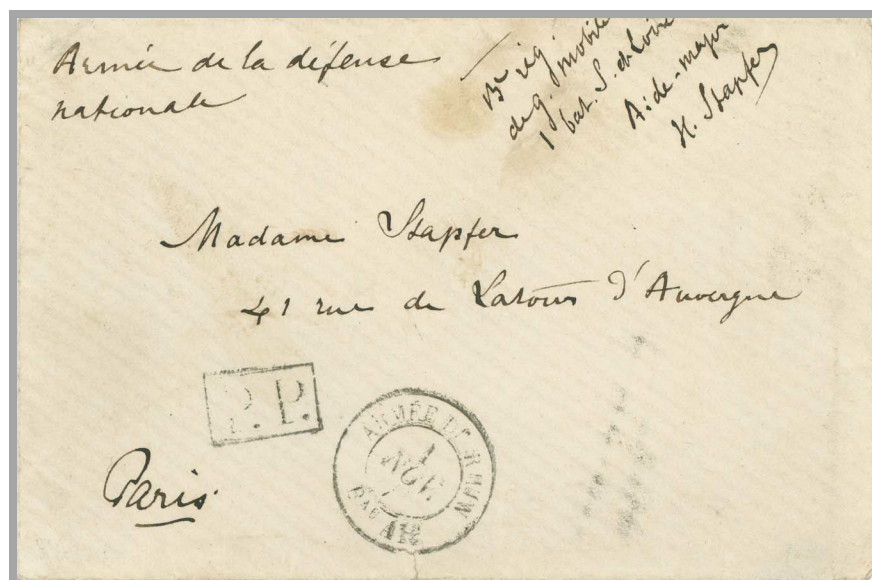
Corps de St. Denis: October 28 – January 27



The Corps de St. Denis was a three-brigade independent command formed to defend the northern sector of Paris



Dated "Redoute de Noisy" on November 15 by Col. Martin of the 138th Regiment
Postmarked November 14 at the Paris (SC) bureau – **granted late free frank**
Left November 18 on the "Général Uhrich" – posted at Luzarches landing point



Posted with free frank on November 1 at the **Armée du Rhin Bureau AH**
Payeur had escaped from Sedan to Paris and was attached to Corps de St. Denis
From the 13th Regiment of Garde Mobile de la Saône-et-Loire – sent locally

Campaign for Paris

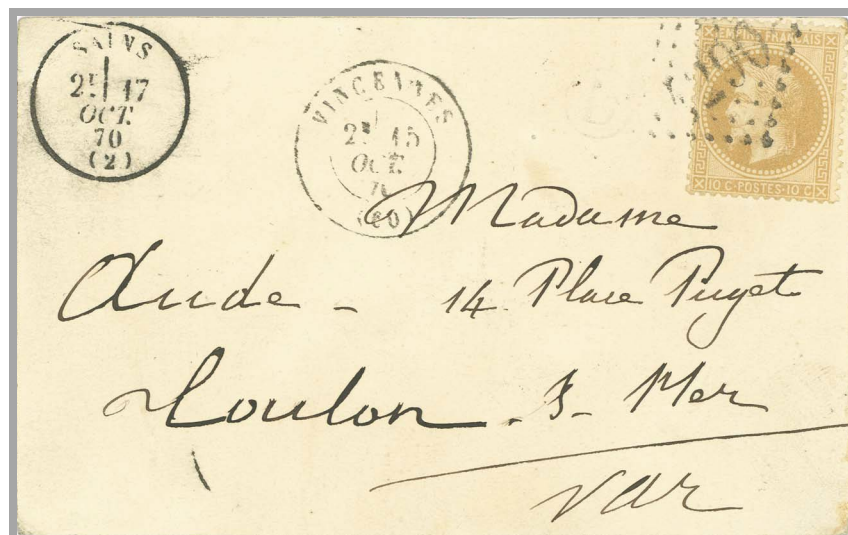
Naval Forces: September 18 – January 27



Four marine infantry battalions and 12 ship crew battalions (13,900 men) garrisoned Parisian external forts, but were not provided with fieldpost services.



Datelined at Bicêtre fort – posted October 21 at nearby Maison-Blanche post office
20c stamp cancelled by **rare petits chiffres 2170** – left next day on the “Garibaldi”
2nd Battalion of Marine Infantry used the **boxed “Marins de Lorient”** marking



Datelined at Nogent fort – posted October 15 at nearby Vincennes post office
10c postcard rate – jettisoned on October 16 from the “Jean Bart #2” over Soissons
Rare **October 17 Sains recovery postmark** – from a naval medical officer

Campaign for Paris

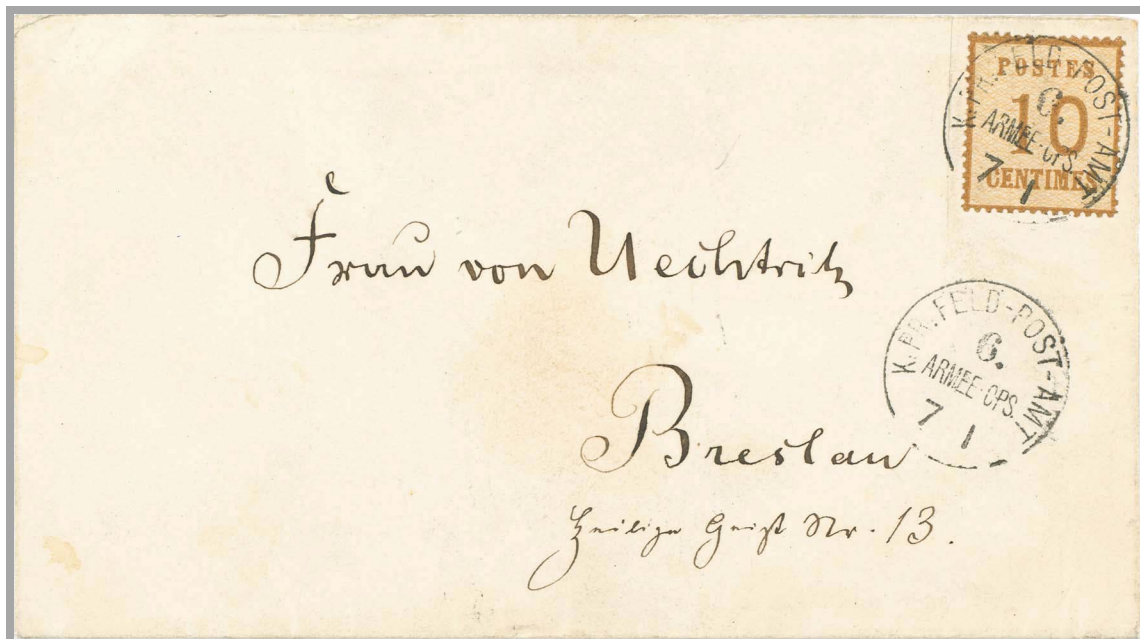
German III Army: September 16 – January 27



The German III Army moved into siege lines south of the city, starting on September 16. The investment was completed on September 19.



Posted September 17 at the III Army headquarters bureau near Meaux
Prepaid 20c in cash per German "f20" plus 20c stamp for French postage
German fieldpost cancel on a French stamp is rare – arrived October 2



Posted prepaid 10c at the III Army's 6th Corps bureau on January 7 – arrived January 12
German fieldpost cancels on Alsace-Lorraine Issue stamps are rare

Campaign for Paris

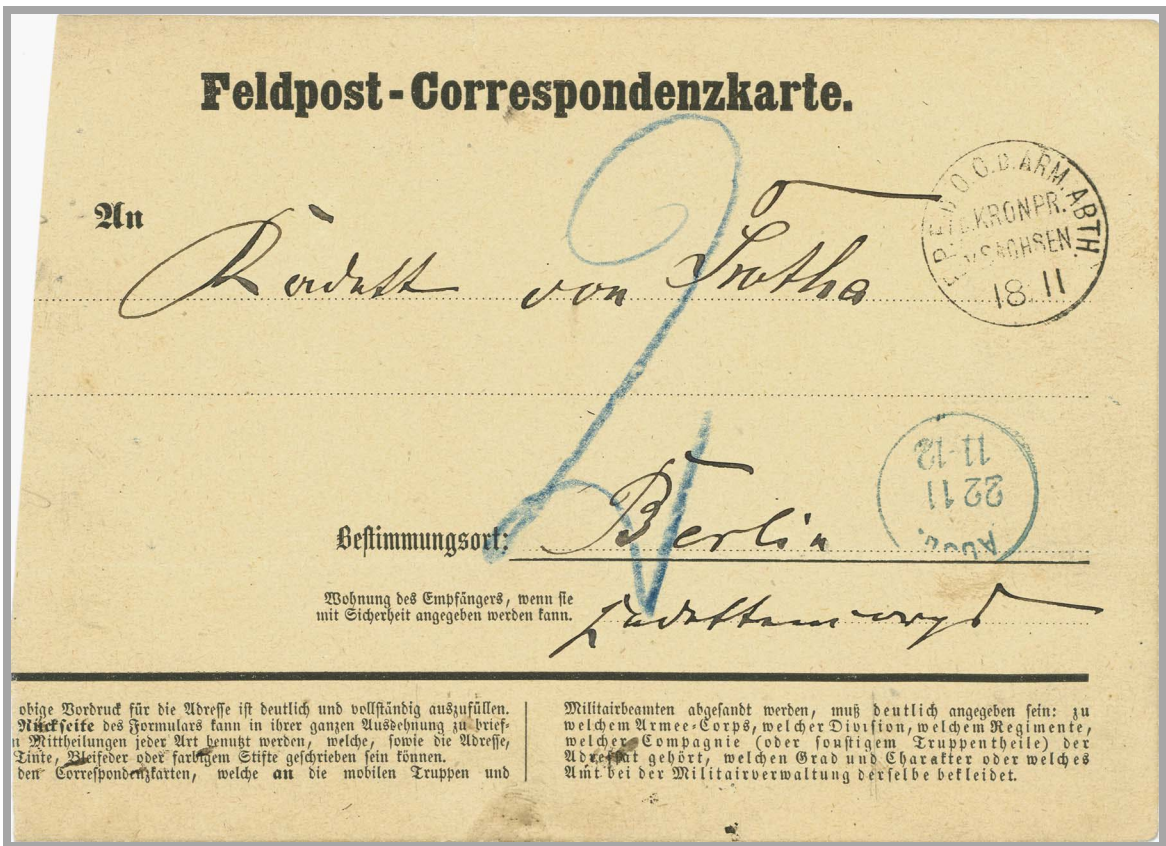
German IV Army: September 16 – January 27



The German IV Army moved into siege lines north of the city, starting on September 16. The investment was completed on September 19.



Posted prepaid 10c on October 20 at the IV Army's Guard Corps bureau – arrived October 26



Posted November 18 at the IV Army's headquarters bureau – 2 groschen due in Berlin

Campaign for Paris

Combat at Montmesly: September 17



The first combat took place opposite Charenton at Montmesly. The 1st Division of the 13th Corps attacked the German 5th Corps, which was moving to its sector. The French retreated.



Dated September 18 at Charenton - endorsed from the 13th Corps' 1st Division
Postmarked on September 18 at the 1st Division's Bureau AL - arrived September 25
"Nous avons eu hier notre première affaire...nous avons une dizaine d'hommes tués"
Carried out of Paris to Evreux on September 20 by the **first post office line-crosser**



"Combat outside of Paris" by Etienne Berne-Bellcour (1875)

Campaign for Paris

Combat at Villejuif: September 22-23



The 13th Corps' 2nd and 3rd Divisions attacked the German 6th Corps on the plateau of Villejuif, opposite the Bicêtre and Ivry forts. They successfully occupied the heights.



Dated September 25 in Paris by Général Vinoy, commander of the 13th Corps
Marked "Gouvernement de la défense Nationale" and prepaid 20c on the reverse
Left September 29 in **official sack of the "Etats-Unis"** – arrived October 2 in Nantes
"l'ennemi n'ose rien encore, c'est nous qui l'attaque..."



"Combat de Villejuif" by Edouard Detaille

Campaign for Paris

Combat at Chevilly: September 30



The 2nd and 3rd Divisions of the 13th Corps attacked the German 6th Corps opposite the Bicêtre and Ivry forts south of Paris. The French retreated to their starting points.



Dated October 1 at Bicêtre by an officer in the 2nd Division of the 13th Corps
Postmarked in red on October 1 at the 2nd Division's Bureau AM – “A.R.A.M” cancel
Carried out of Paris on October 12 on the “Washington” – arrived October 17



Dated September 30 at Vanves – from Major Mowat of the 14th March Regiment
Postmarked on October 1 at the 3rd Division's Bureau AN – free frank per red “P.P.”
Carried out of Paris on October 12 on the “Washington” – arrived October 16

Campaign for Paris

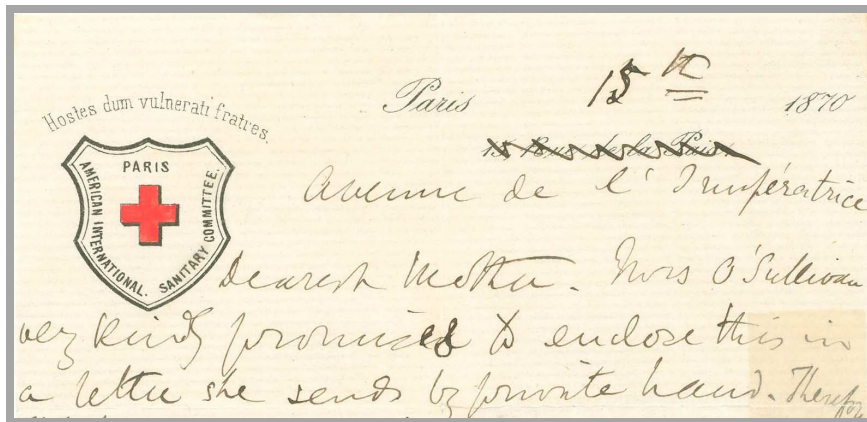
Combat at Châtillon: October 13-14



The 3rd Division of the 13th Corps and Garde Mobile battalions from the 10th Regiment of Côte d'Or and the 59th Regiment of Aube attacked the 2nd Bavarian Corps south of Paris, but retreated to their starting points.



Dated October 15 by a British surgeon - confided to Nadar's balloon builder company **Red Aérostiers cachet** - left October 18 on the "Victor Hugo" - posted October 21 at Tours
Unpaid letter marked with red "*FR* 1^F 50^C" tray mark for 40c debit - 6d due in London
"we went out yesterday to the field of Chatillon & brought back only two wounded..."



Scan of letterhead (85%)

Campaign for Paris

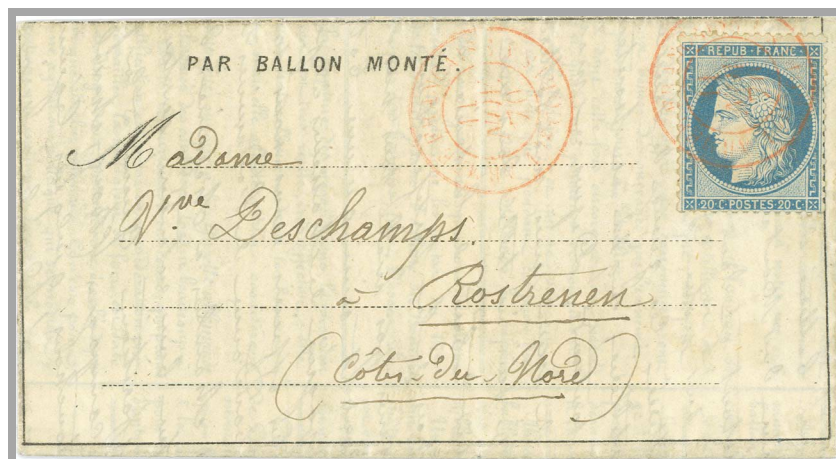
Formation of the 2^e Armée de Paris: November 8



On November 8, the French re-organized their best combat units into a new 2^e Armée that would attempt to break out of Paris. Until new fieldpost postmarks could be made, they continued to use the old ones.



Postmarked “Armée du Rhin Qr G¹ 13^e Corps” on November 17 – free frank per “P.P.”
Left November 21 on the “Archimède” – arrived November 25 in Nantes
Private “2^{me} Armée 1^{re} Corps Etat-Major Général” marking



Dépêche-Ballon #4 newsletter datelined November 10 at Clichy-la-Garenne
Red November 11 “Armée Française 14^e Corps A” postmark – 20c franking
Used by 2nd Corps of the 2^e Armée - carried in captured “Daguerre” mailbag

Campaign for Paris

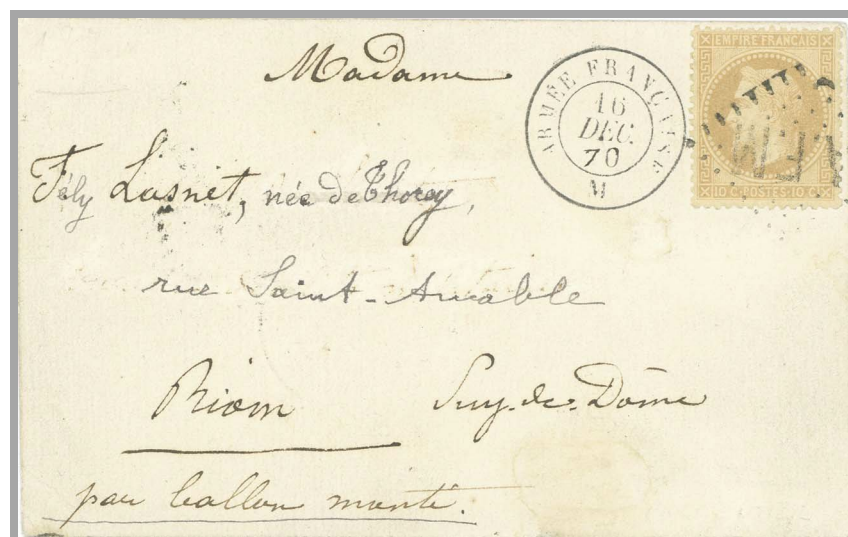
2^e Armée Fieldpost: November 28 – December 19



Starting November 28, the three corps of the 2^e Armée began receiving their 12 fieldpost bureaus. By the December 19 re-organization, only 8 were in use. Fewer than 40 2^e Armée covers are known from this period.



Postmarked December 12 at the 3rd Corps' 1st Division Bureau L – “A.F.L” cancel
Left December 15 on the “Ville de Paris” which was captured on landing in Prussia
No arrival postmarks appear on captured mail – **only letter known from Bureau L**



Dated December 17 by a captain in the 105th Regiment – franked 10c for postcard rate
Postmarked December 19 (inverted “9”) at the 3rd Corps' 3rd Division Bureau M – “A.F.M” cancel
Left December 22 on the “Lavoisier” – arrived December 27 – **3 Bureau M letters are known**

Campaign for Paris

Formation of the 1^{re} Armée de Paris: November 9



On November 9, the French government decreed the formation of 59 National Guard “war” regiments, which became the 1^{re} Armée. They were assigned to help defend Paris after the departure of the 2^e Armée, but were not provided with a fieldpost service.



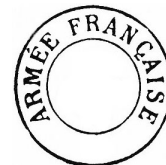
Gazette des Absents #17 datelined December 24 at Rosny-s-Bois by “2^e Régiment de Paris”
Posted December 25 in Paris with a free frank per the “P.P.” – confirmed by star cancel
Left December 27 on the “Tourville” – arrived January 1 in southern France



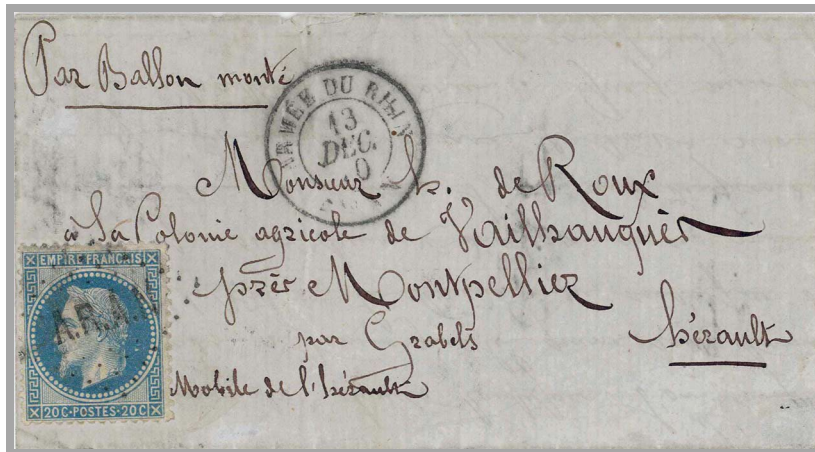
Datelined January 12 at Créteil – endorsed “38^e Régiment de Paris 118^e Bataillon”
Posted prepaid 20c in Paris on January 13 – from a National Guard surgeon
Left January 15 on the “Vaucanson” – arrived January 24 at Nozay

Campaign for Paris

Formation of the 3^e Armée de Paris: November 8



On November 8, fifteen of the Garde Mobile regiments in Paris were incorporated into the five divisions of the 3^e Armée, which would defend Paris after the departure of the 2^e Armée. Most were not provided with dedicated fieldpost services.



Dated December 12 at St. Maur – from 3^e Armée's Garde Mobile de l'Hérault
Postmarked "Armée du Rhin B^{au} AN" on December 13 – re-used temporarily at St. Maur
Left December 17 on the "Parmentier" – arrived December 29 in Montpellier



Franked by 5 20c (II) Bordeaux stamps in Montpellier on January 2 – response to above letter
Sent by "Boule de Moulins" to Paris – rare June 22 Paris Poste Restante arrival postmark
Addressed to the 45th Regiment of Garde Mobile de l'Hérault of the 3^e Armée

Campaign for Paris

Battle of Champigny: November 30 – December 3



The 2^e Armée began its breakout effort on November 30 with an attack on the Württemberg Division at Champigny. Reinforced by the 2nd Corps, the Germans repulsed the attack and the French retreated back to Vincennes on December 3.



Dated December 6 at Meaux by 1st Corps 2nd Division soldier captured at Champigny
"Je suis prisonnier de guerre depuis le 30 Novembre" – posted January 3 in Caen



Dated December 5 near Champigny - posted December 6 at the 2nd Corps HQ bureau

Campaign for Paris

3^e Armée Diversionary Attacks: November 29



To draw German reinforcements away from the 2^e Armée's attack at Champigny, the 3^e Armée conducted five diversionary attacks at different points around Paris.



Dated November 29 at Bicêtre by an officer in the Maud'huy Division of the 3^e Armée
Postmarked at Bureau D on November 30 - **division attacked L'Hay south of Paris**
Carried out of Paris on November 30 on the "Jules Favre No. 2" – arrived December 3



Dated November 29 at Colombes – **blue "3^{eme} Armée 2^{eme} Division" unit marking**
Postmarked December 1 in Paris – left Paris on December 5 aboard the "Franklin"
"...cette nuit, l'on a commencé à entendre une cannonade bien nourrie..."
Postmarked December 5 at Nantes, near the balloon's landing spot – arrived next day

Campaign for Paris

Reorganization of the 2^e Armée: December 4



The 1st Corps was decimated at Champigny, so it was dissolved and its regular soldiers were placed in the Reserve Division. The old 3rd Corps became the 2nd Corps, and the old 2nd Corps became the 1st Corps.



Dated December 12 by a captain in the 42nd Regiment of the Reserve Division
Postmarked December 12 at the 2^e Armée's headquarters Bureau A – "A.F.A" cancel
Left December 15 on the "Ville de Paris" which was captured – no arrival marks



Dated December 18 at Vincennes by a corporal in the 122nd Regiment
Postmarked December 19 at the Reserve Division's Bureau J – "A.F.J" cancel
Left December 22 on the "Lavoisier" – arrived December 25 in Bordeaux

Campaign for Paris

Second 2^e Armée Fieldpost: December 19 – January 28



Starting December 19, the nine military postmasters for the re-organized 2^e Armée began serving their new units. With the reduction from three to two corps, Bureaus K, L and M were discontinued.



Dated January 25 at Les Lilas by a soldier in the 108nd Regiment of the 2nd Corps
Postmarked January 26 at the 2nd Corps' headquarters Bureau F – red “A.F.F” cancel
Left January 27 on the “**Jacquard**” which was lost at sea – 20c stamp lost in water soaking



Gazette des Absents #25 datelined January 11 at Aubervilliers – 50 centimes franking
Postmarked January 12 at the 1st Corps' 1st Division Bureau C – datestamp cancel and blue “PD”
Left January 13 on the “**Général Faidherbe**” – **arrived January 20 in Viterbo, Papal States**

Campaign for Paris

Battle of Buzenval: January 19



90,000 French soldiers, including 42,000 from the Garde Nationale, made a final breakout effort against the German 5th Corps and the Garde Landwehr Division. They retreated back to Mont-Valérien.



Garde Nationale order to report for duty in the next day's Buzenval attack
Postmarked January 18 in Paris – franked 1870 Issue 20c stamp for balloon service
Left January 20 on the "Général Bourbaki" – arrived January 31 in Bordeaux



Postmarked January 16 at the Garde Landwehr Division bureau – sent to Garde Corps at Paris

Campaign for Paris

End of the 2^e Armée Fieldpost: January 29



On January 25, the 2^e Armée was dissolved. The soldiers moved into Paris on January 29, and the fieldpost stopped operating at that time. They evacuated Paris on March 15.



Dated January 18 at Bagnolet by a soldier in the 2nd Division of the 2nd Corps
Postmarked January 19 at the 2nd Division's Bureau H – "A.F.H" cancel
Left January 20 on the "Général Bourbaki" – **arrived January 25 in Belgium**



Dated January 11 by Captain Henri de Seroux of the 3rd Division of the 1st Corps
Postmarked January 12 at the 3rd Division's Bureau E – 20c stamp cancelled "A.F.E"
Left January 13 on the "Général Faidherbe" – **fewer than 5 covers known from Bureau E**

Campaign for Paris

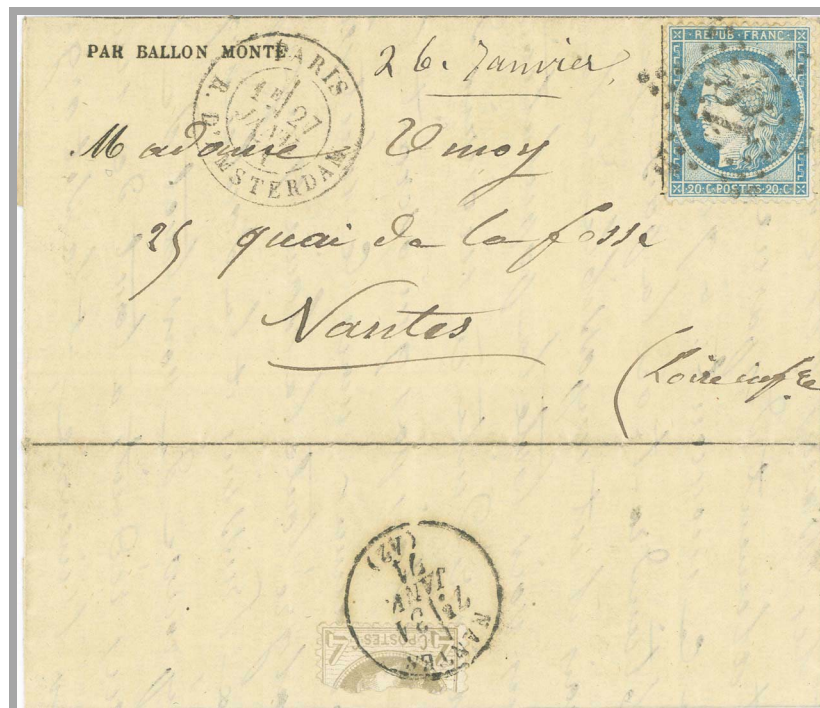
Surrender of Paris: January 28



On January 28, Paris surrendered and signed an armistice that extended to March 12. The balloon mail service ended with the last departure in the early morning of January 28.



Postmarked "Armée Française C" on January 28 – **latest known 2^e Armée postmark**
Left Paris sometime in February 1871 after the resumption of normal postal routes



Gazette des Absents #32 posted January 27 in Paris by **army commander Général Vinoy**
Left Paris on January 28 on the **last balloon "Général Cambronne"** – arrived January 31
"We are negotiating at this moment: at what price will we obtain peace?"

Campaign for Paris

German Occupation: January 28 – September 11, 1871



On March 1, France ratified the preliminary peace treaty. The Germans paraded through Paris that day and then withdrew from all positions south of the Seine River during March. They left their last positions around Paris on September 11, 1871.



Prepaid 10c occupation postage and 20c French postage by Parisian civilian
Postmarked "K. BAYER FELDPOST VI" on April 23 at Bavarian bureau near Vincennes
Transferred to nearby Fontenay-s-Bois on April 24 – French stamp cancelled GC "1543"
Arrived in occupied Metz on April 26 – charged 30c unpaid occupation postage due



Lithograph of the Germans marching through Paris on March 1, 1871

The Postal History of the Republican Phase of the 1870-71 Franco-Prussian War

Background: The republican phase of the war began in September 1870, after the surrender of Napoléon III and his army at Sedan, and after the remaining French imperial armies were trapped in the sieges of Paris and Metz. The French 3rd Republic was proclaimed on September 4, and it formed new armies to raise the siege of Paris from the north and south, and to defend eastern France. The French Navy also blockaded the German coasts, but all of those efforts ended with the surrender of Paris on January 28, 1871. The new republic then suppressed a civil uprising in Paris and suffered a 31-month German occupation.

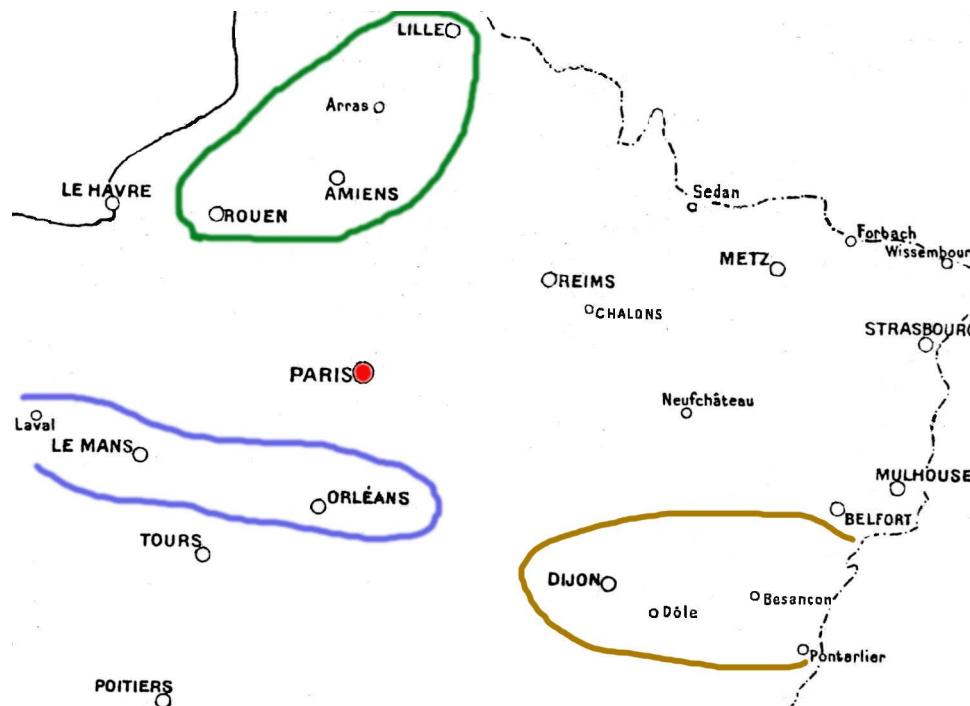
Campaign on the Loire from Orléans to Laval: September 14 to March 7

Campaign in the North from Rouen and Amiens to Lille: October 17 to March 7

Campaign in the East from Dijon to Belfort and Pontarlier: October 6 to March 10

French Naval Campaigns along the German coast and elsewhere: July 24 to March 7

Post-War Commune suppression and German occupation: March 1871 to September 16, 1873



Campaigns on the Loire (blue), in the North (green), and in the East (brown)

Postal Background: The French and Germans provided fieldposts at the divisional, corps and army levels, although the integrated French imperial fieldpost gave way to ad hoc local fieldposts in each of the republican campaigns.

Scope and Study: This exhibit traces the entire conflict through letters mailed at the French and German fieldpost bureaus, and through other military-related mail.

Presentation: The exhibit is organized by campaign, which is identified in the heading of each page. The military unit or activity is identified in the sub-headings. Text boxes provide historical or postal background, and greater detail is provided in the body of the page. Finally, icons at the upper right identify French or German armies, or battles between them.

Campaign on the Loire

Historical Summary: September 14 – March 7



- The French 15th Corps, formed September 14-October 7, lost the first battle of Orléans to the von der Tann Detachment on October 10-11. On November 9, the 1^{re} Armée de la Loire (15th and 16th Corps) re-captured Orléans, but was shattered by the German II Army on December 3-4.
- The 2^e Armée de la Loire (16th, 17th and 21st Corps) was formed on December 5 from remnants of the 1^{re} Armée. It retreated from II Army attacks west of Orléans, at Vendôme and finally at Le Mans on January 11-12. A January 31-March 7 armistice ended hostilities.



Only known "Armée de la Loire Trésor et Postes * G^d Quartier G^l *" fieldpost postmark
From headquarters escort Francs-Tireurs Girondin – arrived December 3 in La Châtre



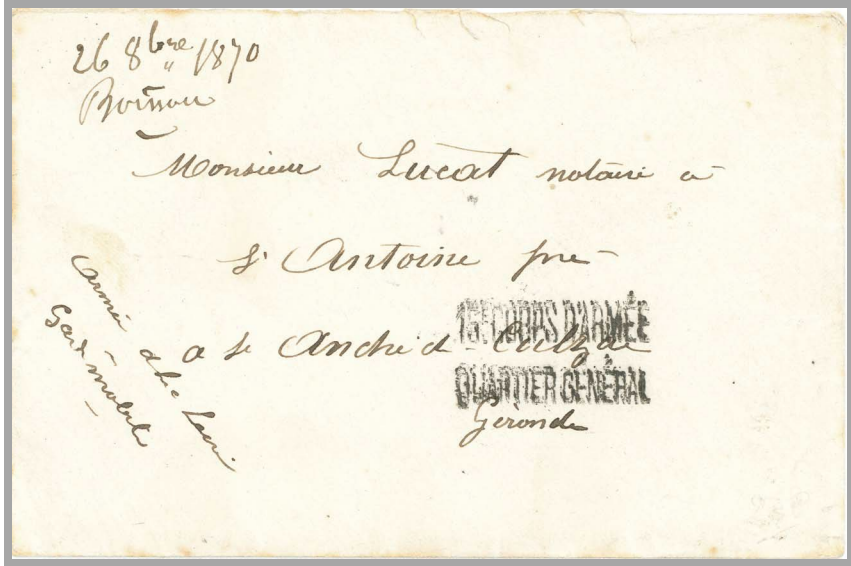
Area of military operations for the campaign on the Loire River

Campaign on the Loire

1^{re} Armée de la Loire: October 6-27



The French 1^{re} Armée de la Loire was formed in October around the 15th and 16th Corps. The fieldpost used locally-made undated postmarks: two-line linear postmarks for the 15th Corps and single-ring circular postmarks for the 16th Corps.



Docketed October 26 – postmarked “15^e Corps d’Armée Quartier Général”
From 15th Corps headquarters – arrived October 27 in St. André d’Aulzac



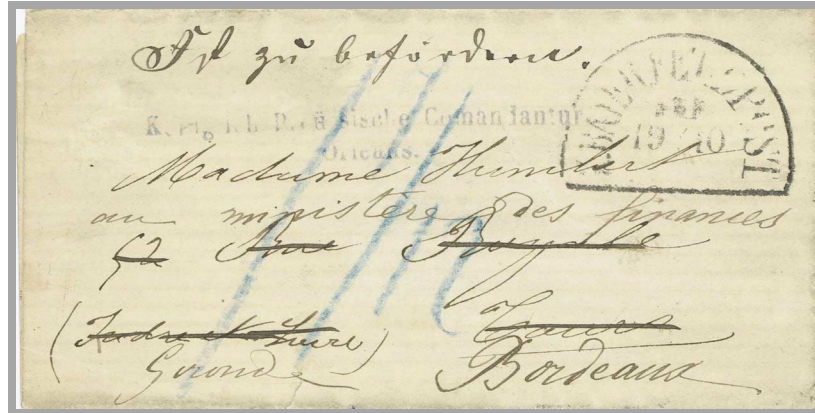
Postmarked “16^e Corps B.A.” at the 1st Division’s Bureau A – free frank per red “P.P.”
The 16th Corps was assembling west of Orléans – arrived November 4 in Lyon

Campaign on the Loire

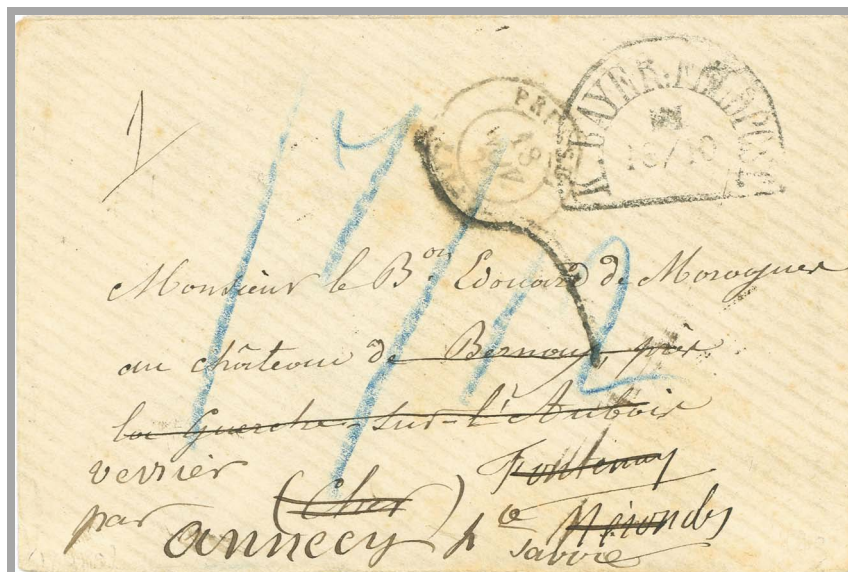
Von der Tann Detachment: October 6 – November 5



The German high command detached a 28,000-man army group from the Paris siege on October 6 to address the growing threat on the Loire River. General von der Tann was given command over his 1st Bavarian Corps, the 22nd Division, and two cavalry divisions.



Dated October 15 by a French civilian in Orléans – given to the local fieldpost
“Königlich Preussische Comandantur Orleans” censor mark – blue 17/12 sgr debit
Posted October 19 at the 1st Bavarian Corps’ 2nd Division Bureau III – arrived January 6



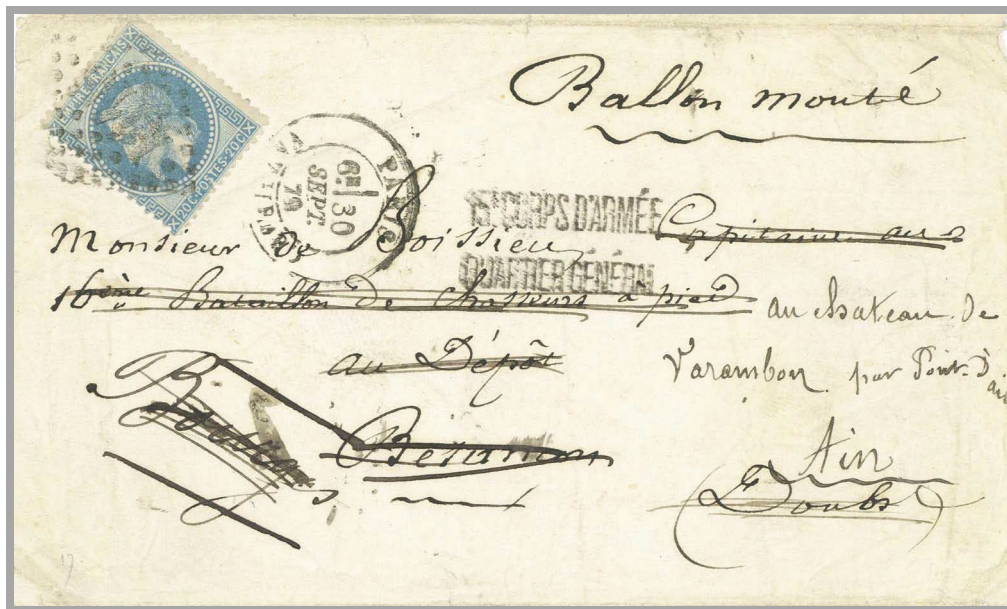
Posted unpaid on October 16 at the 1st Bavarian Corps’ 2nd Division Bureau III
Bavarian fieldpost was the only post office in Orléans after the French evacuation
Routed via Prussia and Lille to la Guerche on November 21 – 5 décimes postage due

Campaign on the Loire

First Battle of Orléans: October 10-11



On October 10, the von der Tann Detachment attacked the French 15th Corps north of Orléans at Artenay. The French retreated south of the Loire River to Bourges. The Germans occupied Orléans on October 11, and then returned the 22nd Division and 4th Cavalry Division to the Paris siege.



Posted prepaid 20c on September 30 in Paris – left October 12 on the balloon “Louis Blanc”
Sent to Captain de Boissieu at the 16th Chasseurs depot in Besançon – arrived October 17
Forwarded to 15th Corps at Bourges on October 20 – **Headquarters arrival postmark de Boissieu had been killed on October 11 at Aydes during the 15th Corps retreat**



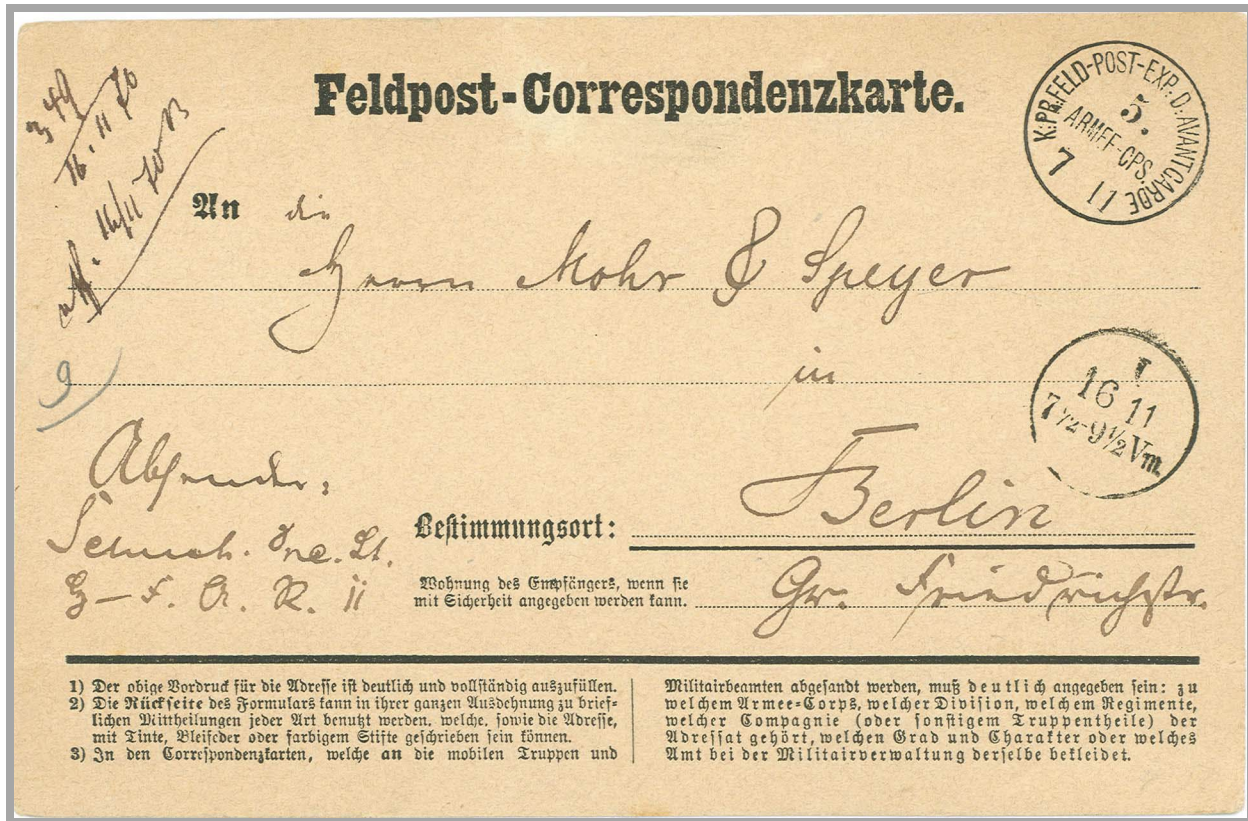
German lithograph of the October 10 combat at Artenay

Campaign on the Loire

Battle of Châteaudun: October 18



On their return to Paris from Orléans, the German 22nd Division and the 4th Cavalry Division defeated the Lipowski Franc-Tireurs de Paris at Châteaudun, and burned the city before moving to Chartres.



Dated October 31 at Chartres - posted November 7 at the 4th Cavalry Division bureau
4th Cavalry used the "5. Armee-Cps Avantgarde" postmark - from the 11th Artillery Regiment



"Bataille de Châteaudun" by A. Hoffmann

Campaign on the Loire

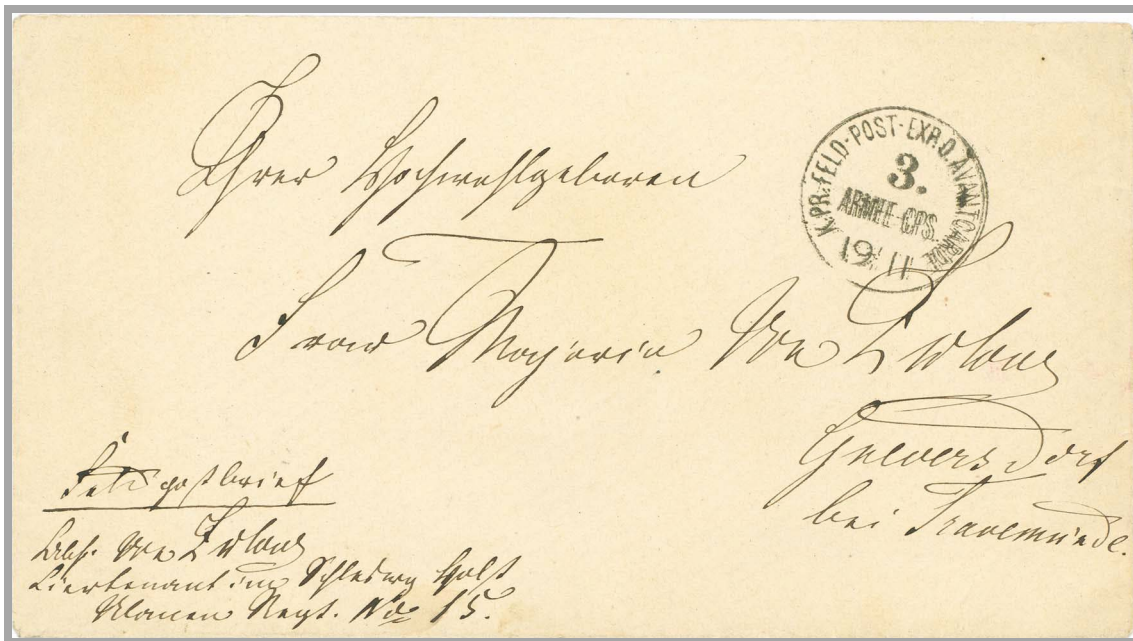
Mecklenburg Detachment: November 6-24



On November 6, von der Tann's Detachment was placed under the command of the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg and reinforced by the 17th Division and the 6th Cavalry Division.



Posted November 24 at the 2nd Cavalry Division's "6. Armee-Corps Avantgarde" bureau
From the 5th Pomeranian Hussars Regiment – arrived November 30 in Rothenburg



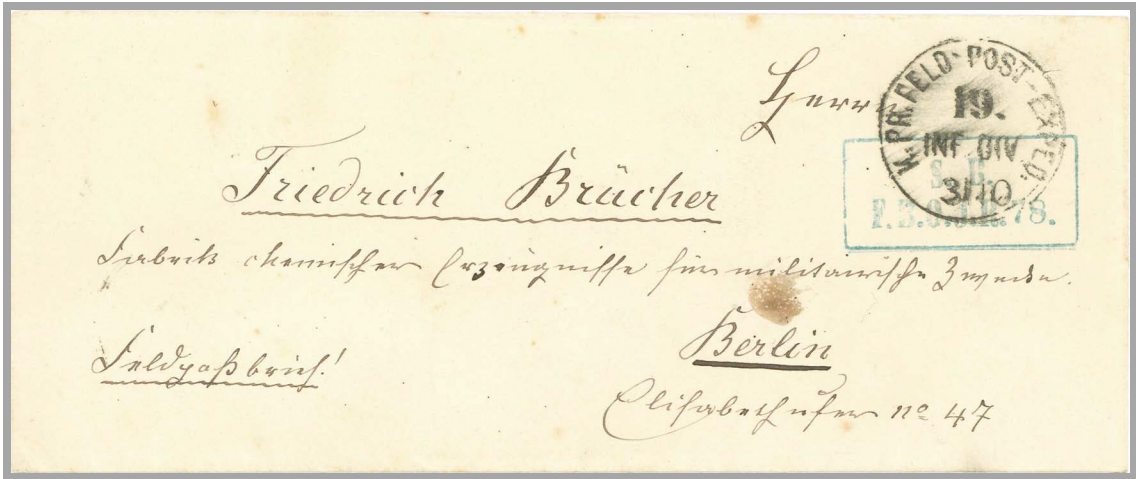
Posted November 19 at the 6th Cavalry Division's "3. Armee-Corps Avantgarde" bureau
From the 15th Schleswig-Holstein Lancers Regiment – arrived November 26 in Gneversdorf

Campaign on the Loire

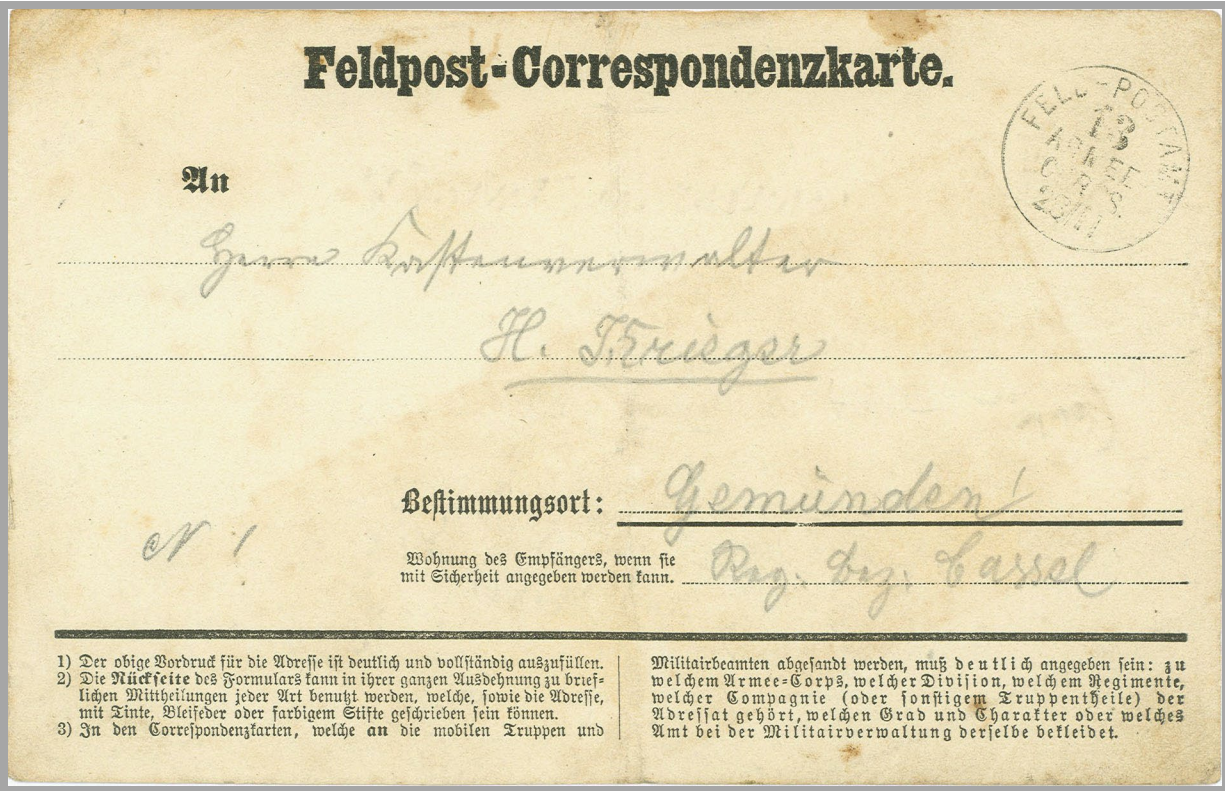
II Army Advance to Orléans: October 28 – November 30



The October 27 surrender of Metz released the II Army for an advance to the Loire. On November 25, the Mecklenburg Detachment came under its orders.



Posted October 31 at the 10th Corps' 19th Division bureau departing from Metz
Blue 78th Ostfriesland Infantry Regiment handstamp – arrived November 2 in Berlin



Dated November 25 at Authon - posted November 28 at the 13th Corps headquarters bureau
Mecklenburg's 13th Corps was formed from the 17th and 22nd Divisions – arrived December 5

Campaign on the Loire

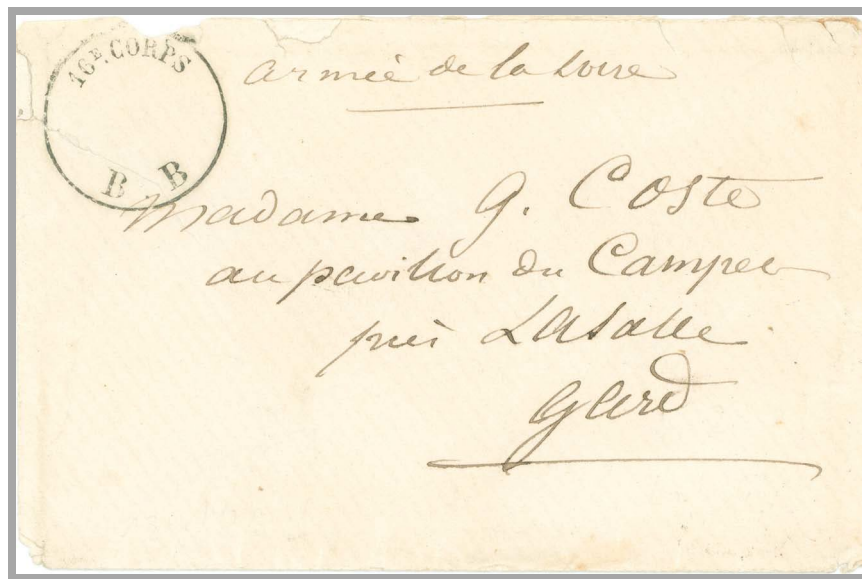
French Advance on Orléans: October 28 – November 8



The impending arrival of the formidable German II Army from Metz prompted the 1^{re} Armée de la Loire to plan an offensive that would establish a strong defensive line anchored north of Orléans.



Postmarked "15^e Corps d'Armée Division de Cavalerie" - **rarest 15th Corps postmark**
From Cavalry Division near Chevilly – no Aurignac arrival postmark



Dated November 4 west of Orléans - postmarked "16^e Corps B.B."
From the 2nd Division of the 16th Corps – arrived near Nîmes on November 5

Campaign on the Loire

French Advance on Orléans: October 28 – November 8



The 16th Corps took a position west of Orléans, with the 2nd, 3rd and Cavalry Divisions of the 15th Corps on their right. The 15th Corps' 1st Division moved northeast of Orléans for a concentric attack.



Posted unpaid on October 29 in Paris – **30c due in rue de Strasbourg postmark**
Left November 2 aboard the balloon “Fulton” – arrived November 4 in Tours
To 6th Dragoons Regiment in the 15th Corps Cavalry Division of the 1^{re} Armée de la Loire



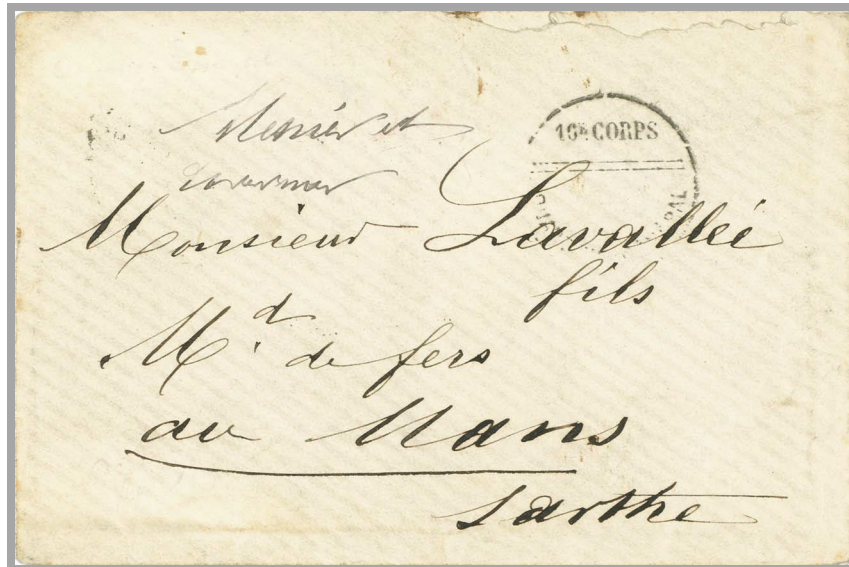
Docketed November 1 and postmarked “16^e Corps B.A.” at the 1st Division Bureau A
Routed via Switzerland and Baden to occupied France - 30c occupation postage due
German “Auf militärischen Befehl geöffnet” censor mark (“opened on military order”)

Campaign on the Loire

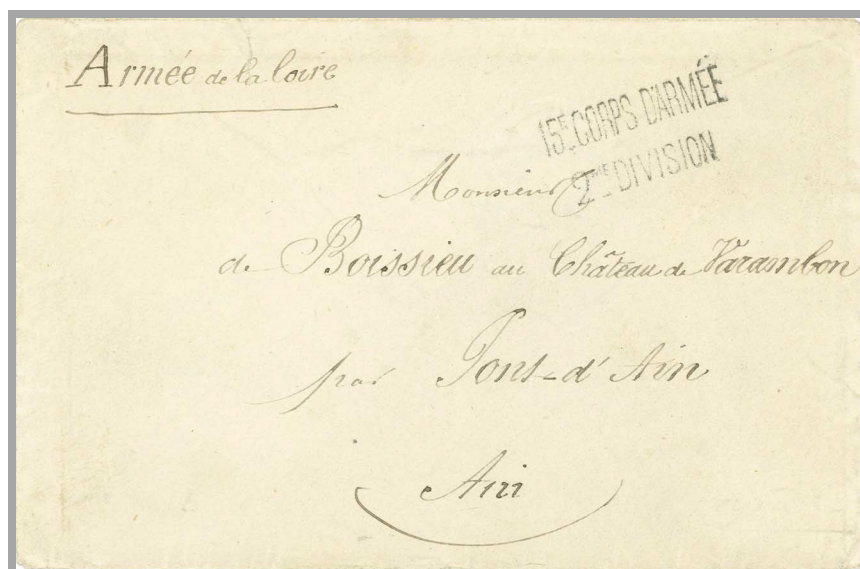
Second Battle of Orléans: November 9



Sensing a trap, von der Tann's outnumbered 1st Bavarian Corps moved west of Orléans, where they ran into the advancing 16th Corps at Coulmiers. The result was a convincing French victory and the re-capture of Orléans.



Dated November 15 northwest of Orléans – postmarked “16^e Corps Quartier Général”
Corporal in 2nd Division wrote, “**we were under fire at Colmier**” – arrived November 17



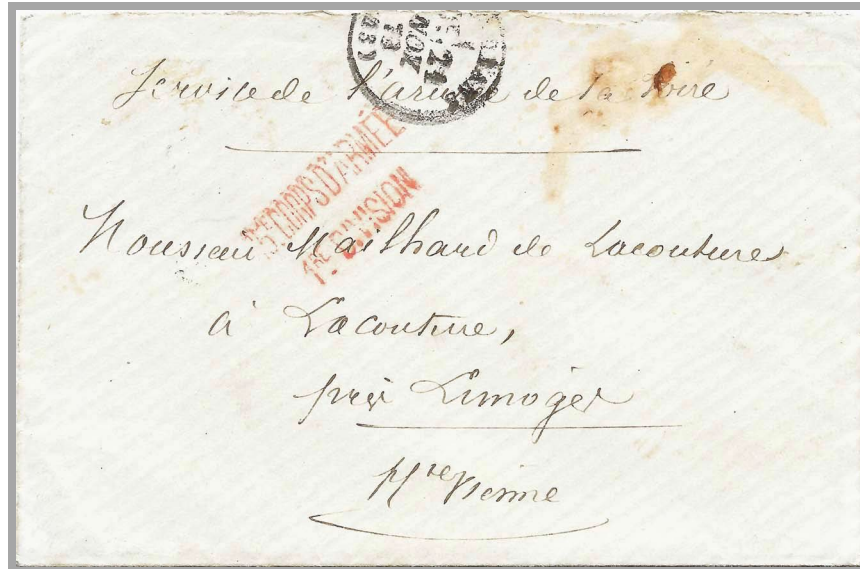
Posted November 8 at the 15th Corps' 2nd Division bureau – arrived November 10
2nd Division's 5^e Bataillon de Marche de Chasseurs à Pied fought on November 9

Campaign on the Loire

French Defense of Orléans: November 10 – December 3



After the victory at Coulmiers, the French took defensive positions north of Orléans to await the German II Army. The 15th Corps was east of Artenay, and the 16th Corps was between Coulmiers and Artenay.



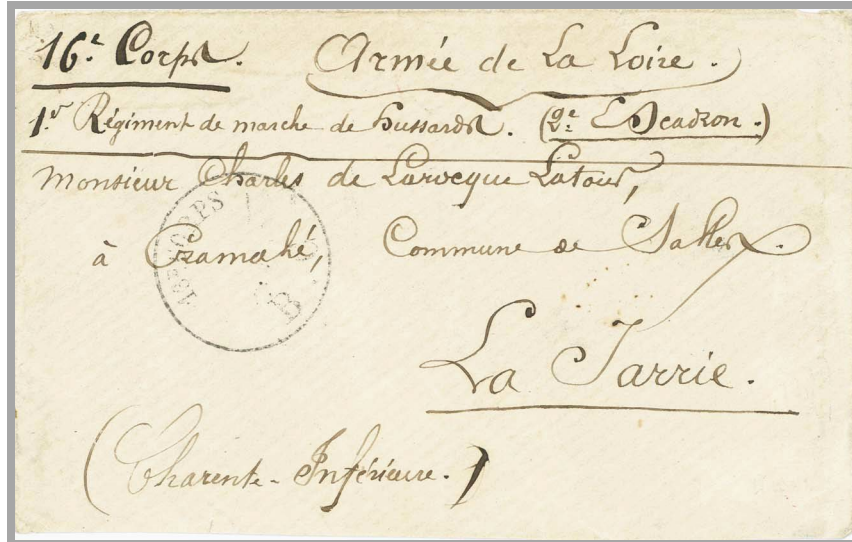
Dated November 20 at Chevilley (north of Orléans) by brigade commander Général Minot
Postmarked in red at the 15th Corps' 1st Division bureau – November 21 Orléans transit



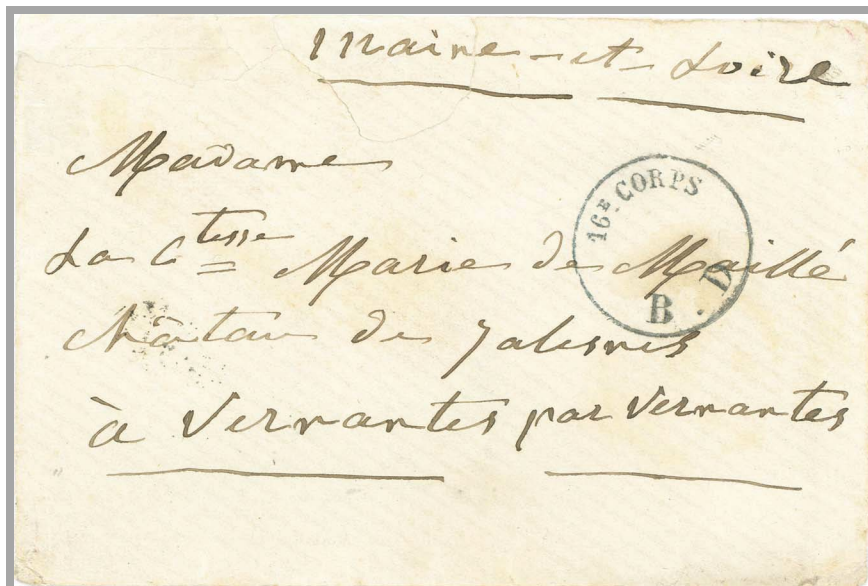
Postmarked in red at the 15th Corps' 3rd Division bureau near Artenay
From the 69th Regiment of Garde Mobile de l'Ariège – arrived December 1 at Foix

Campaign on the Loire

French Defense of Orléans: November 10 – December 3



Postmarked "16^e Corps B.C." at the 3rd Division's Bureau C – November 16 Orléans transit
From a captain in the 16th Corps' 1st Hussards cavalry regiment - used 3rd Division fieldpost



Dated November 22 at Vilarçon by cavalry commandant Armand de Maillé
Postmarked in blue at the 16th Corps' Cavalry Division Bureau D
November 23 Orléans transit postmark – arrived November 25 in Vernantes

Campaign on the Loire

Battle of Beaune-la-Rolande: November 28



The newly-formed French 20th and 18th Corps launched a diversionary attack on the German 10th Corps northeast of Orléans at Beaune-la-Rolande. The French were unable to dislodge the Germans, so they retreated back to Gien.



Letter from German 56th Regiment (10th Corps) soldier captured on November 28
Sent from Mont-Louis camp near Perpignan to Bordeaux for censoring at the War Ministry
Posted December 26 in Bordeaux – **free frank per red Directeur Général des Postes mark**
Mont-Louis only held 336 prisoners – **German POW mail is very scarce**



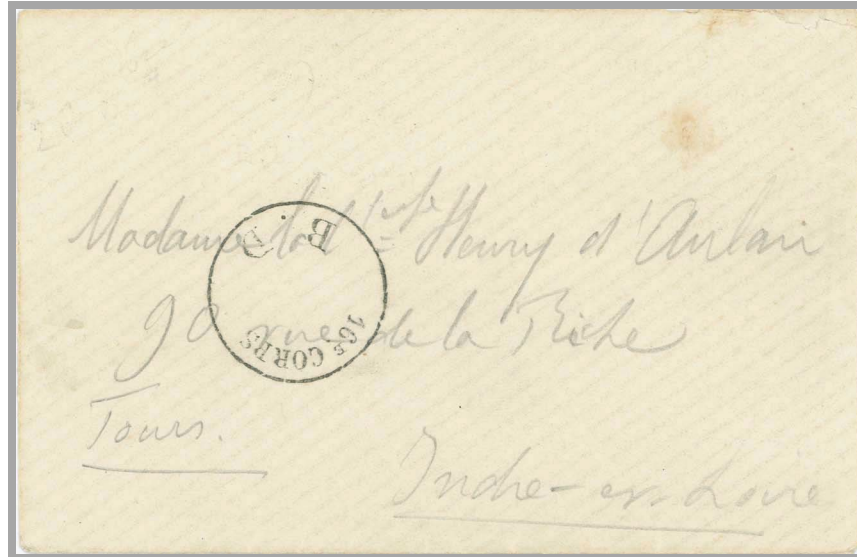
“Battle of Beaune-la-Rolande”

Campaign on the Loire

Battle of Patay: December 1



The French 16th Corps and recently-formed 17th Corps attacked northeast from St Péray and ran into the 1st Bavarian Corps west of the Paris-Orléans Road. The Bavarians retreated to Loigny.



Dated November 26 by Captain Henry d'Aulain of the 4th Dragoons march regiment
Posted at the 16th Corps' Cavalry Division Bureau D – arrived November 28 in Tours
Henry d'Aulain was **killed in action on December 1 in the battle at Patay**



"Armée de la Loire" by Alphonse de Neuville (1874)

Campaign on the Loire

Battle of Loigny: December 2



The French 16th and 17th Corps attacked the I Bavarian Corps at Loigny. Reinforcements from the German 17th and 22nd Divisions pushed the French back to Patay.



Paris Red Cross notice about a Volontaire de l'Ouest (17th Corps) wounded on December 2
Prepaid by a Bordeaux 20c (I) stamp in Avignon on December 13 – reached Bourges on the 15th
Delivered via Prussian commander at Orléans on March 4, 1871 – 20c occupation postage due



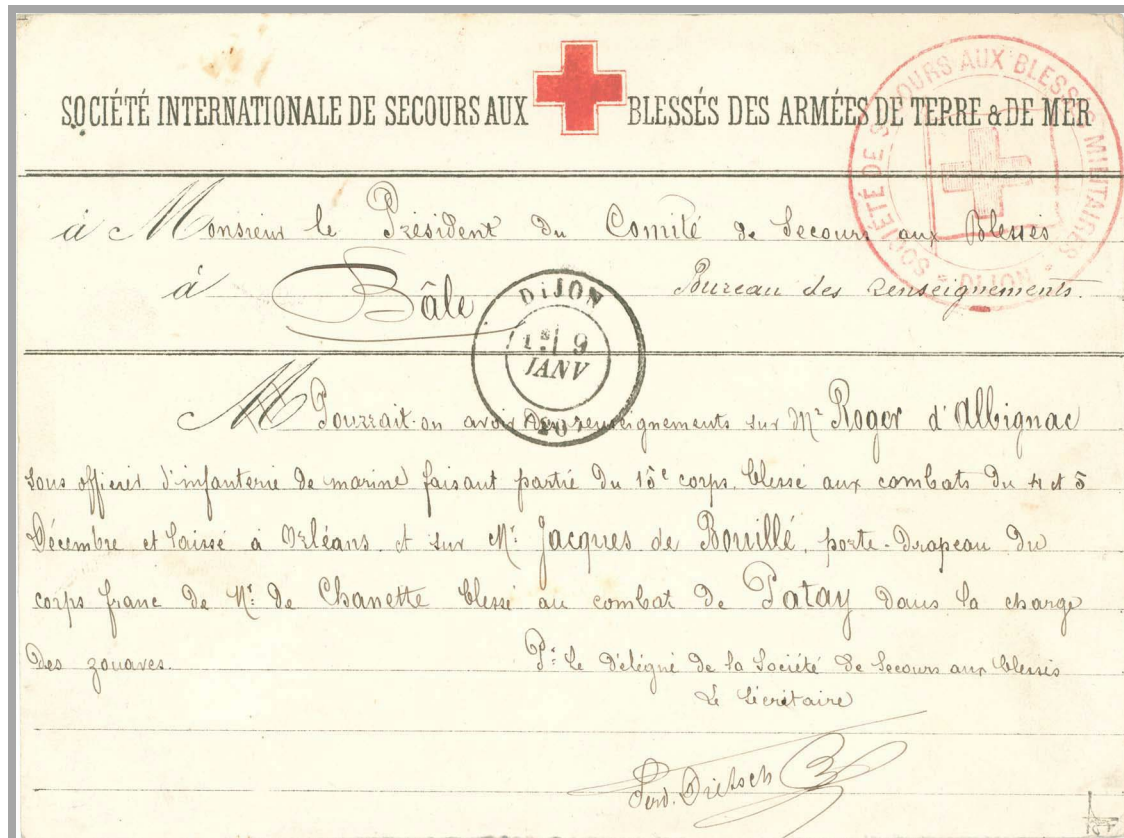
“Bataille de Loigny” by Charles Castellani (1879)

Campaign on the Loire

Third Battle of Orléans: December 3-4



On December 3, the German 9th Corps and Mecklenburg advanced south toward Orléans, while the 3rd Corps attacked from the northeast. The next day, the French right wing retreated south of the Loire, and the left wing to the west.



Dijon Red Cross inquiry about a wounded 15th Corps officer left at Orléans on December 4
Posted with a free frank on January 9 in Dijon – arrived January 12 in Basel, Switzerland



Diorama of the 1st Bavarian Corps at the Battle of Orléans

Campaign on the Loire

2^e Armée de la Loire: December 6 – January 31



The 1^{re} Armée de la Loire was split in two by the December 4 retreat. Chanzy's 2^e Armée de la Loire (16th, 17th and 21st Corps) took a position west of Orléans, while Bourbaki's 1^{re} Armée (15th, 18th and 20th Corps) re-formed well south of Orléans.



Docketed January 25 – postmarked “Postes. - 16^e Corps. Quartier-Général”
Foreign destination required 30c postage – stamps cancelled GC 1987 (Laval)



Posted January 2 at the 16th Corps' Cavalry Division Bureau D – **arrived January 11 in Jersey**
From Lt.-Colonel Dijon, commander of the 2nd Mixed Cavalry Regiment in the 16th Corps cavalry

Campaign on the Loire

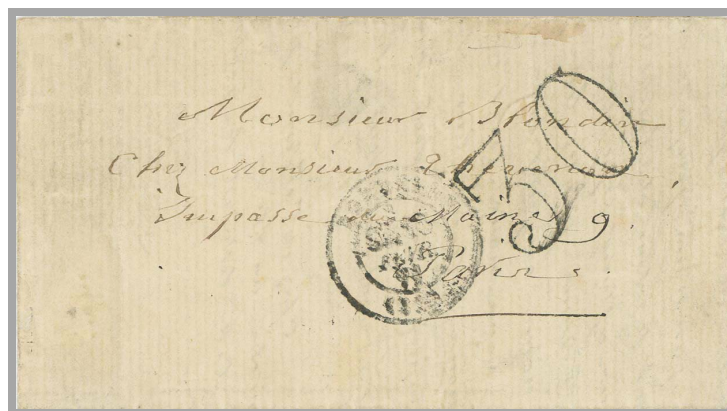
2^e Armée de la Loire: December 6 – January 31



The 2^e Compagnie des Aérostiers Militaires de l'Armée de la Loire was formed at Tours on December 7 to man observation balloons with eight former Paris balloon pilots. Mangin and Duruof were based in Bordeaux.



Reverse of letter addressed to Paris – datelined September 29 in Châteauroux
Signed by Paris balloon pilot Gabriel Mangin – **blue “Aérostier Militaire” marking**
Carried on **unsuccessful November 7 return flight to Paris** from Rouen



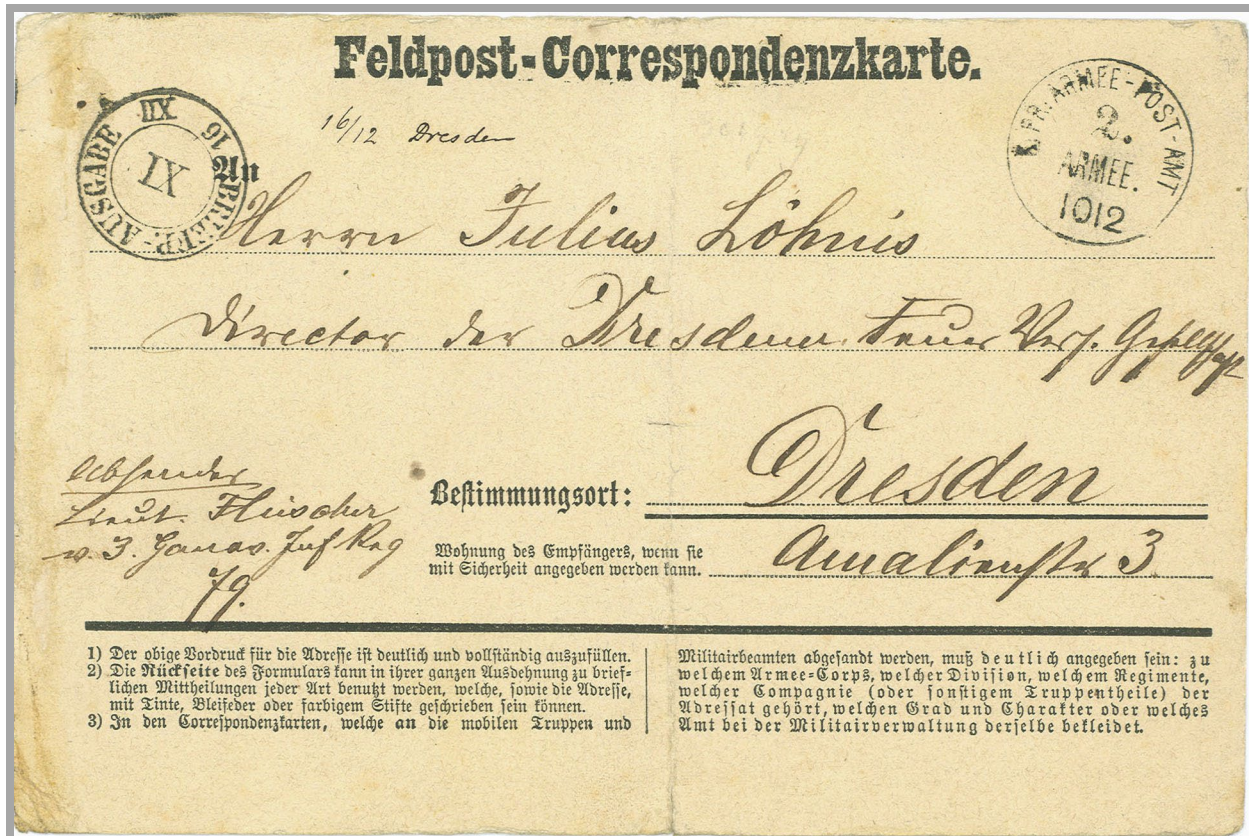
Scan of letter front (90%)
Held at Bordeaux until armistice – posted there on February 10 with 30c due

Campaign on the Loire

German Advance from Orléans: December 7



The German II Army occupied Orléans on December 5. After a two-day rest, the Mecklenburg Detachment advanced southwest toward Beaugency, supported by the 9th Corps moving along the south bank of the Loire toward Blois. The 3rd and 10th Corps stayed near Orléans to protect against the French 1^{re} Armée south of Orléans at Bourges.



Dated east of Orléans on December 9 – posted next day at the II Army headquarters bureau
From the 79th (Hannover) Regiment of the 10th Corps – arrived December 16 in Dresden



Map of German December 7 advance from Orléans

Campaign on the Loire

Beaugency Battles: December 7-9



The Mecklenburg Detachment attacked the French 2^e Armée de la Loire in a series of brutal battles around Beaugency. The French held their positions but, flanked by the German 9th Corps at Blois, retreated to Vendôme on December 11-13.



Postmarked "Armée de l'Ouest" at the 21st Corps' headquarters near Beaugency
Unnecessary **20c (II) Bordeaux Issue franking** – arrived December 12 in Nantes
From the Légion des Volontaires de l'Ouest - 21st Corps headquarters escort



"Combat d'Infanterie sur une route, 1870" by Paul Grolleron

Campaign on the Loire

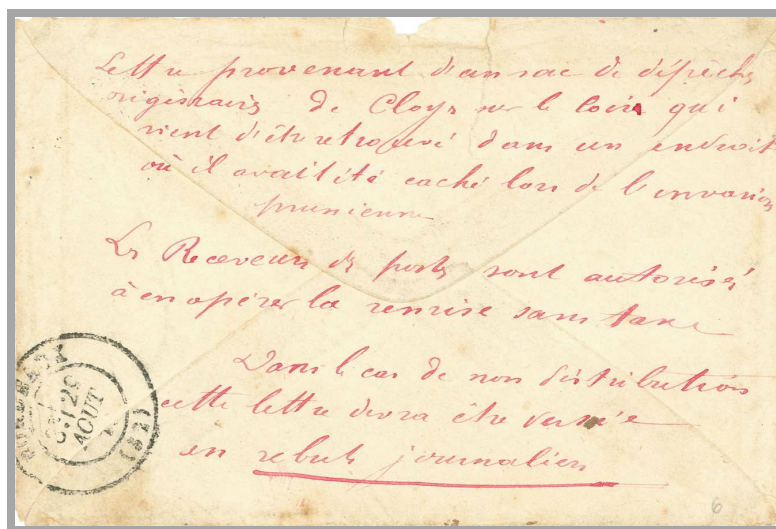
Battle of Vendôme: December 15



The German 3rd, 10th and 13th Corps engaged the 2^e Armée at Vendôme on December 15. The French retreated in great disorder to Le Mans, where they arrived on December 21.



Letter endorsed from the Chasseurs Girondins of the 21st Corps' 4th Division
21st Corps retreated December 16 from Cloys-s-le-Loir – letter left there and hidden
Postmarked August 28, 1873 at the Rebutts & Reclamations bureau in Paris



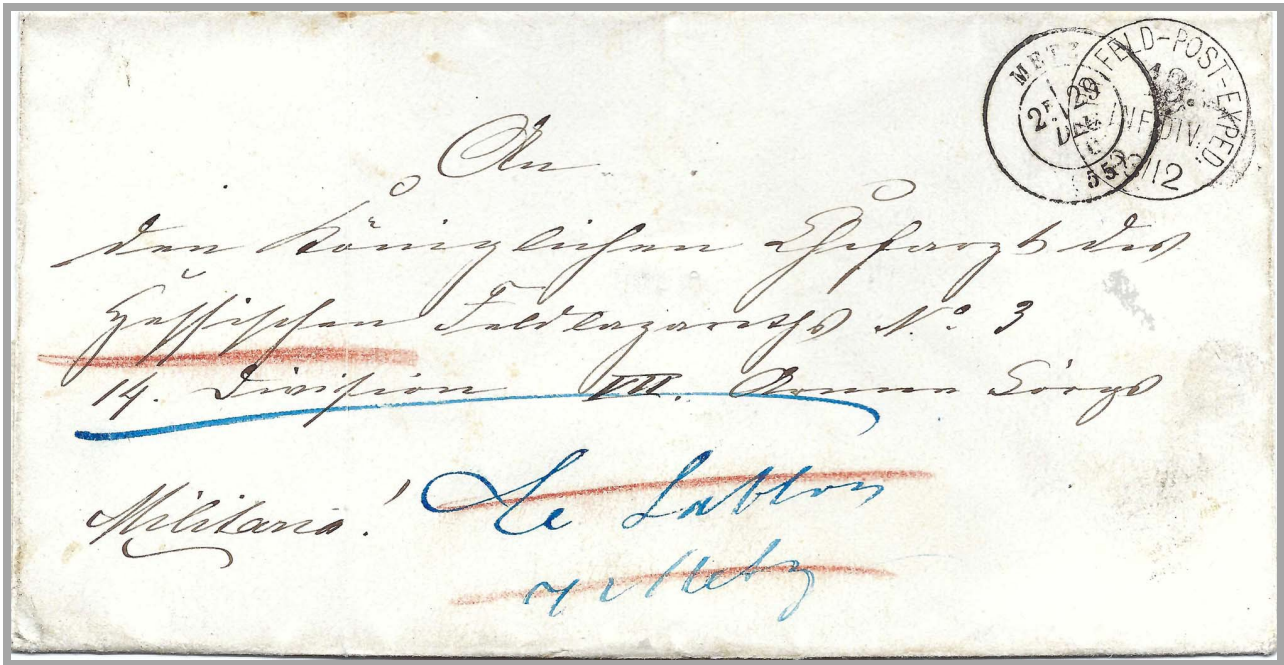
Scan of reverse (90%) – note from postal official describing the 1873 recovery at Cloys
“...vient d’être trouvé dans un endroit où il avait été caché lors de l’invasion prussienne”
Granted a military free frank per the note and “P.P.” mark - delivered August 29 in Bordeaux

Campaign on the Loire

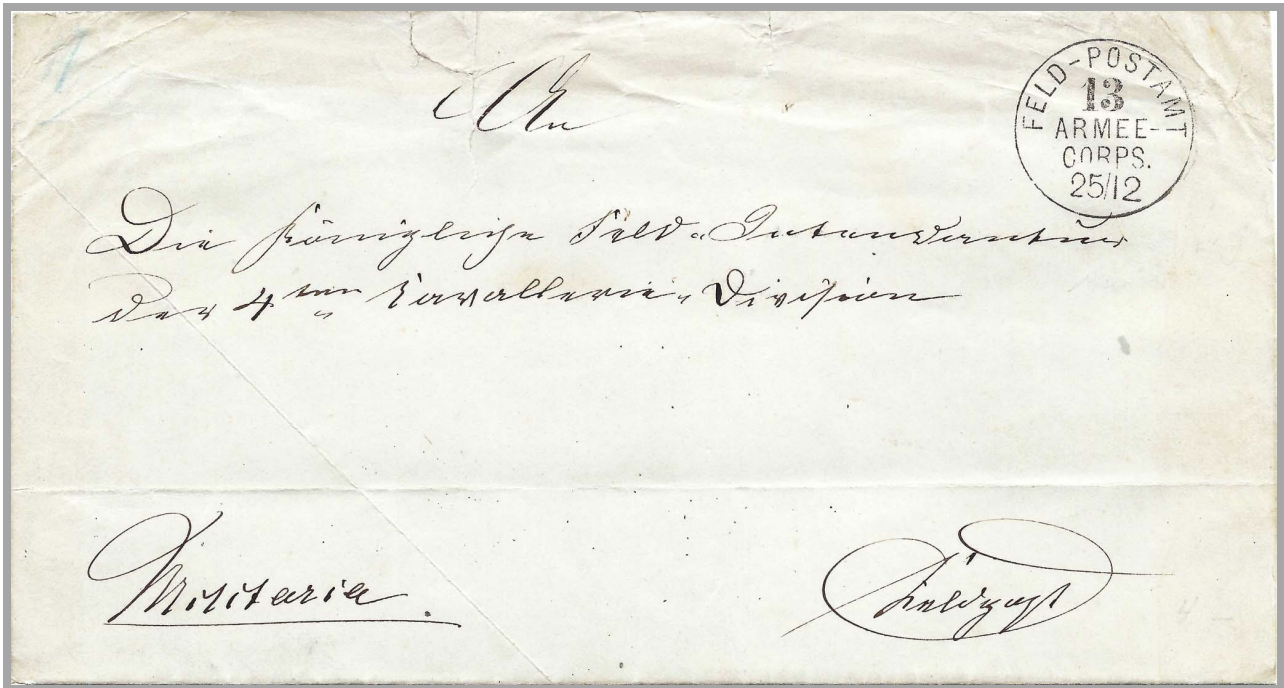
German Reorganization: December 16-31



After the victory at Vendôme, the German II Army re-positioned the 9th Corps and 13th Division to protect Orléans and returned the 13th Corps to the III Army on December 19.



Posted December 28 at the 13th Division (7th Corps) bureau at Châtillon – Dec. 29 Metz arrival



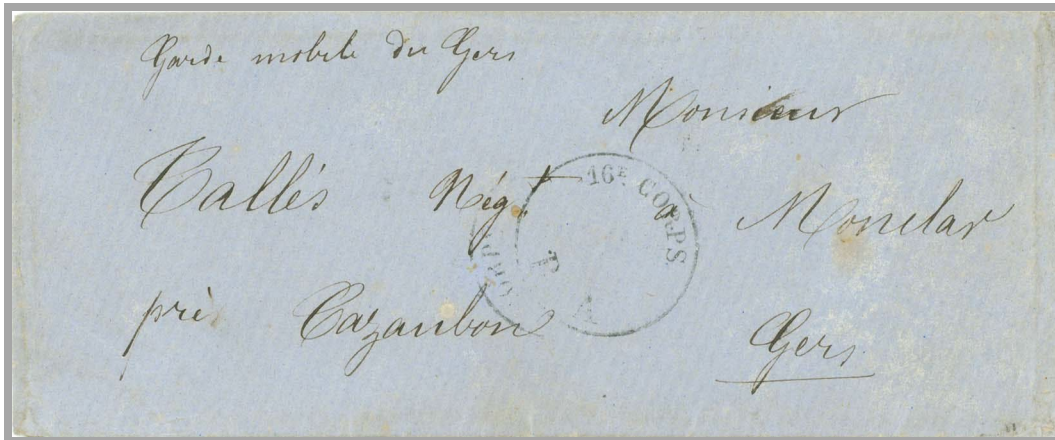
Posted December 25 at the 13th Corps headquarters bureau at Chartres – to 4th Cavalry Division

Campaign on the Loire

2^e Armée de la Loire at Le Mans: December 21 – January 12



With the German II Army no longer in active pursuit, the 2^e Armée de la Loire rested and re-organized. This respite ended on January 1, when the II Army was ordered to attack Le Mans.



Dated December 30 at Le Mans – posted at 16th Corps' 1st Division Bureau A
85th Regiment of Garde Mobile du Gers (17th Corps) transferred to depleted 16th Corps



Prepaid 10c local rate on December 25 in Le Mans – "P.P." mark used as cancel
To Major Le Gonidec de Traisson of the Volontaires de l'Ouest of the 21st Corps
From Charles Tresvaux du Fraval - Le Gonidec was at Le Mans December 24-30

Campaign on the Loire

Battle of Le Mans: January 11-12



The Germans attacked on January 11, but the French held their positions. The next day, an attack directed at poorly-trained mobilis es broke the line, and the 2  Arm e retreated west to Laval on January 17. The German 3rd and 10th Corps occupied Le Mans.



Dated January 12 at Le Mans – unusual green January 13 “3. Armee-Cps.” postmark
Arrived January 23 in Luneburg



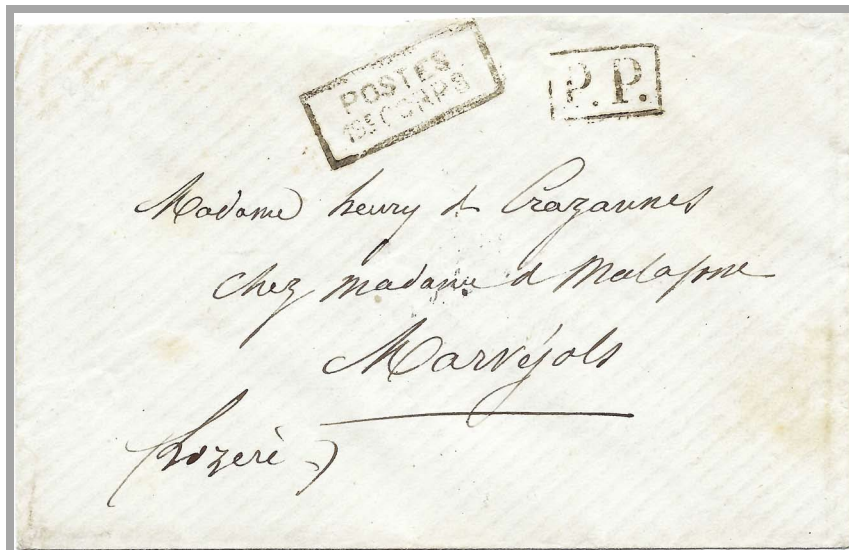
“Bataille du Mans 11 Janvier 1871” by G. Koch

Campaign on the Loire

2^e Armée de la Loire at Laval: January 17-31



The French 2^e Armée de la Loire re-organized for further resistance at Laval. The newly-formed 19th Corps was moved to the northern flank, and the 1st Division of the 17th Corps was transferred to the depleted 16th Corps.



Postmarked January 31 with rare boxed "Postes 19^e Corps" marking
"P.P." for free frank – February 2 Aurillac transit postmark



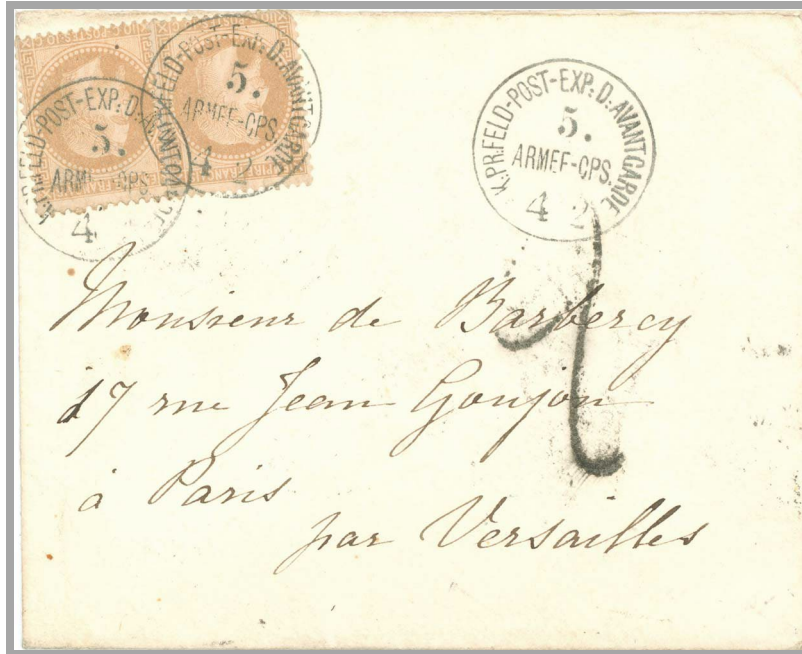
Postmarked "Armée de l'Ouest" on January 25 at the 21st Corps HQ bureau at Laval
Private blue cachet of the 21st Corps Commanding General – arrived January 27

Campaign on the Loire

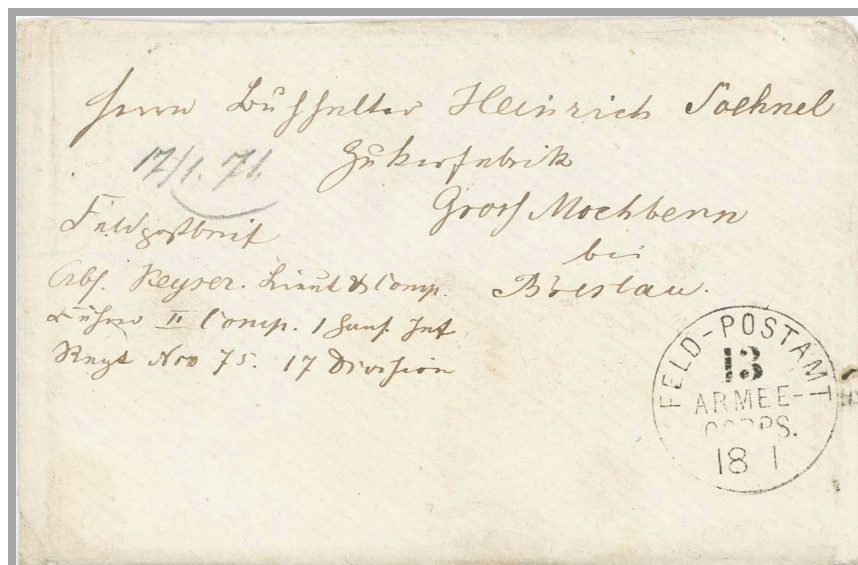
German Occupation of Alençon: January 12 – March 7



On January 19, Mecklenburg's 13th Corps was detached from the II Army, and sent to Rouen to reinforce the I Army. The 4th Cavalry Division stayed behind to occupy Alençon.



Endorsed from the 6th Ulanen Regiment at a horse-breeding farm in Alençon
10c "Lauré" stamps **cancelled by 4th Cavalry Division's February 4 "5. Armee-Cps"**
Routed unsealed via Versailles (for censoring) **to Paris on February 7** – 20c due



Dated January 17 at Alençon – postmarked next day at the 13th Corps HQ bureau
From a Lieutenant in the 75th Regiment of the 17th Division – arrived January 28

Campaign on the Loire

Armistice: January 31 – March 7



Paris signed a 21-day armistice on January 28, and hostilities in the Loire region ceased on January 31. On March 7, the French armies were disbanded. During March, the Germans left the Loire region and moved north of the Seine River.



20c stamp cancelled “2^e Armée Postes Grand Quartier Général” in Poitiers on March 5
Private “2^e Armée de la Loire Etat-Major Général” unit marking – arrived March 6



Prepaid 50c rate to Rome on February 11 at the 17th Corps' 1st Division bureau
1st Division was leaving that day to join the 16th Corps – arrived February 15

Campaign on the Loire

Armistice: January 31 – March 7



On February 11, most of the 2^e Armée de la Loire moved to a defensive position south of the Loire, leaving the newly-formed 2^e Armée de Bretagne to protect Brittany.



Blue March 1 postmark from the 2^e Armée de la Loire's 19th Corps HQ bureau near Tours



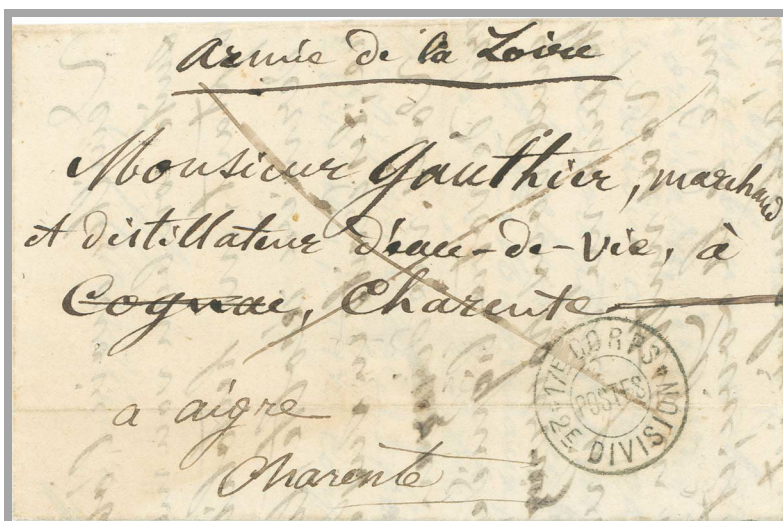
Prepaid 60c double-weight registered rate on March 3 at the 19th Corps' 1st Division bureau
Postmarked that day in transit at nearby Thouars – arrived March 6 in Lyon

Campaign on the Loire

Armistice: January 31 - March 7



The 2^e Armée de Bretagne was formed to protect western France in the event of renewed hostilities. It consisted of a diverse group of regular army troops and Gardes Mobilisées.



Dated February 21 near Laval - posted at the 17th Corps' 2nd Division bureau
From the 64th March Regiment in the 2^e Armée de Bretagne - arrived February 26



Dated February 1 near Nantes - posted at the 17th Corps' Cavalry Division bureau
Countersigned by Col. de Lacombe of the 8th Hussards Regiment in the 2^e Armée de Bretagne

Campaign on the Loire

Armistice: January 31 – March 7



The March 1, 1871 preliminary peace treaty mandated the dissolution of the French armies, so the 2^e Armée de la Loire and the 2^e Armée de Bretagne were disbanded on March 7.



Posted February 1871 in occupied Rouen – red German “Rouen *1871*” postmark
Addressed to Chasseurs du Havre in the Corps Lipowski of the 2^e Armée de Bretagne
Sent to Beuvron-en-Auge (near Caen) on February 22 - **marked “INCONNU LIPOVSKI”**
Forwarded to St. Hilaire on March 12 and returned to the sender at Rouen on March 22
Marked “Corps licencié” in blue since the corps had been disbanded on March 7

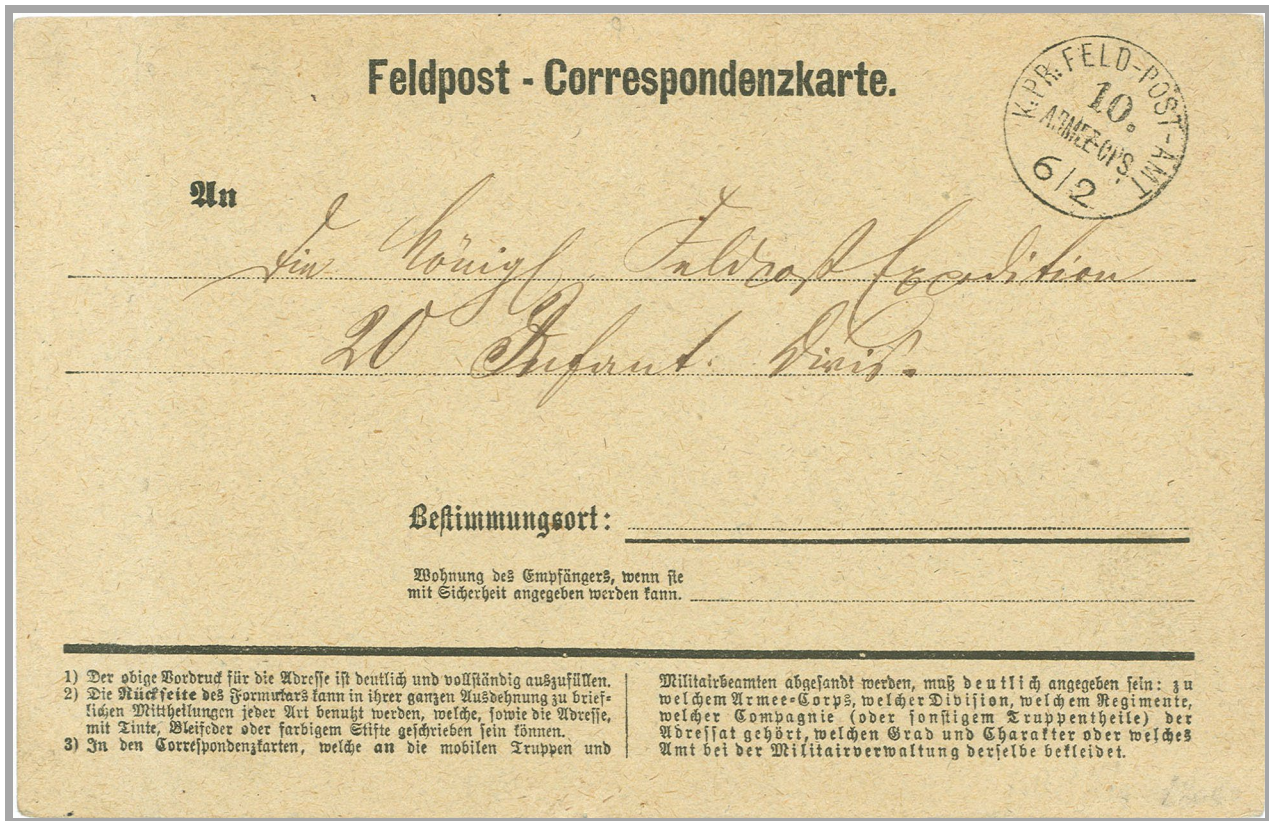
**INCONNU
LIPOVSKI**

Campaign on the Loire

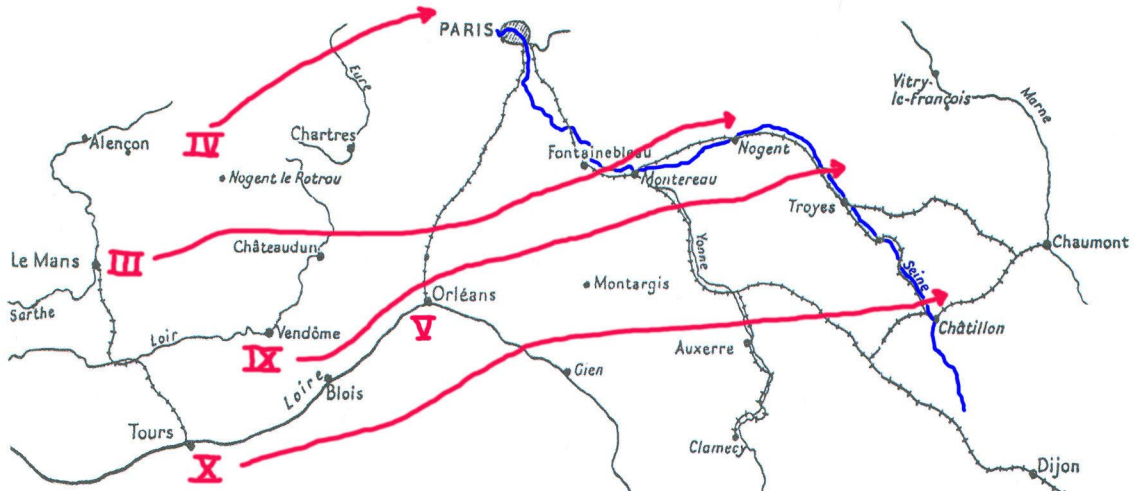
Armistice: January 31 – March 7



A March 4 military convention prescribed the withdrawal of the II Army to new positions north of the Seine River. By March 31, they had completely evacuated the Loire region.



Dated February 6 at Tours – posted at 10th Army Corps bureau – to a 20th Division soldier



Map of the withdrawal of German corps (red roman numerals) from the Loire region

Campaign in the North

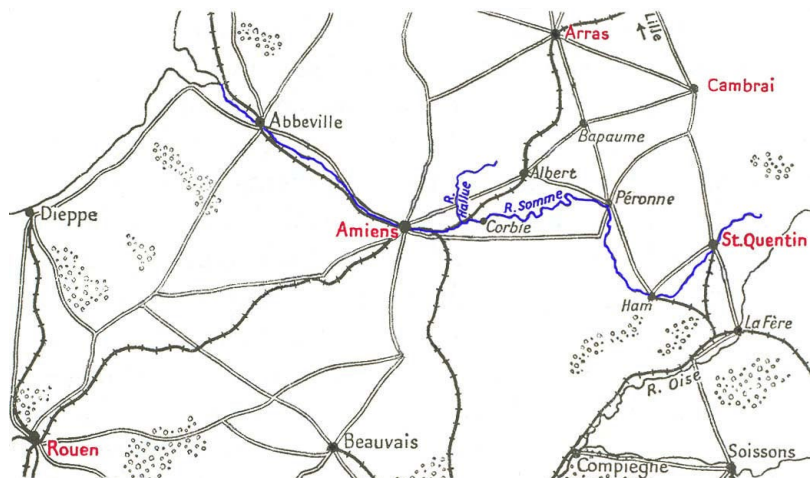
Historical Summary: October 17 – March 7



- The French Armée du Nord was formed on October 17 to threaten the Paris siege, but lost the November 27 battle of Amiens to the German I Army. Organized into the 22nd and 23rd Corps on December 18, it won a December 23 battle east of Amiens, but was shattered at the January 19 Battle of St. Quentin. A January 31-March 7 armistice ended hostilities.
- The weak French Armée de Rouen lost the December 4-5 Battle of Rouen to the I Army and retreated to Le Havre for the rest of the war.



“Armée du Nord Quartier Général” postmarks – to 22nd Corps payeur at Cambrai



Area of military operations for the Campaign in the North

Campaign in the North

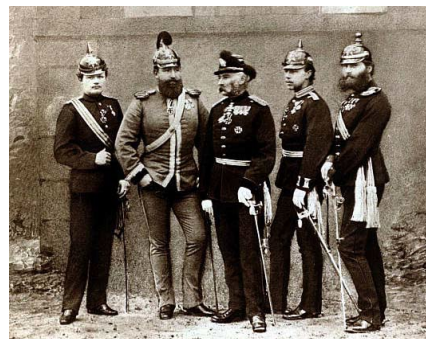
German Advance into the North: September 26 – November 20



On September 26, the German IV Army detached the 12th (Saxon) Cavalry Division and the 2nd Garde Infantry Regiment to Clermont (midway between Paris and Amiens). On November 20, they were attached to the I Army.



Dated October 27 at Clermont - posted October 31 at the 12th Cavalry Division bureau
From the 2nd Garde Infantry Regiment – arrived November 5 in Düsseldorf



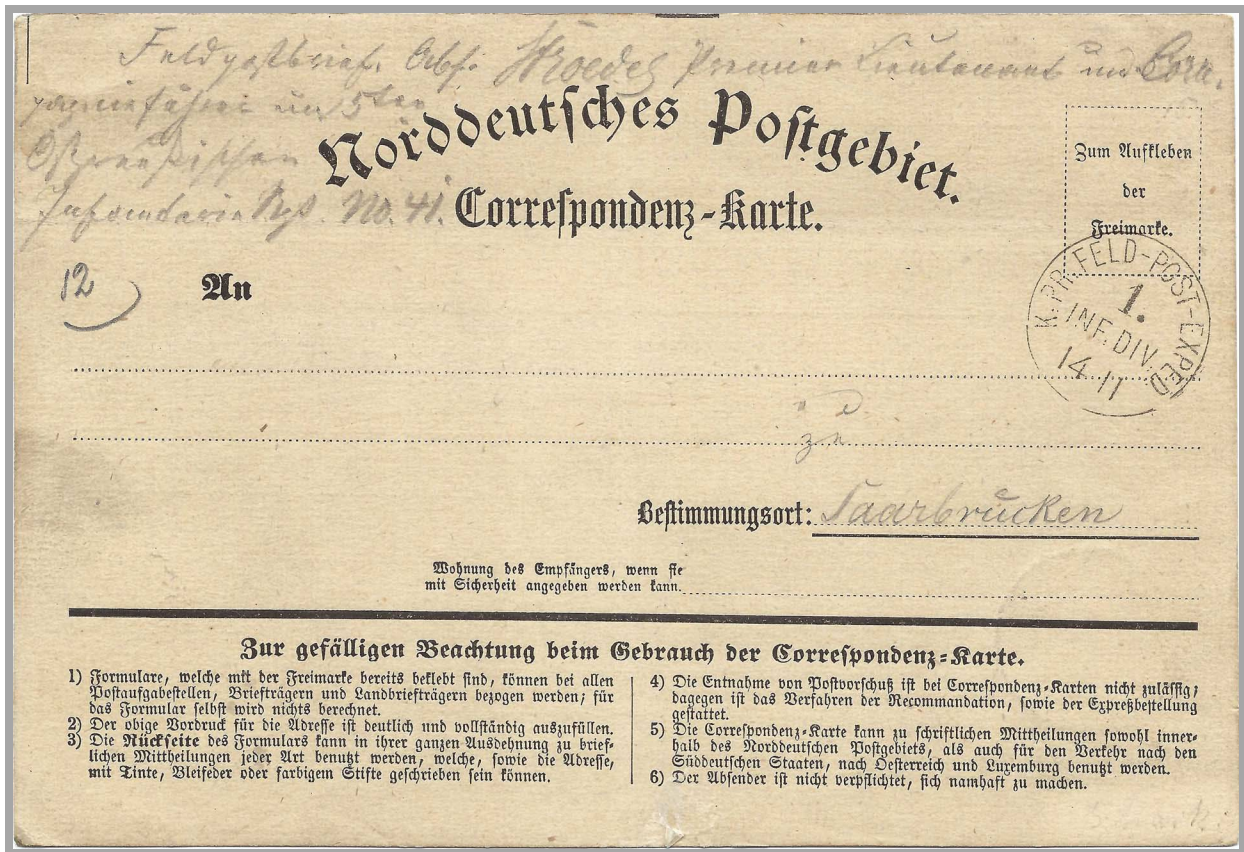
Photograph of soldiers in the 12th (Saxon) Corps

Campaign in the North

German Advance into the North: September 26 – November 20



The October 27 surrender of Metz released the 42,000-man I Army (1st Corps, 8th Corps and 3rd Cavalry Division) for service in the North. They reached the Soissons area on November 20.



Posted November 14 at the 1st Infantry Division bureau - besieged Mézières November 2-25
From the I Army's 41st Ostpreussen Infantry Regiment – arrived November 19 in Saarbrücken



“Advance of the Prussian Army” by C. Becker

Campaign in the North

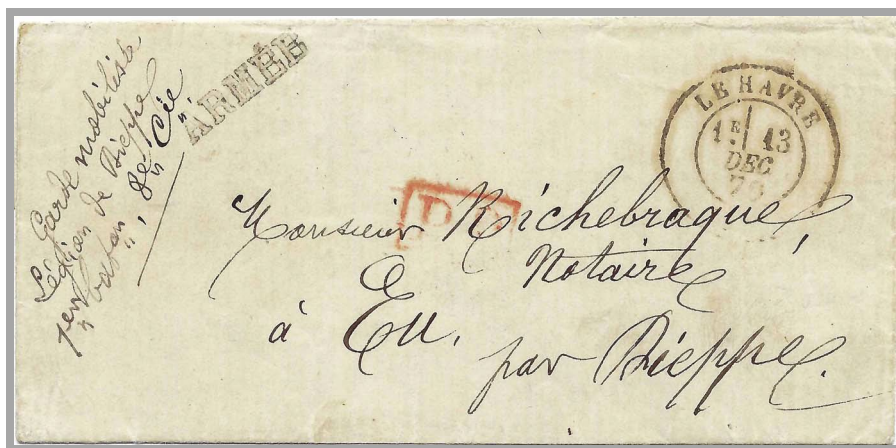
Armée de Rouen/Le Havre: September 15 – March 7



The 22,000-man French Armée de Rouen was formed around Gardes Mobiles and two cavalry regiments that had escaped from Sedan. They were defeated at Rouen on December 4-5 and retreated to join the 33,000-man Armée du Havre, which played no further offensive role in the war.



Posted with free frank at Fleury (southeast of Rouen) on November 13
From Garde Mobile de la Loire-Inférieure of the Armée de Rouen – arrived November 17



Posted December 13 in Le Havre – marked **"ARMÉE"** and "P.P." for free frank
From the Légion Mobilisée de Dieppe of the Armée du Havre – arrived December 16 in Eu

Campaign in the North

First Battle of Amiens: November 27



The German I Army (1st Corps, 8th Corps and 3rd Cavalry Division) attacked the French 22nd Corps east of Amiens. The French retreated north to Arras.

Feldpost-Correspondenzkarte.

An *Lehrmann Hoff*

Bestimmungsort: *Elberfeld*

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Dated near Amiens on November 27 – posted the next day at the I Army HQ bureau
From the 7th Konigs-Husar Regiment of the 8th Corps - arrived December 3 in Elberfeld



Lithograph of the First Battle of Amiens

Campaign in the North

Battle of Rouen: December 4-5



The German 8th Corps attacked the French Armée de Rouen, which retreated to Le Havre on December 7. The 1st Corps occupied Rouen.

Feldpost - Correspondenzkarte.

An *Herrn Dr. Kopsak*

Bestimmungsort: *Friedland in Ostpreußen*

Wohnung des Empfängers, wenn sie mit Sicherheit angegeben werden kann.

1) Der obige Bordruck für die Adresse ist deutlich und vollständig auszufüllen.
2) Die Rückseite des Formulars kann in ihrer ganzen Ausdehnung zu brieflichen Mittheilungen jeder Art benutzt werden, welche, sowie die Adresse, mit Tinte, Bleifeder oder farbigem Stifte geschrieben sein können.
3) In den Correspondenzarten, welche an die mobilen Truppen und Militairbeamten abgesandt werden, muß deutlich angegeben sein: zu welchem Armeekorps, welcher Division, welchem Regimente, welcher Compagnie (oder sonstigem Truppentheile) der Adressat gehört, welchen Grad und Charakter oder welches Amt bei der Militairverwaltung derselbe bekleidet.

Datelined near Rouen – posted December 6 at 1st Corps' Reserve bureau - arrived December 18



“Contre-attaque d’Infanterie” by Paul Grolleron

Campaign in the North

Armée du Nord: December 3 - January 31



Général Faidherbe arrived at Lille on December 3 to reorganize the Armée du Nord. At that time, he introduced a fieldpost service, which used undated blue straight-line postmarks for army headquarters and the 22nd Corps.



Posted December 9 at the Armée du Nord headquarters bureau by 22nd Corps payeur
Postmarked December 10 in transit at nearby Lille - arrived December 15



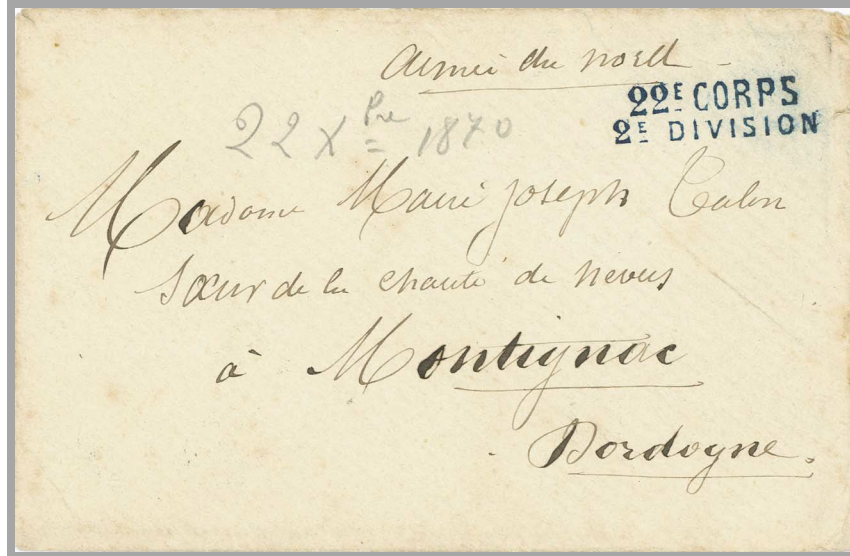
Posted January 9 at the 22nd Corps' 2nd Division bureau - free frank per "P.P."
Postmarked January 10 in transit at nearby Arras - arrived January 12

Campaign in the North

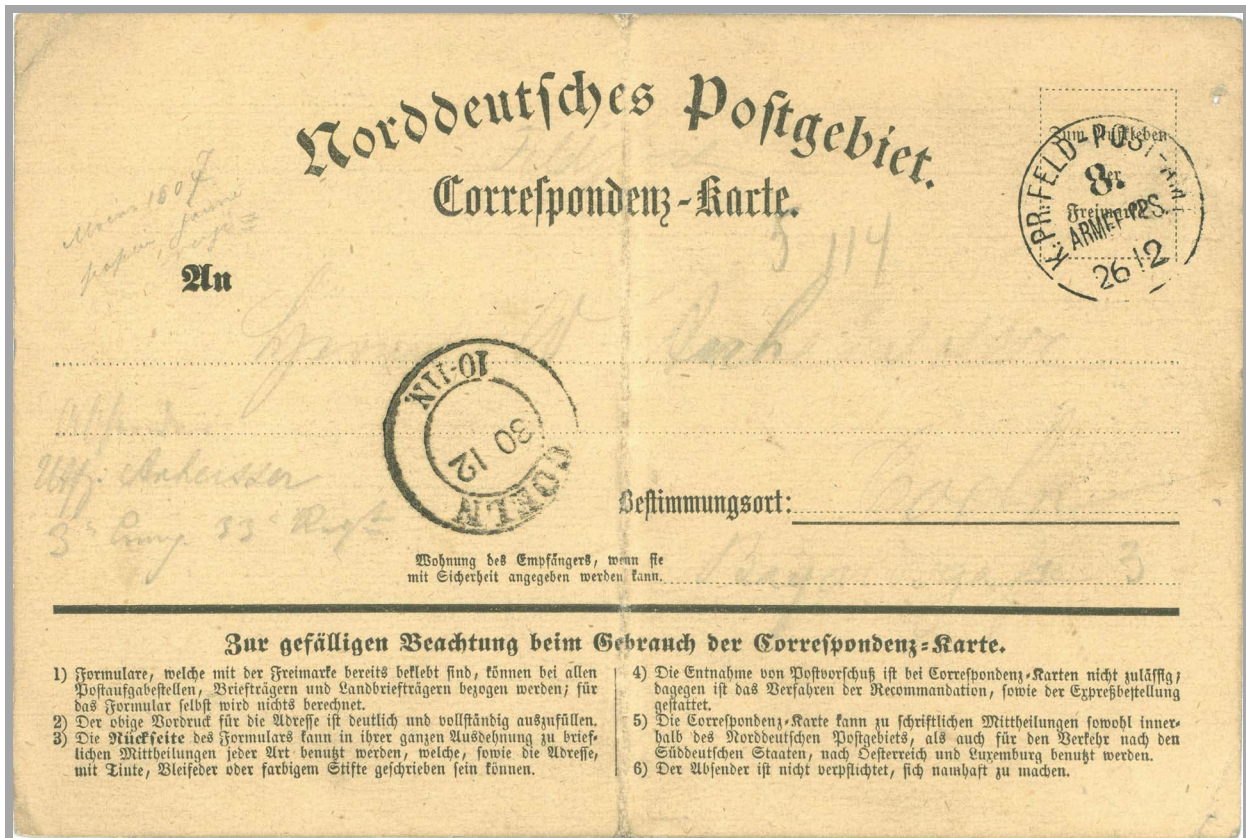
Second Battle of Amiens: December 23



The German I Army attacked the Armée du Nord at the Hallue River east of Amiens. The French repulsed the attack, but then retreated north to Arras.



Docketed December 22 and posted at the 22nd Corps' 2nd Division bureau
Arrived in southern France on December 26



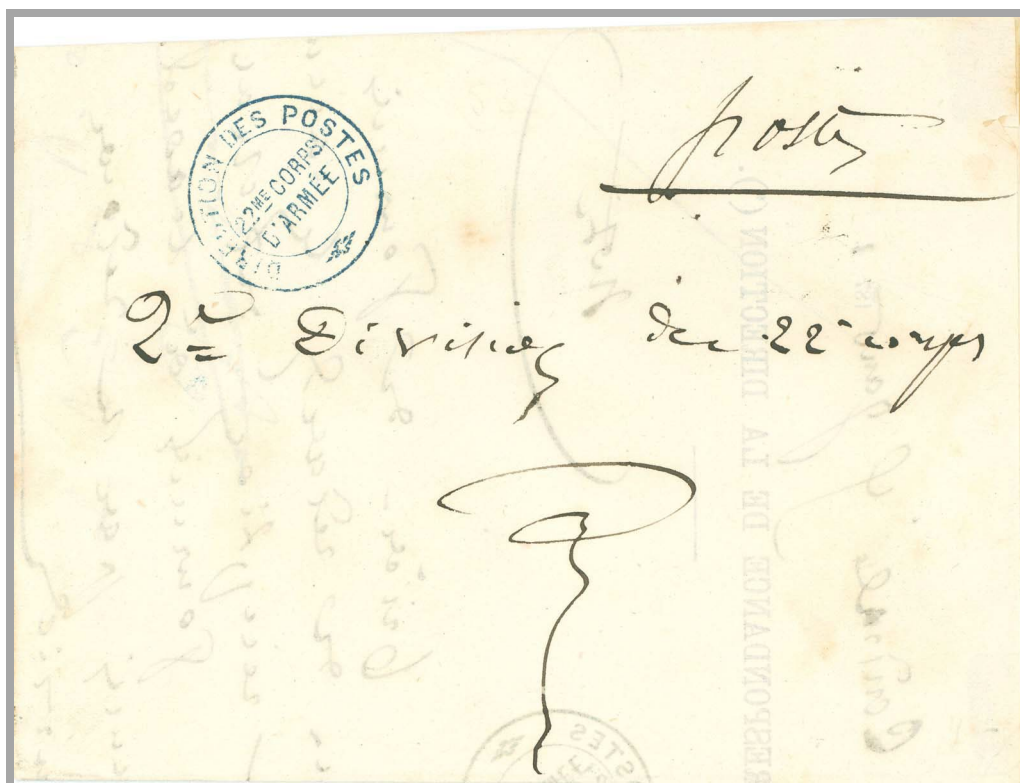
Dated near Amiens on December 24 – posted at the 8th Corps bureau two days later

Campaign in the North

Battle of Bapaume: January 3



The Armée du Nord attacked the German 8th Corps and 3rd Cavalry Division. The French effectively won the battle but withdrew to Cambrai.



Dated January 5 at Cambrai - postmarked "Direction des Postes 22^{me} Corps d'Armée"
Sent to the military postmaster of the 22nd Corps' 2nd Division



"Bataille de Bapaume" by Armand Dumaresq (1871)

Campaign in the North

Armée du Nord at Cambrai: January 4-18



The Armée du Nord rested at Cambrai after the failed attack on Bapaume. Mail to the army benefited from a military free frank.



Posted prepaid 10c on January 6 in occupied Épinal – provisional and Relais No. 66 postmarks
 Mis-addressed to 22nd Corps at Metz on January 8 – Metz “**Ober Postdirection**” censor mark
 Forwarded via Prussia and Lille on January 13 to Cambrai – no postage due per free frank



Auf militairischen
 B. f. hi aufgehoben

Posted prepaid 20c on January 10 in occupied Bischweiler – **blue military censor mark**
 Addressed 24th Regiment depot - soldier was assigned to 22nd Corps’ 68th Régiment de Marche
 Arrived February 3 in Cambrai with a French free frank per the “PD” mark

Campaign in the North

Battle of St. Quentin: January 19



The German I Army routed the Armée du Nord at St. Quentin. The French retreated north to Arras and distributed their forces among northern cities.



Dated by a sergeant in the 73rd march regiment – **report on St. Quentin battle**
Dropped in postbox – postmarked January 23 in St. Omer – 30c postage due

Feldpost - Correspondenzkarte.

An den *Herrn W. Anheiser*
3 Bayardgasse
Cöln

Kopie an:
H. Anheiser
König. Regim. Urd. u. G.
Regim. u. Fil. Regim.
N. 33
3. Comp.

tes **Armee-Corps.**
te **Division.**
tes **Regiment N^o**

te **Compagnie.**
te **Schwadron.**
Batterie.

1) Correspondenzkarten an die mobile Armee werden portofrei befördert und sind bei sämtlichen Norddeutschen Postanstalten käuflich zu haben (5 Stück à 3 Pfennige).
2) In den Correspondenzkarten muß deutlich angegeben sein, zu welchem Armee-Corps, welcher Division, welchem Regimente, welcher Compagnie (oder sonstigem Truppenteile) der Adressat gehört, welchen Grad und Charakter oder welches Amt bei der Militär-Verwaltung derselbe bekleidet.
3) Die Rückseite des Formulars kann in ihrer ganzen Ausdehnung zu brieflichen Mittheilungen jeder Art benutzt werden, welche, sowie die Adresse, mit Tinte, Bleifeder oder farbigem Stifte geschrieben sein können.
4) In **Privat-Angelegenheiten** ist eine Recommendation der Correspondenzkarten nicht gestattet.

Posted at 8th Corps Reserve bureau at St. Quentin on January 20 – arrived January 26

Campaign in the North

Armistice: January 31 – March 7



Per an armistice signed at Paris, hostilities in the North ceased on January 31. On March 7, the Armée du Nord was disbanded. In the interim, new 2-ring fieldpost postmarks were introduced.



Posted February 23 at the Armée du Nord HQ bureau near Lille – arrived February 24
10c and 20c Bordeaux Issue franking for 30c postage to Belgium – blue “P.P.” cancels



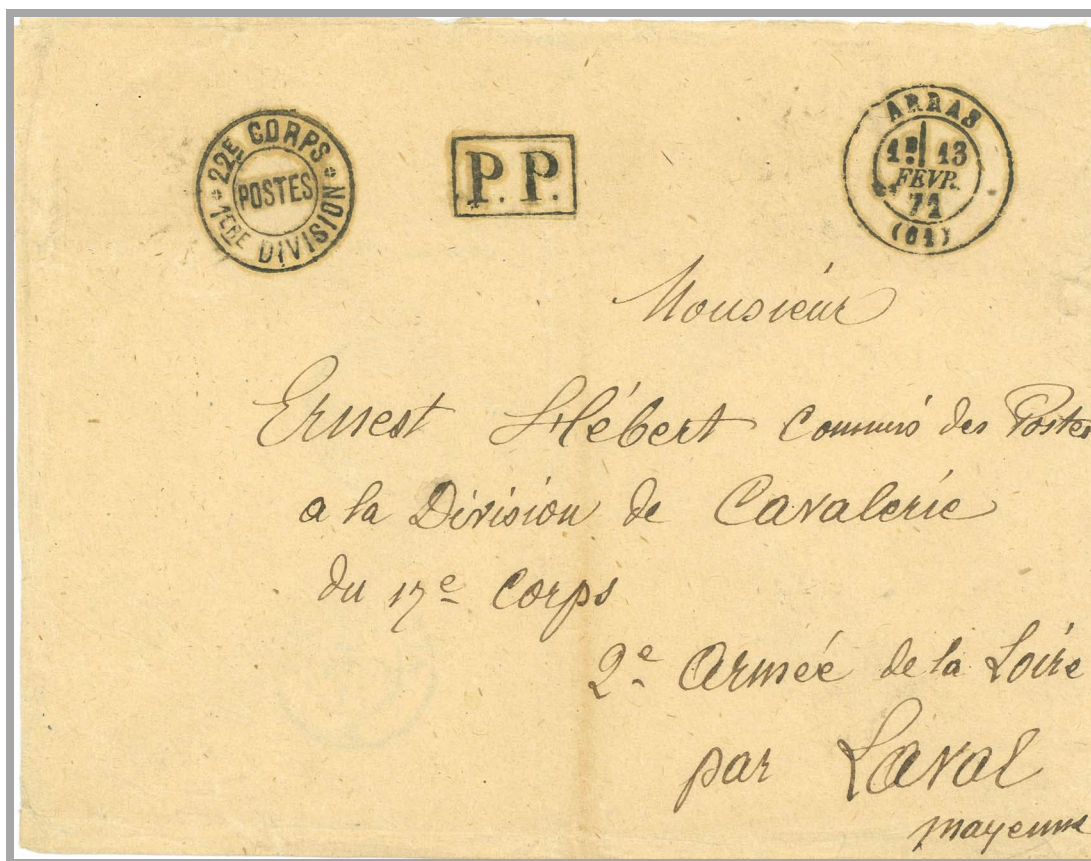
“23^e Corps Postes 1^{ère} Division” cancels on 20c Bordeaux Issue stamps for postage via Belgium
“23^e Corps Postes Quartier Général” transit postmark – arrived March 31 in occupied Bayon

Campaign in the North

Armistice: January 31 – March 7



Posted February 9 at the 22nd Corps' 2nd Division bureau near Cambrai
"P.P." mark for free frank – from the 2nd Division's military postmaster



Posted February 13 at the 22nd Corps' 1st Division bureau near Arras
Provisional "P.P." mark – February 18 "17^e Corps Postes D^{on} de Cavalerie" arrival

Campaign in the North

Armistice: January 31 - March 7



Posted prepaid 20c in occupied Rouen - addressed to the 22nd Corps' 2nd Division
Routed via Prussia and Lille on February 17 to Cambrai - "P.P." mark for arrival free frank



Posted prepaid 20c in occupied Amiens - provisional "Amiens 1871 Poste" postmark
February 7 "22^e Corps Postes 2^e Division" arrival mark - incorrect 30c postage due

Campaign in the North

Armistice: January 31 – March 7



The 23rd Corps had been formed from elements of the oversized 22nd Corps on December 18. Together, they constituted the Armée du Nord along with the Isnard and Pauly flying columns.



Posted February 17 at the 23rd Corps' 1st Division bureau -arrived February 18
Armée du Nord blue **provisional "P.P."** mark for free frank



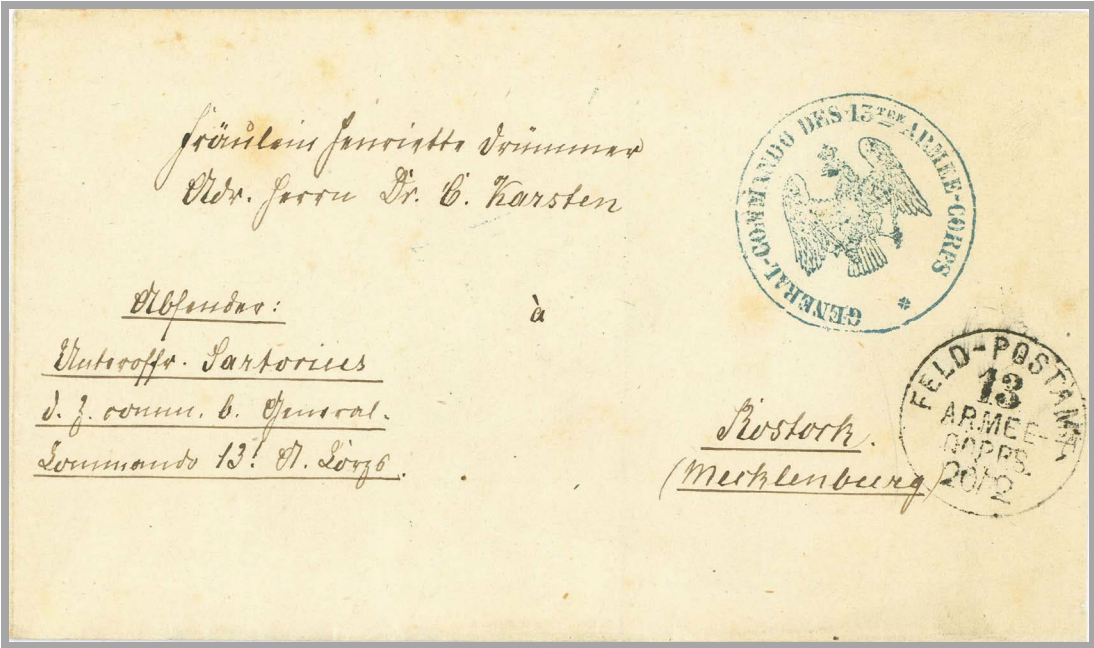
Posted February 22 at the 23rd Corps' 2nd Division bureau – arrived February 23

Campaign in the North

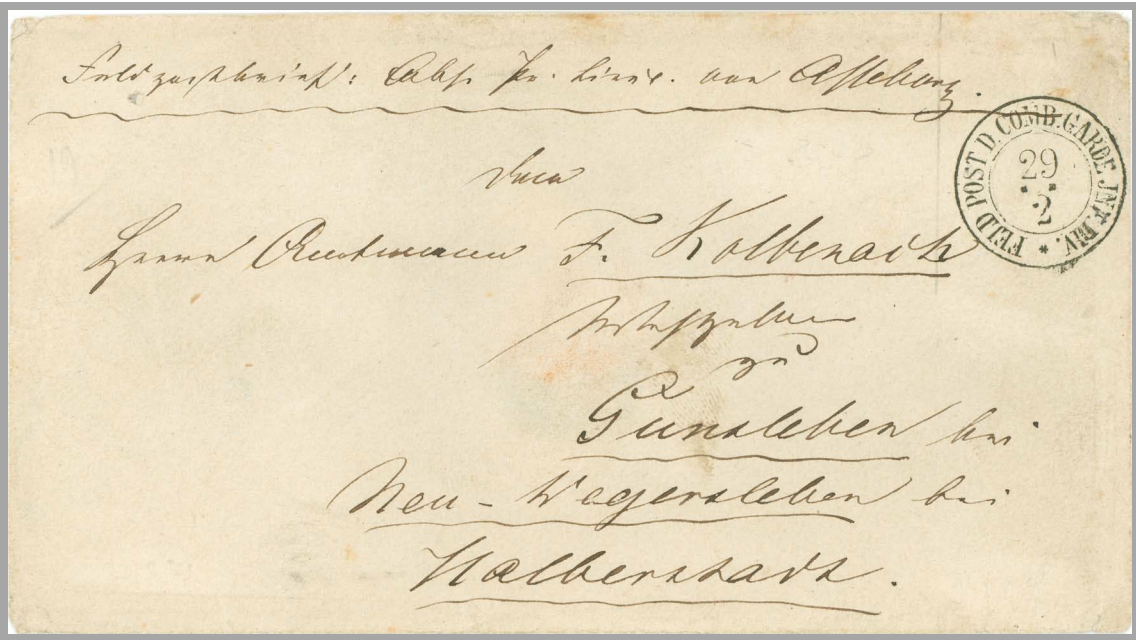
Armistice: January 31 – March 7



The March 1 Preliminary Peace Treaty called for German withdrawals based on indemnity payments. They evacuated the north of France starting on July 22, 1871.



Posted February 20 at the 13th Corps HQ bureau – **blue 13th Corps Commander mark**
13th Corps was transferred January 19 to reinforce the I Army – arrived February 24



February 29 “Comb. Garde Inf. Div” postmark used by the detachment from the IV Army

Campaign in the East

German 14th Army Corps: September 30 – February 13



The German 14th Corps was formed on September 30 from the Baden Division (recently released from the siege of Strasbourg) and two Prussian brigades. They advanced south to Vesoul on October 18.



Posted December 20 at the 14th Corps bureau at Dijon – arrived December 26 in Mustrin Blue “K. Train-Reg Leit. Esc. 14 A. Corps” private unit marking



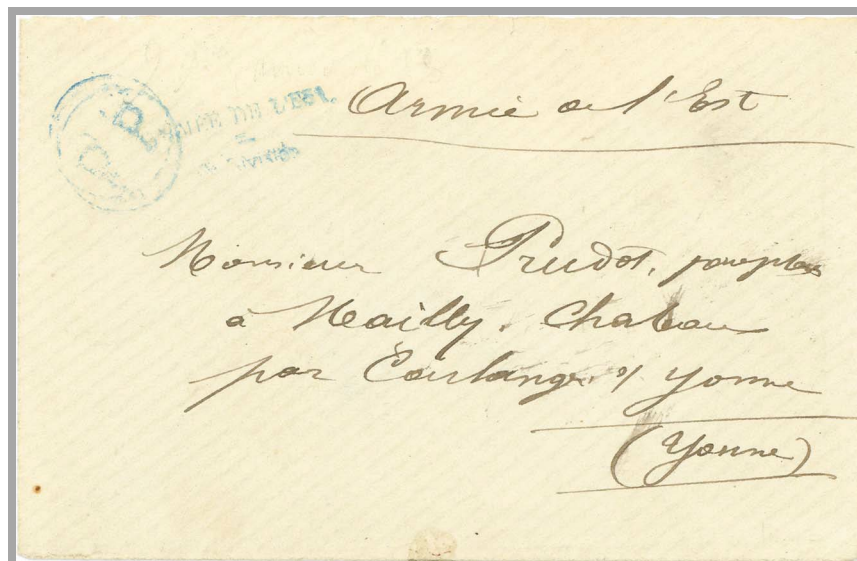
Map of 14th Corps advance (in green) from Strasbourg



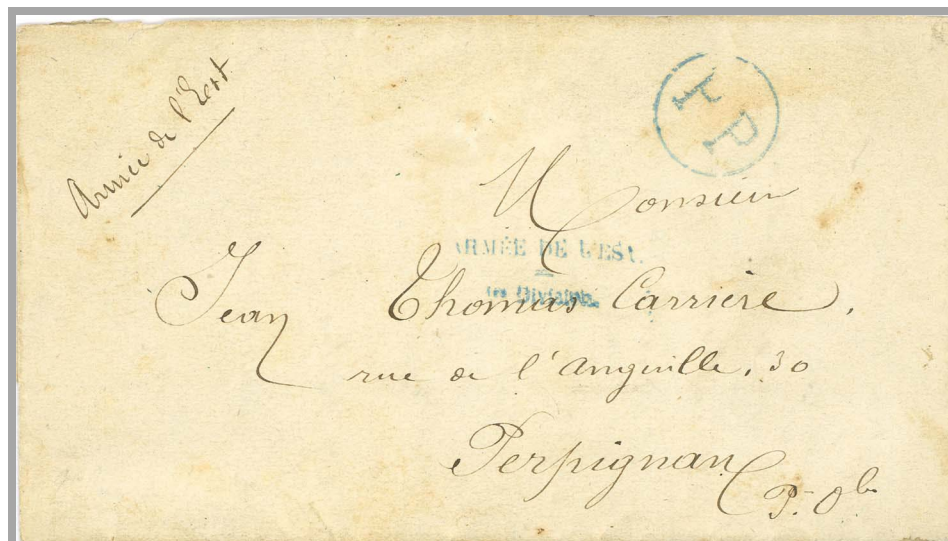
Campaign in the East

Armée de l'Est: October 21 - November 15

On October 21, the two-division Armée de l'Est was organized at Besançon, along with a fieldpost service. They used bluish undated two-line postmarks and a special "P.P." marking. This army was transferred 25 days later to the Loire as the 20th Corps, so surviving mail is rare.



Posted at the Armée de l'Est 2nd Division bureau near Besançon - arrived November 13



ARMÉE DE L'EST.
1^{re} Division.

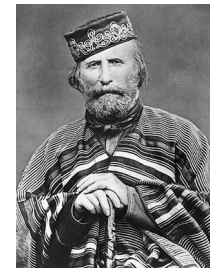
Dated November 4 at Auxon (near Besançon) by a payeur officer in the 2nd Brigade
Postmarked "Armée de l'Est 1^{re} Division" - distinctive blue "P.P." for free frank
Arrived November 9 in Perpignan - **this army was in existence for only 25 days**



Campaign in the East

Armée des Vosges: October 14 - March 10

Léon Gambetta offered Giuseppe Garibaldi command of all Corps Francs in the Vosges region and one Garde Mobile brigade. On October 14, Garibaldi left Tours to form his Armée des Vosges at Dôle. In January, his headquarters was provided with a fieldpost service.



Garibaldi

Posted October 25 in besieged Paris - **addressed to Général Garibaldi** at Tours
Left October 27 on the "Vauban" - arrived November 2 in Tours - forwarded to Dôle



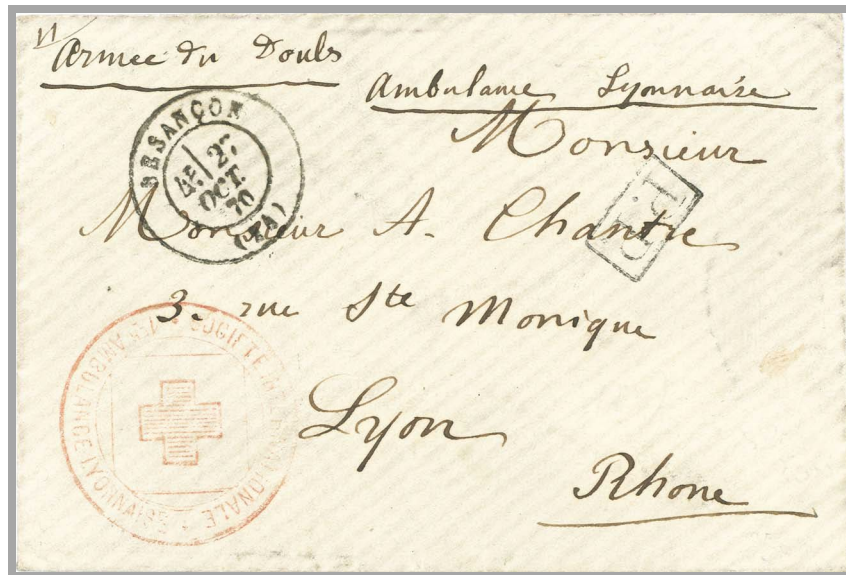
Dated February 9 near Chalon-s-Saône - **postmarked "Armée des Vosges Postes Q^{er} Gal"**
From the 4^e Légion de Garde Nationale Mobilisée du Jura - arrived February 15 in Mareuil

Campaign in the East

Battle on the Ognon River: October 22



The German 14th Corps attacked elements of the Armée de l'Est and gained control of the bridges over the Ognon. Stopped north of Besançon, the 14th Corps retreated to Gray on October 24.



Posted with free frank on October 27 in Besançon – endorsed “Armée du Doubs”
Red “Société Internationale 1^{er} Ambulance Lyonnaise” private marking
Treated the wounded after the battle – arrived October 30 in Lyon



“Episode from the Franco-Prussian War” by Alphonse de Neuville (1875)

Campaign in the East

Battle of Dijon: October 30



The Armée de la Côte d'Or evacuated Dijon on October 28 and retreated to Dôle. It returned to be defeated on October 30 by the Baden Division, which occupied Dijon the next day.



Posted with free frank on October 29 in Dôle – **endorsed “Armée de la Côte d’Or”**
Green oval “Francs-Tireurs du Midi 2^{me} Cie” private marking – arrived November 2
This army was formed October 19 and disbanded November 1 - **only 12 days**



“Dijon 30 October 1870” lithograph by Münchmeyer

Campaign in the East

Baden Division at Dijon: October 31 - December 27



The Baden Division of the 14th Corps had a dedicated fieldpost with two types of "GR.BAD.FELDPOST" postmarks.



Posted by French civilian in Dijon - November 30 large Baden Division postmark
Blue "Commandantur von Dijon" censor marking - civilian post had left October 31
Arrived February 24 in Arras - "P.P." annulled and 30c postage due assessed



Postmarked "GR.BAD.FELDPOST" on November 11 in Dijon - small type is rarer
Black "Gr. Bad. 3 Infanterie Reg. 3. (Fues.) Bat." unit marking - arrived November 15

Campaign in the East

Battle of Nuits-Côte d'Or: December 18



The Baden Division advanced south toward Nuits and attacked the Cremer Division. Cremer retreated to Beaune, and the Baden Division returned to Dijon on December 19.



Posted December 15 at Nuits by soldier in the Cremer Division's 1^{re} Légion de Marche du Rhône



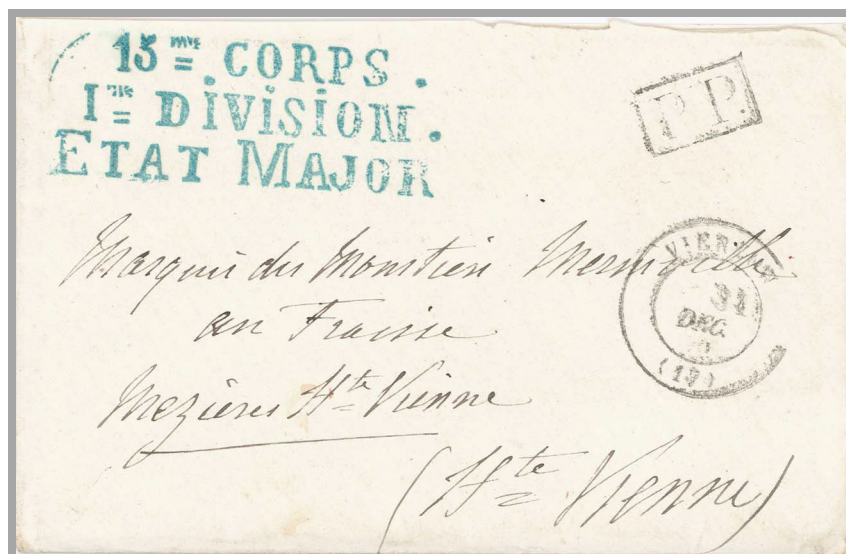
Postmarked December 17 at the Baden Division bureau in Dijon - just before the battle



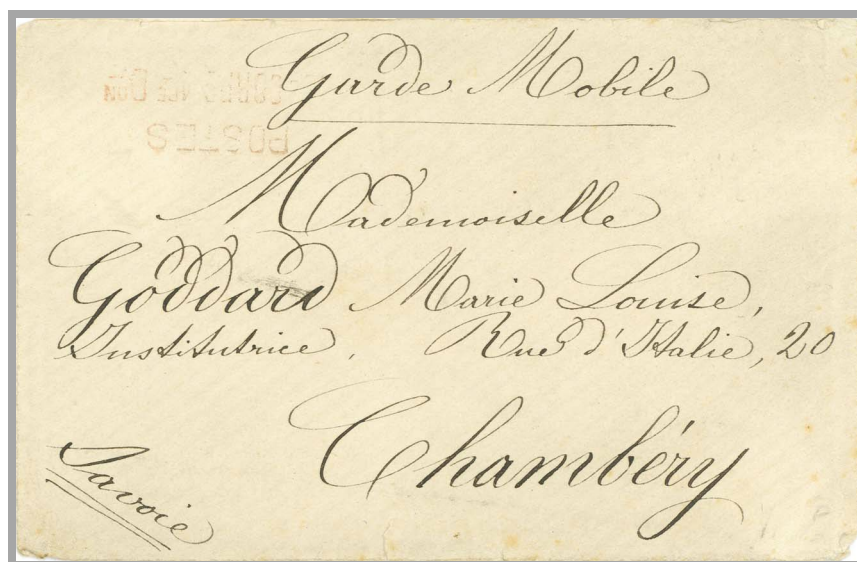
Campaign in the East

1^{re} Armée Moves East: December 19 – January 8

On December 19, Général Bourbaki's 1^{re} Armée (15th, 18th, 20th and 24th Corps, along with the Cremer Division) was ordered from Bourges to Vesoul. The plan was to re-capture Dijon and lift the siege of Belfort. They were mostly in place by January 8.



Posted at Vierzon on December 31 – just before departure for Clerval
Blue 15th Corps private unit marking – arrived January 2 in Mézières



New style "Postes 15^e Corps 1^{re} Don" fieldpost postmark was introduced January 1
Applied in red enroute to Clerval - arrived January 7 in Chambéry

Campaign in the East

1^{re} Armée Moves East: December 19 – January 8



The Ministry of War decreed the formation of the 25th Corps at Vierzon on January 1 to replace the departed 15th Corps and to protect Bourges. They were provided with a fieldpost.



Blue “25^e Corps d’Armée Q^{tier} Général” postmark - cancels **Bordeaux Issue 20c (II)**
From the 2nd Division’s Garde Mobile du Puy de Dôme – no Ardes arrival postmark



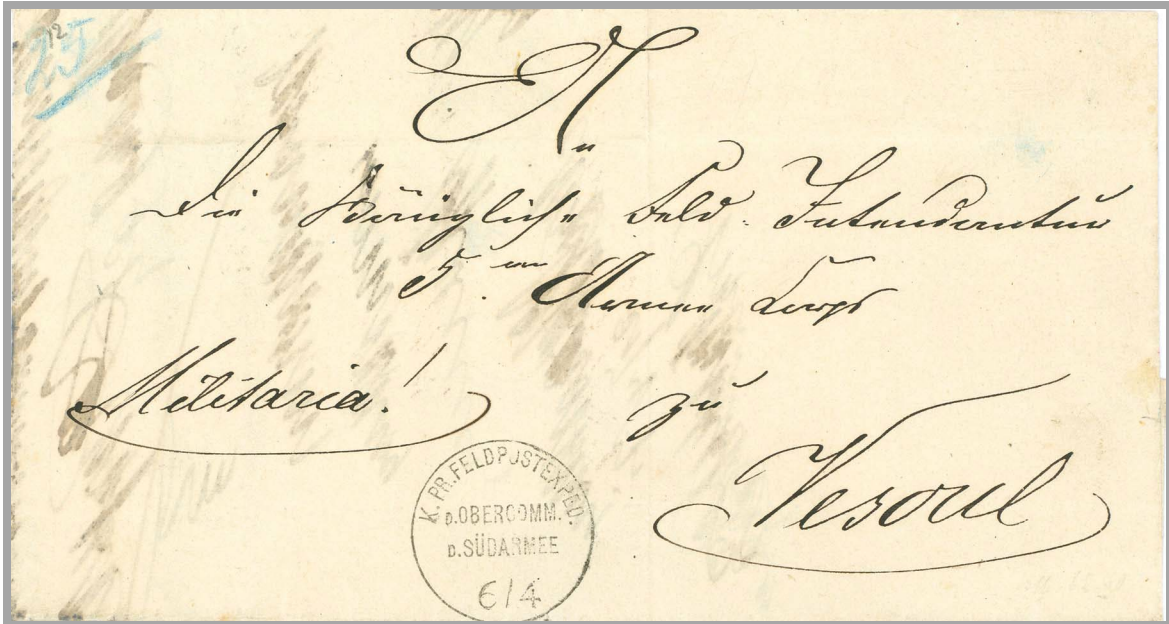
Dated February 7 near Vierzon – postmarked “25^e Corps d’Armée 2^e Division”
From the 7^e Bataillon de Marche de Chasseurs à Pied – arrived February 9 in Jumeaux

Campaign in the East

German Sud Army: January 6 – March 31



On January 6, the German 2nd and 7th Corps were detached from the II Army and combined with the 14th Corps to form the Sud Army (91,000 men) to operate against Bourbaki's 1^{re} Armée. On January 14, they left Châtillon for Besançon.



Postmarked at the Sud Army headquarters in Dijon – **one of the rarest fieldpost markings**
Addressed to the 5th Corps at Vesoul during the occupation period



Map of the Sud Army advance (in gold) and the French retreat (green)

Campaign in the East

Battle of Héricourt: January 15-17



The French 1^{re} Armée attacked the out-numbered 14th Corps along the Lisaine River but was repulsed. Threatened by the advancing Sud Army, the French retreated to Besançon, arriving on January 22.



Rare “Postes 15^e Corps Cav^{le}” postmark applied during the retreat from Héricourt
From Général de Longuerue, commander of the division – private blue unit marking
Postmarked January 19 in transit on the Paris-Besançon railroad – arrived January 25



“Attack on a Barricaded House” by Alphonse de Neuville (c. 1875)



Campaign in the East

French Retreat to Pontarlier: January 18-31

The French 1^{re} Armée retreated to Besançon on January 22 to make a stand, but decided to retreat further to Pontarlier, on the Swiss frontier, where they arrived on January 31.



Only known example of the “18^e Corps Quartier G^{al}” postmark
Prepaid 30c for routing via Switzerland – January 29 Berne transit
Blue “Auf militärischen Befehl angehalten” (examined) censor mark
Arrived February 11 in Strasbourg with 30c occupation postage due

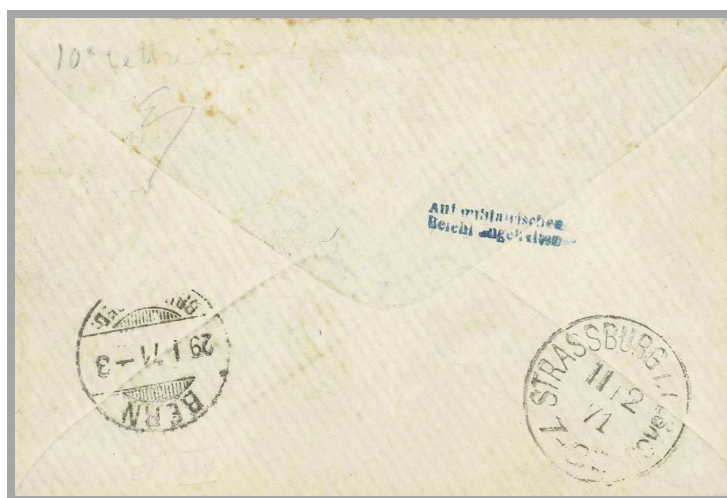


Image of reverse (90%)

Campaign in the East

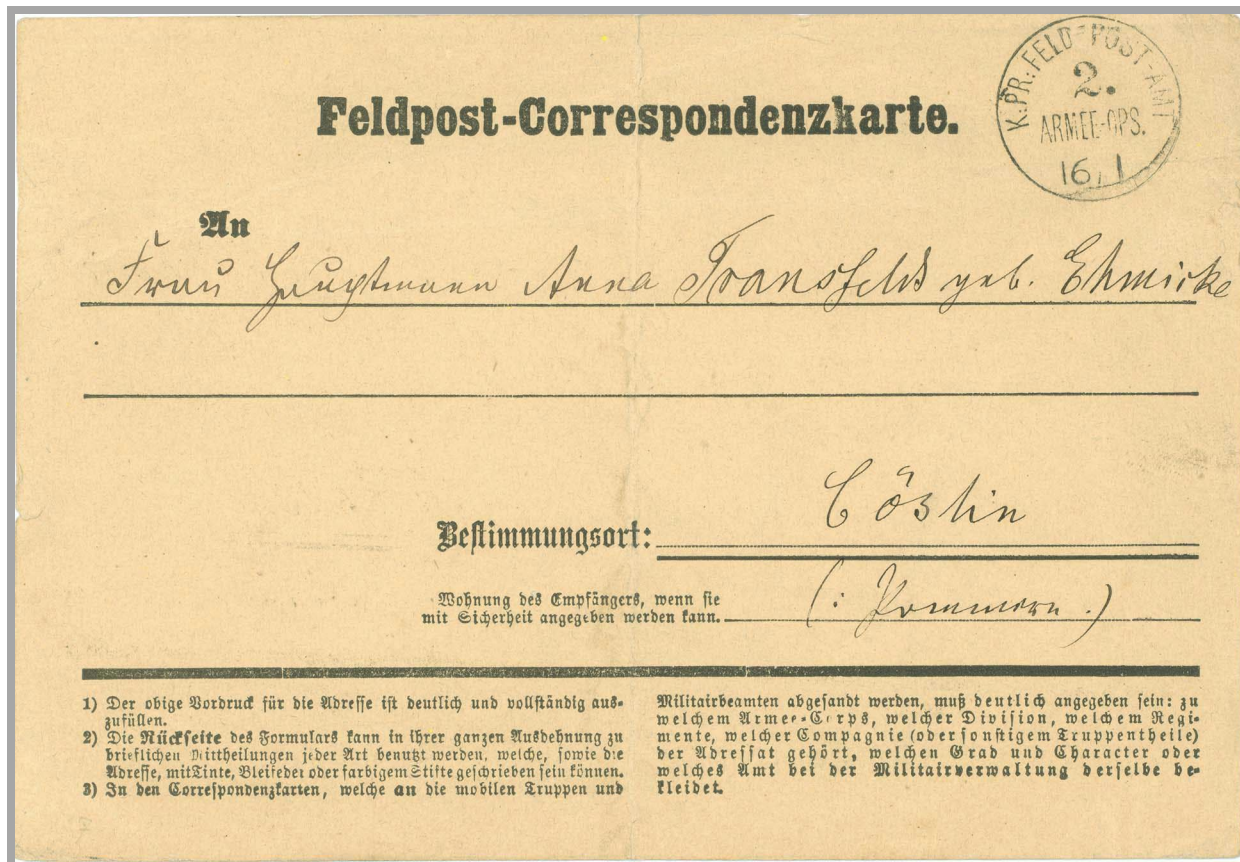
German Pursuit of the 1^{re} Armée: January 18-31



On January 19, the Sud Army learned of the 1^{re} Armée retreat and pivoted south toward Dôle to cut it off. This opened their right flank to the Armée des Vosges, but they stayed inactive in Dijon.



Posted January 31 at the 7th Corps HQ bureau near Pontarlier – arrived February 10



Dated January 16 while passing by Dijon – posted that day at the 2nd Corps HQ bureau



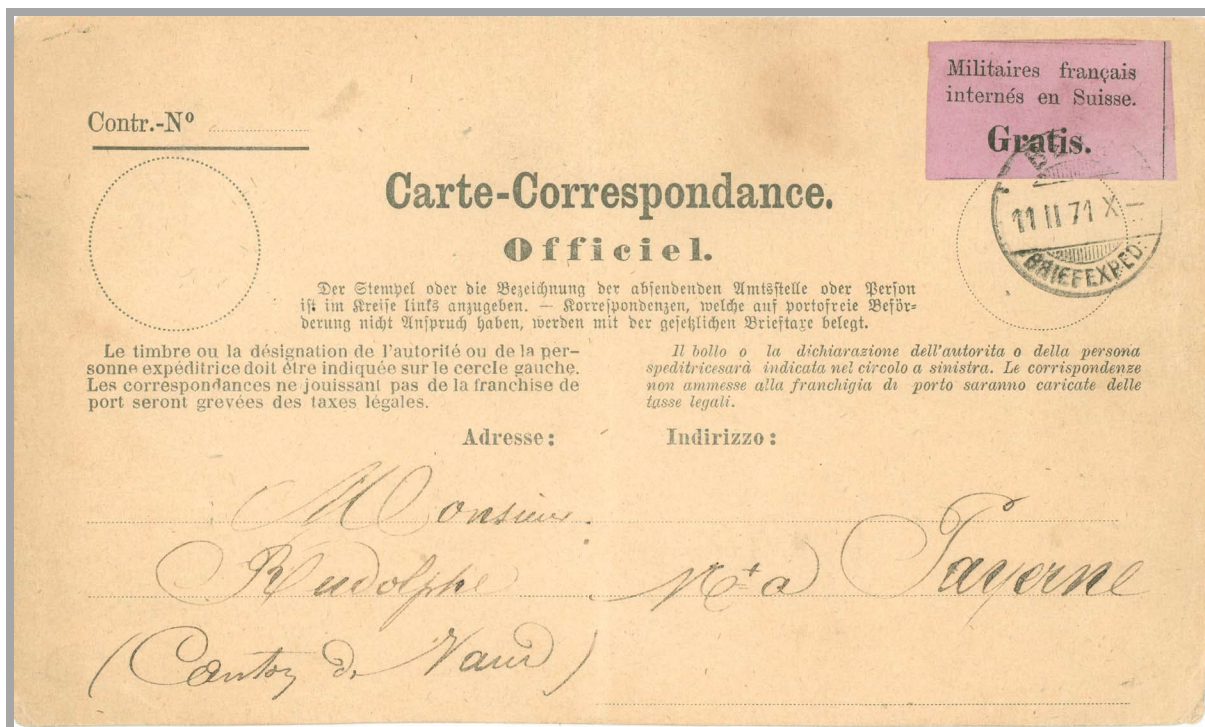
Campaign in the East

1^{re} Armée Internment in Switzerland: February 1 – March 16

On February 1, the 1^{re} Armée crossed into Switzerland to escape the Sud Army. They were interned but given free frank privileges on February 3. A special "Gratis" label was created for their mail.



Posted with free frank on February 4 in Neuchâtel – **violet Neuchâtel Red Cross oval** "Je suis en Suisse depuis le 1^{er} du mois prisonnier avec toute l'armée" – arrived February 6



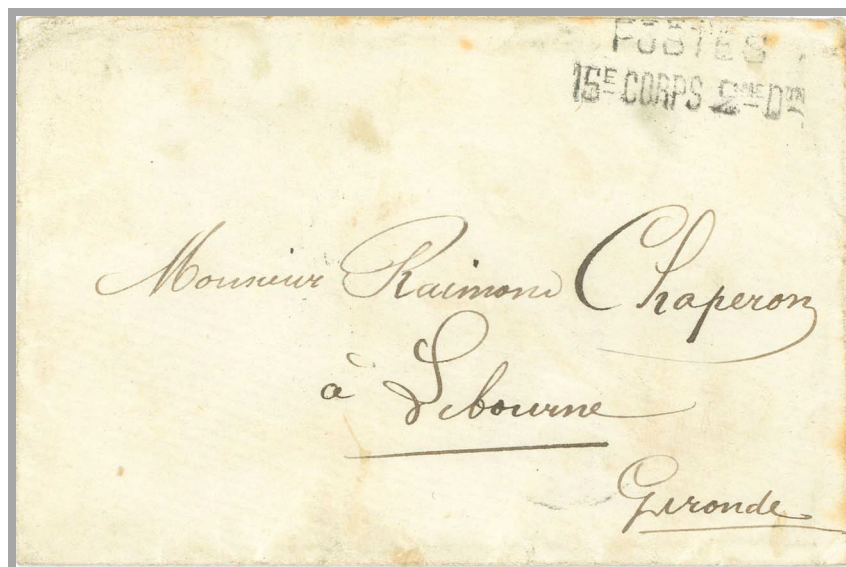
Official card posted February 11 in Berne by a 3^e Régiment de Zouaves (20th Corps) internee "Gratis" label unusually tied by Berne postmark – they were not intended to be cancelled



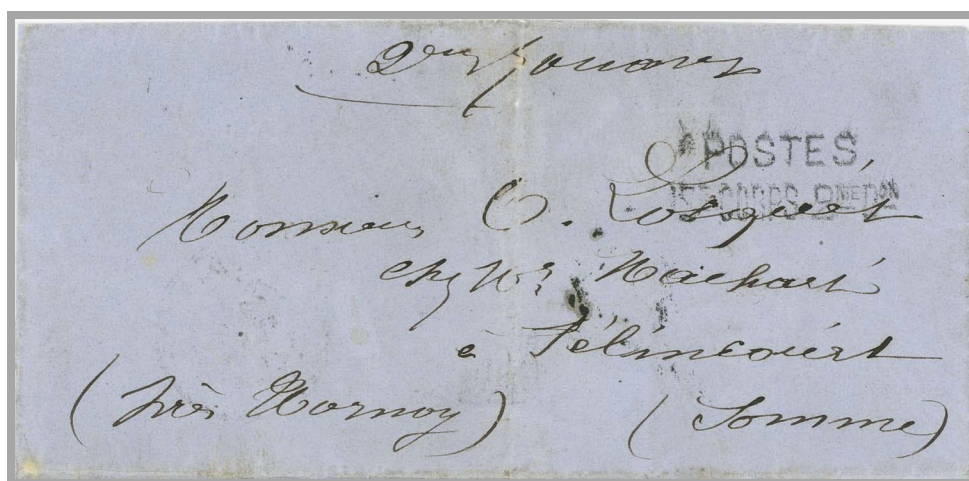
Campaign in the East

Armistice: February 13 - March 31

An armistice became effective on February 13 in the East. The French 15th Corps 2nd Division and 20th Corps 1st Division were left to protect Besançon during that period. They had a 15th Corps fieldpost there.



Postmarked "Postes 15^e Corps 2^{me} Div" - March 11 Besançon transit
Arrived March 15 in Libourne



Dated March 16 near Besançon by a 2^e Régiment de Marche de Zouaves soldier
Posted at 15th Corps 2nd Division bureau - March 17 Besançon transit - arrived March 22
Latest known 1^{re} Armée postmark



French Naval Campaigns

Historical Summary: July 24 – March 7

- Baltic Squadron blockaded the German coast from July 24 to September 29
- North Sea Squadron blockaded the German coast from August 7 to September 13
- Northern Squadron blockaded the North Sea from October 1 to November 30
- English Channel Squadron patrolled from December 1 to March 7
- Mediterranean Squadron patrolled from December 1 to March 7



Posted October 20 in besieged Paris – left October 22 on the balloon “Garibaldi”
20c military rate to “Curieux” at Montevideo – November 16 Ligne B transit



Map of the German North Sea and Baltic Sea coastlines



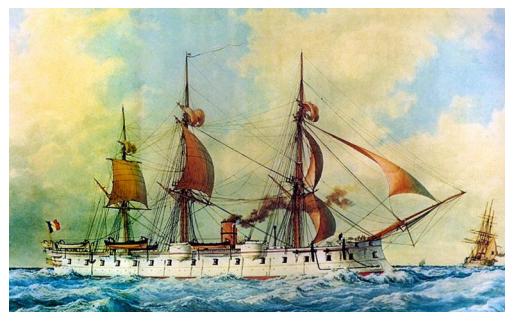
French Naval Campaigns

Naval Concession Rate: July 24 – March 7

The July 24 military free frank applied to personnel actively engaged in the war. On September 24, this was extended to all naval personnel at foreign stations, except that Paris balloon mail still required a 20 centimes franking.



Posted January 12 in besieged Paris – left January 13 on the balloon “Général Faidherbe”
20c military rate to armored corvette “**Belliqueuse**” at **New Caledonia** – arrived March 26
Postmarked January 14 at Ste. Foy landing spot – routed to Marseille on January 16
Ligne V and P&O steamships from Marseille via Egypt to Australia and then Nouméa
Addressee had returned to France – letter forwarded by naval ship to Toulon on June 10
Addressee had joined the aviso “Bruat” at Saigon – letter left Marseille again on June 17
Forwarded via Egypt and Hong Kong (July 15 Ligne N postmark) to Saigon on July 19



French armored frigate



French Naval Campaigns

Baltic Squadron: July 24 – September 29

On July 24, the 15-ship Baltic Squadron left Cherbourg. Their mail was carried by supply ships to French ports and placed in the mails there. The patrol ship "Le d'Estrées" could alternatively send mail via Christianssand, Norway but it was not eligible for a military free frank.



Marked "Service de la Flotte" and endorsed by officer to justify a free frank
Posted August 27 at Christianssand – sent by ship to Hull, England on August 29
Marked at London for 40c debit to France per "GB 1F 60C" tray mark
1 franc postage due on August 31 arrival in Bordeaux



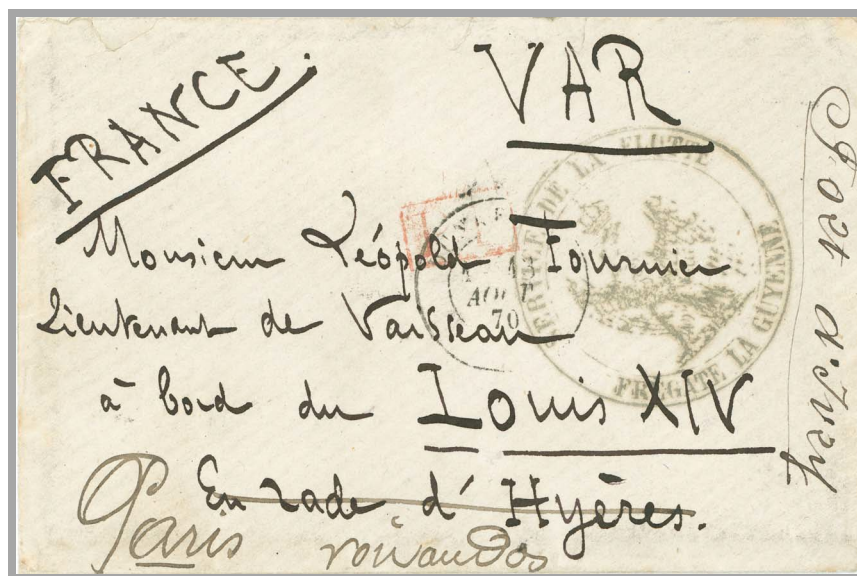
Image of reverse (90%)



French Naval Campaigns

Baltic Squadron: July 24 – September 29

An August 2 clarification permitted the free frank on mail so long as a ship marking was applied. To satisfy that requirement, existing “Service de la Flotte” ship-name markings were used.



Dated August 2 in the Kattegat near Cape Skagen – carried by supply ship to France
Frigate “La Guyenne” marking - posted with free frank on August 13 at Dunkerque
Arrived August 16 – forwarded to “Louis XIV” crewmember at Paris on August 19



Carried by supply ship from the Baltic to Dunkerque on September 22
Frigate “L’Océan” marking – arrived September 26 with a free frank



French Naval Campaigns

North Sea Squadron: August 7 – September 13

The 14-ship North Sea Squadron left Brest on August 7 to blockade Bremen and Hamburg. After difficulties with weather and re-supply, it left the North Sea on September 13.



Carried by supply ship from the North Sea to Dunkerque on September 24
Frigate "L'Invincible" marking - arrived October 1 with a free frank



Postmarked September 28 at Dunkerque after the return of the fleet to France
Steam frigate "Le Solferino" marking - arrived October 3 with a free frank



French Naval Campaigns

Northern Squadron: October 1 – November 30

The two squadrons were re-organized on September 29. They alternated steaming up to the North Sea blockade, and the Baltic coast blockade was abandoned.



Carried by supply ship from the North Sea to Lorient on November 8
Corvette “Reine Blanche” marking with imperial eagle removed - arrived October 3



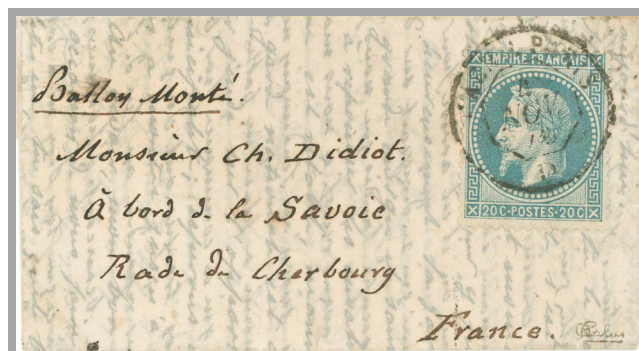
Carried by supply ship to Quiberon on January 17 – red “P.P.” for free frank
Aviso “Le d’Estrées” marking with imperial eagle removed - arrived January 19



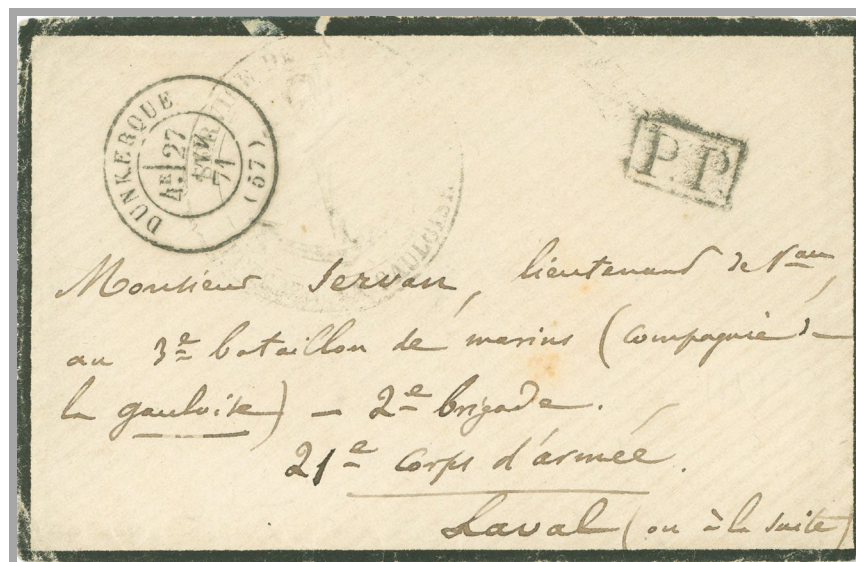
French Naval Campaigns

English Channel Squadron: December 1 – March 7

The alternating North Sea schedule continued until December, when the blockade was abandoned. A portion of the two squadrons then maintained a presence in the English Channel.



Dated November 1 in Paris – **confided to pilot of the balloon “Fulton”**
Addressed to sailor on the “Savoie” – arrived November 5 in Cherbourg



Postmarked in Dunkerque on January 27 – “P.P.” for free frank
Frigate “Gauloise” marking with large anchor – to 21st Corps at Laval



French Naval Campaigns

Mediterranean Squadron: December 1 – March 7

Eight ships from the Northern Squadron were transferred in early December to the Mediterranean to form a new armored squadron under Admiral Jurien de la Gravière.



Dated December 14 on board the "Provence" by Admiral de la Gravière's son
Posted December 14 in Toulon – describes the formation of the squadron
Frigate "Provence" marking with imperial eagle removed - arrived December 15



Postmarked January 21 in Hyères – red "P.P." for free frank
Ship "École des Canonnières" marking with large anchor - arrived January 22

Campaign to Suppress the Paris Commune

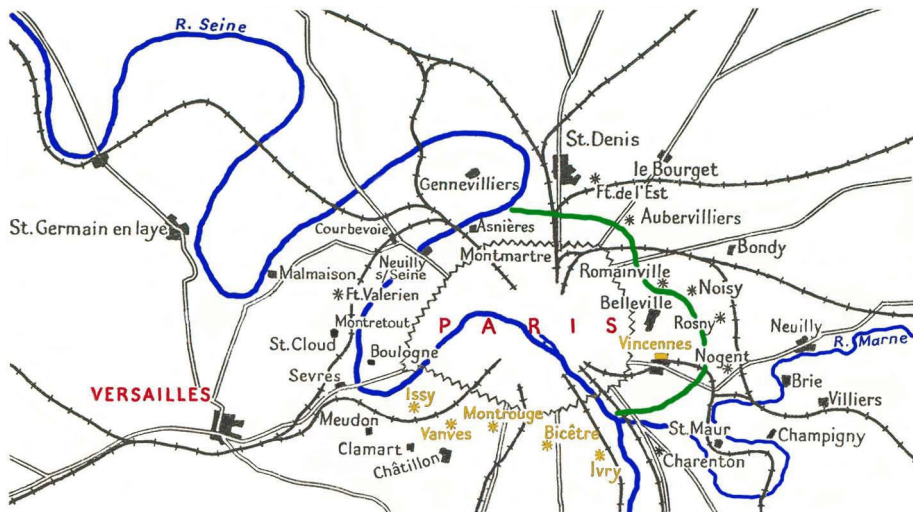
Historical Summary: April 6 – June 10



- Paris Commune was proclaimed on March 28, 1871
- Postal blockade of the Commune began on March 31
- Federal Armée de Versailles was formed on April 6-23
- Armée de Versailles re-captured Paris from May 21 to 28
- Normal postal relations with Paris resumed on June 7
- Armée de Versailles returned to Versailles on June 10



Posted May 3 in Clerval – addressed to a soldier in the Armée de Versailles at Meudon
20c prepaid in cash to postman – confirmed by a ¼ 80c stamp over manuscript “P.P.”
Fewer than five quartered 80c Bordeaux Issue covers are known



Map of the German occupation line (green) and Commune forts (gold)

Campaign to Suppress the Paris Commune

Formation of the Armée de Versailles: April 6-23



The Federal Armée de Versailles was formed on April 6, drawing upon the best provincial regiments and returning POWs, who were formed into provisional line infantry regiments. Two more divisions were added on April 23, bringing the total to six corps.



Postmarked at Army HQ using modified ex-Armée du Nord postmark – arrived May 21
Prepaid by 20c (III) Bordeaux stamp – from 5th Corps commander Général Clinchant



Dated May 11 at Versailles from the 2nd Corps – modified ex-23rd Corps postmark
Franked inside by 10c Bordeaux stamp for the receipt notice rate - received May 16 in Lyon

Campaign to Suppress the Paris Commune

Armée de Versailles Fieldpost: April 6 - June 10



The Armée de Versailles had a makeshift fieldpost operation. The payeurs used old 2^e Armée de la Loire and the Armée du Nord postmark devices, some of which were modified.



Ex-2^e Armée de la Loire “19^e Corps Postes Quartier Général” postmark used at HQ
Prepaid 40c for registration – April 22 Versailles transit – 30c postage due on April 25



Ex-Armée du Nord fieldpost HQ marking (on reverse) – postmarked April 11 in Versailles
Ex-Armée du Nord “P.P.” for 20c prepayment – 30c due in occupied Munster

Campaign to Suppress the Paris Commune

“Semaine Sanglante”: May 21 – 28



The May 21 entry of the Armée de Versailles into Paris began the “Semaine Sanglante,” which was fought from southwest Paris to northeast Paris in continuous street fighting. The Commune’s final positions were overrun on May 28.



Dated May 25 in Paris – modified ex-23rd Corps’ “^E Corps Postes 2^E Division” postmark
2nd Corps’ 2nd Division fieldpost bureau - no postage due charged on May 28 in Fontainebleau
“Aujourd’hui bien encore, les projectiles pleuvent sur le quartier...”



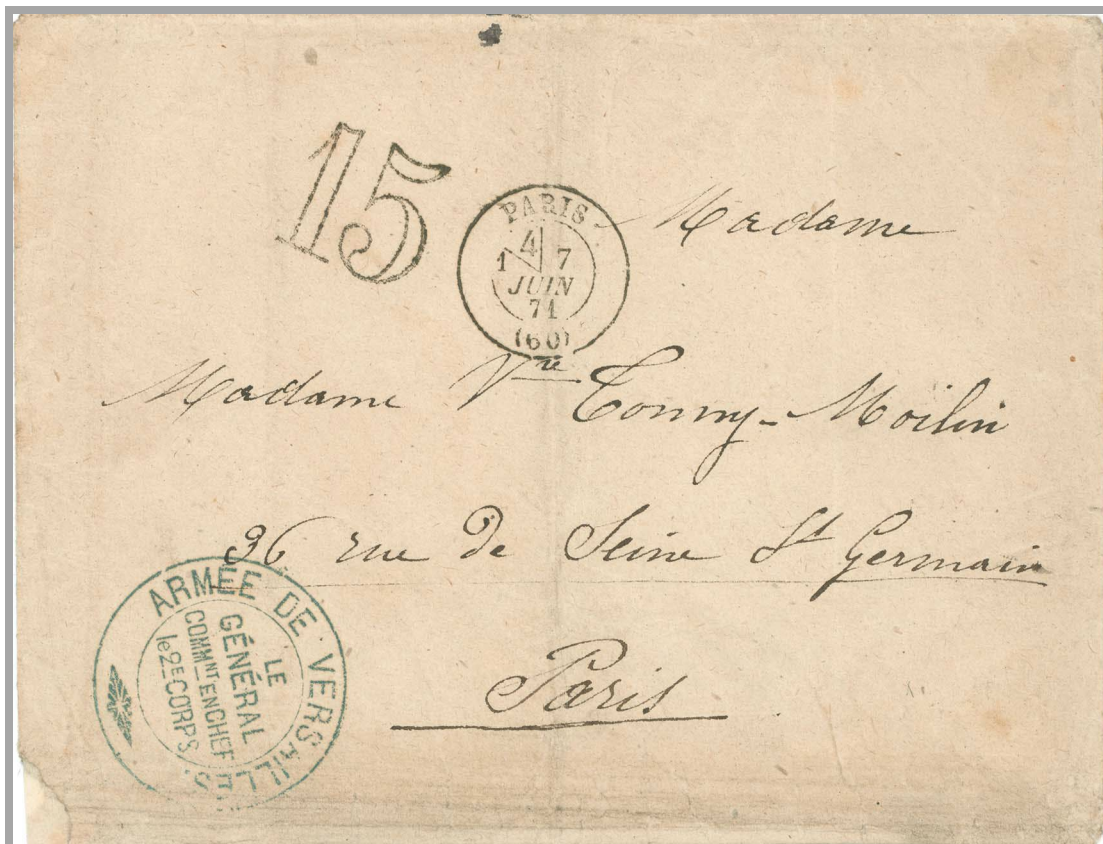
“Place de la Concorde mai 1871” by Gustave Boulanger

Campaign to Suppress the Paris Commune

End of the Commune: May 28



The May 28 collapse of the Commune led to a brief occupation of Paris by the Armée de Versailles. Normal postal relations resumed on June 7 and the army left for Versailles on June 10.



Posted June 7 in Paris – 15c due for unpaid local letter – **2nd Corps commander's unit marking**



"Derniers Combats au Cimetière du Père-Lachaise" by Félix Philippoteaux (1871)



Post-War German Occupation of France

Historical Summary: March 8, 1871 to September 16, 1873

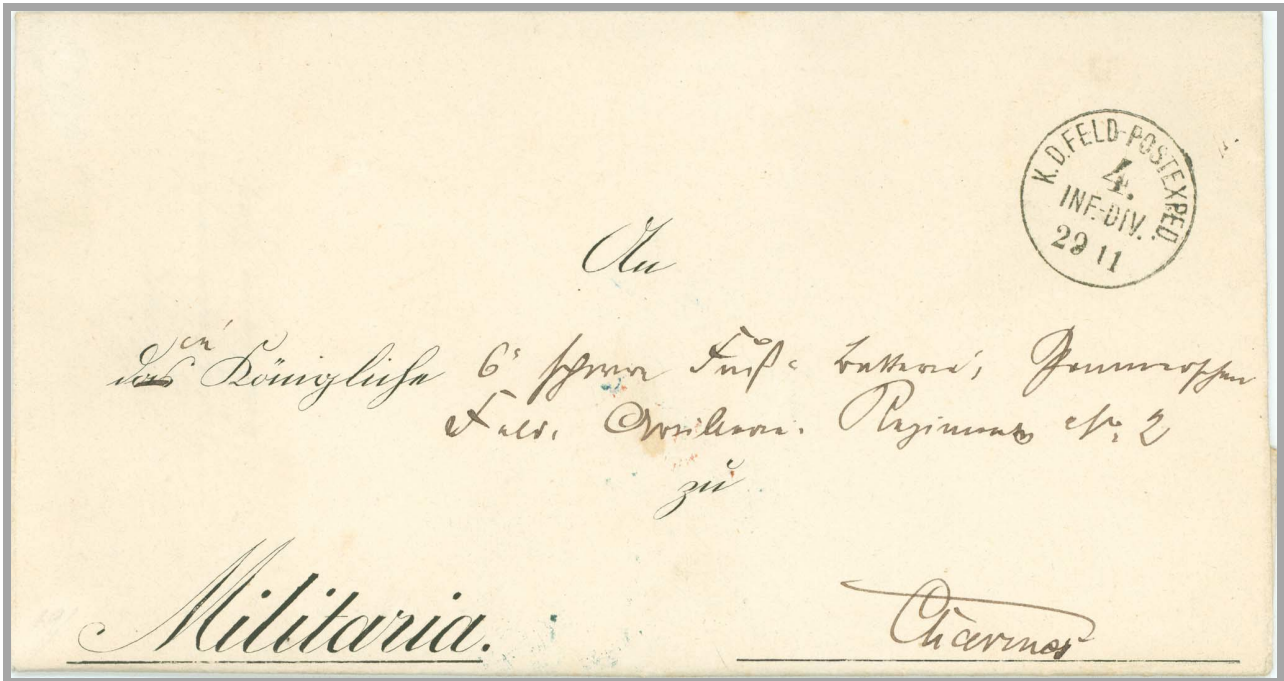
- The Final Peace Treaty was signed on May 10, 1871.
- The area around and north of Paris was evacuated during July-September 1871.
- All but northeast France was evacuated in October 1871, leaving only four divisions in the Occupation Army: 4th, 6th, 19th and 2nd Bavarian.
- The residual Occupation Army was provided with new “K.D.” (King of Germany) fieldpost postmarks, reflecting the unification of the German Empire.
- The last German soldier left Verdun on September 16, 1873.



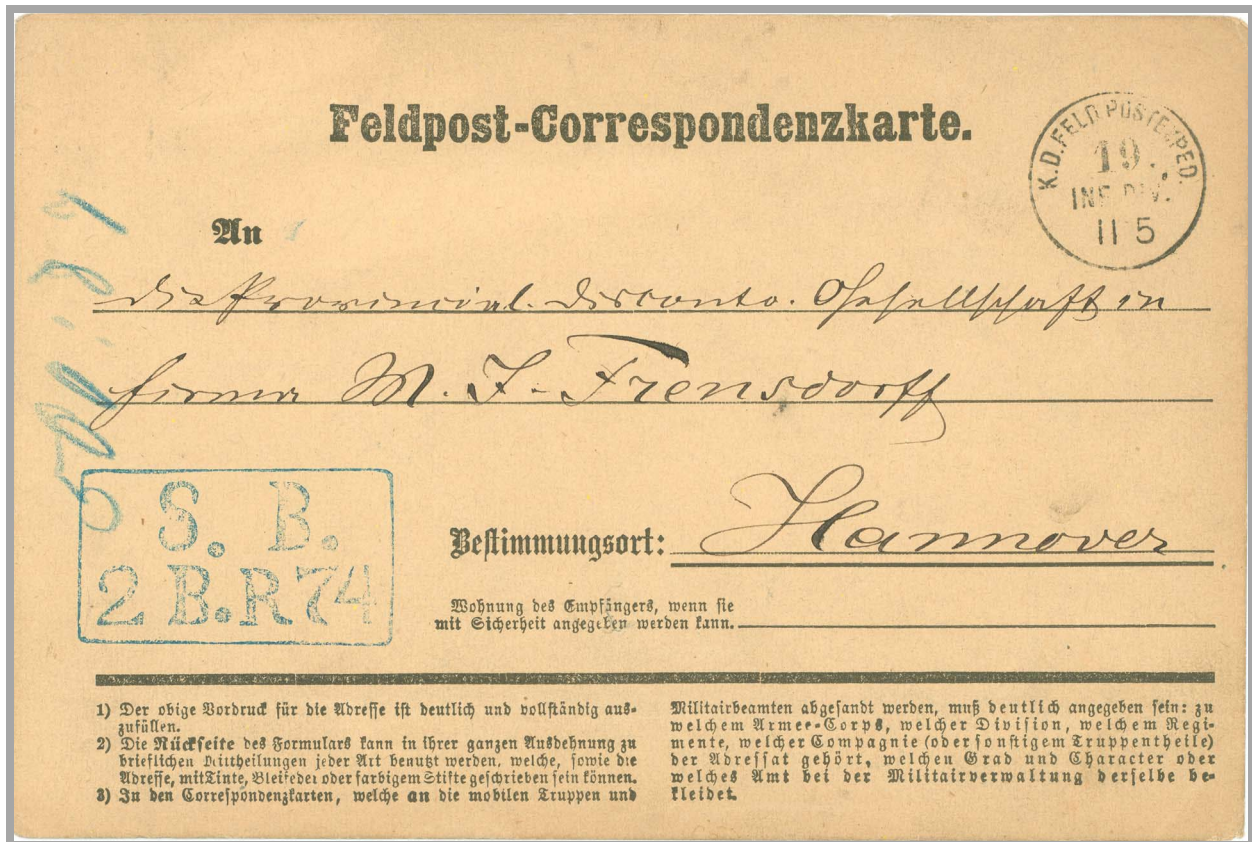
March 15, 1872 “Feldpost Amt der Occupations-Armee” postmark from HQ bureau at Nancy
March 16 Feldpost Relais No. 25 (Ligny) transit – arrived March 16 at the 6th Division bureau

Post-War German Occupation of France

Occupation Army: March 8, 1871 to September 16, 1873



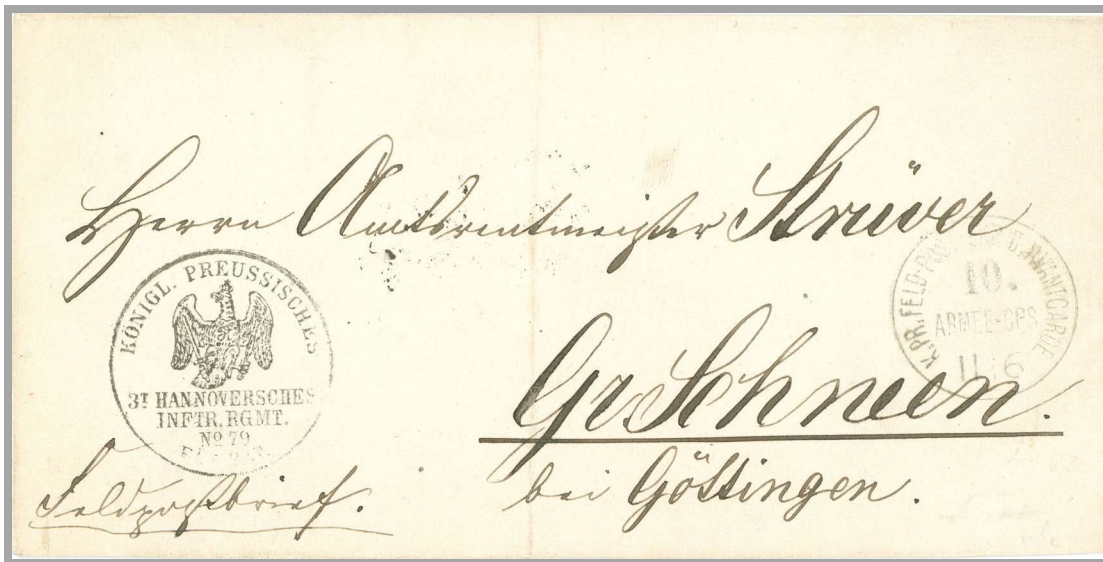
Dated November 27, 1872 at Épinal – posted two days later at the 4th Division bureau



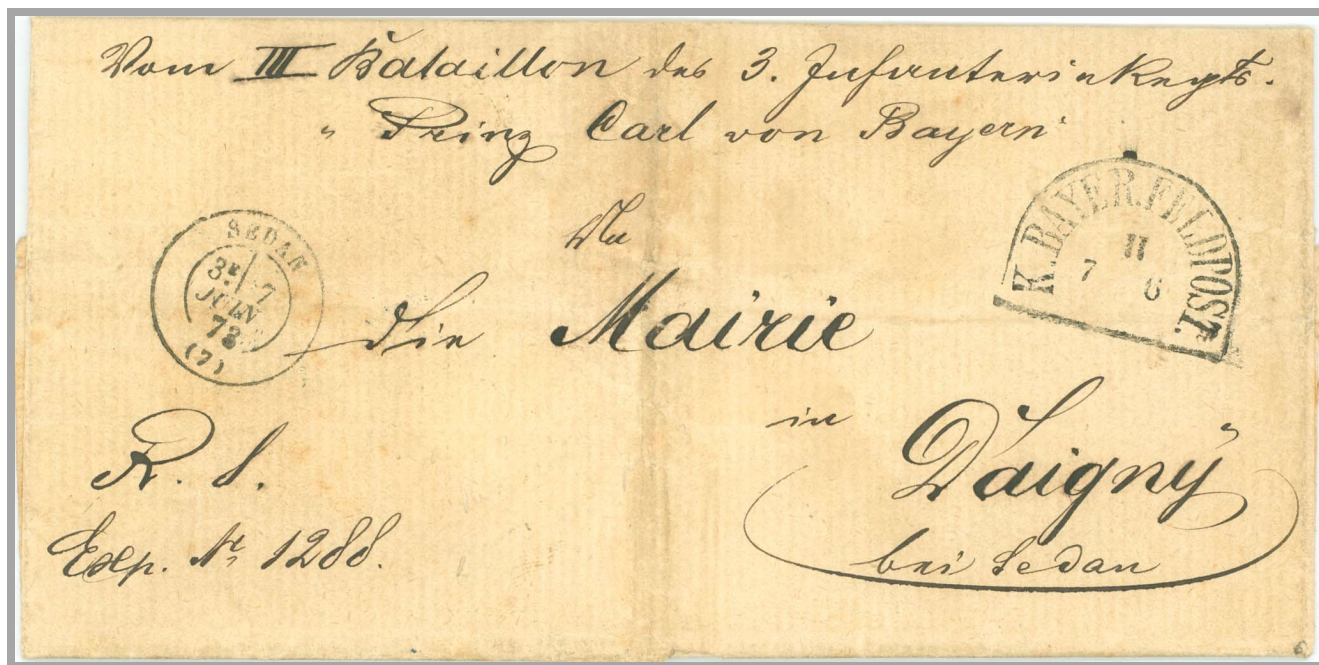
Dated May 11, 1873 at Nancy and posted that day at the 19th Division bureau

Post-War German Occupation of France

Occupation Army: March 8, 1871 to September 16, 1873



Posted June 11, 1871 at the 10th Cavalry Division bureau – arrived June 14



Dated June 6, 1873 at Charleville and posted the next day at the II Bavarian Fieldpost bureau June 7 Feldpost Relais No. 27 (Sedan) transit mark - June 7 Sedan arrival postmark