

## *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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.

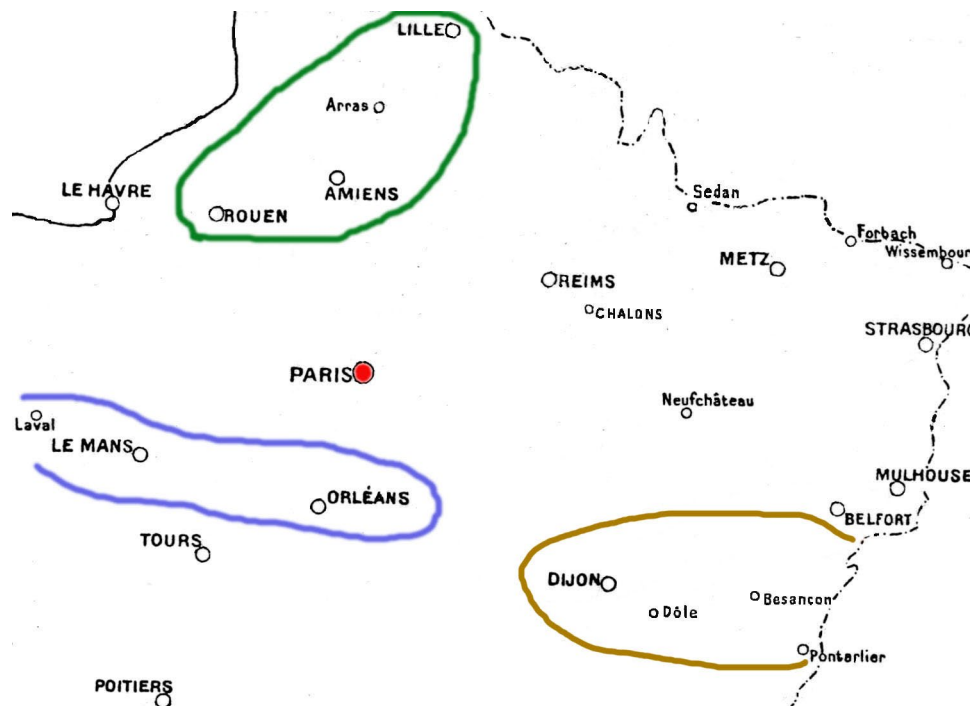
**Campaign on the Loire** from Orléans to Laval: September 14 to March 7

**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 15<sup>th</sup> 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<sup>re</sup> Armée de la Loire (15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Corps) re-captured Orléans, but was shattered by the German II Army on December 3-4.
- The 2<sup>e</sup> Armée de la Loire (16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Corps) was formed on December 5 from remnants of the 1<sup>re</sup> 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<sup>d</sup> Quartier G<sup>l</sup> \*" fieldpost postmark  
From headquarters escort Francs-Tireurs Girondin – arrived December 3 in La Châtre



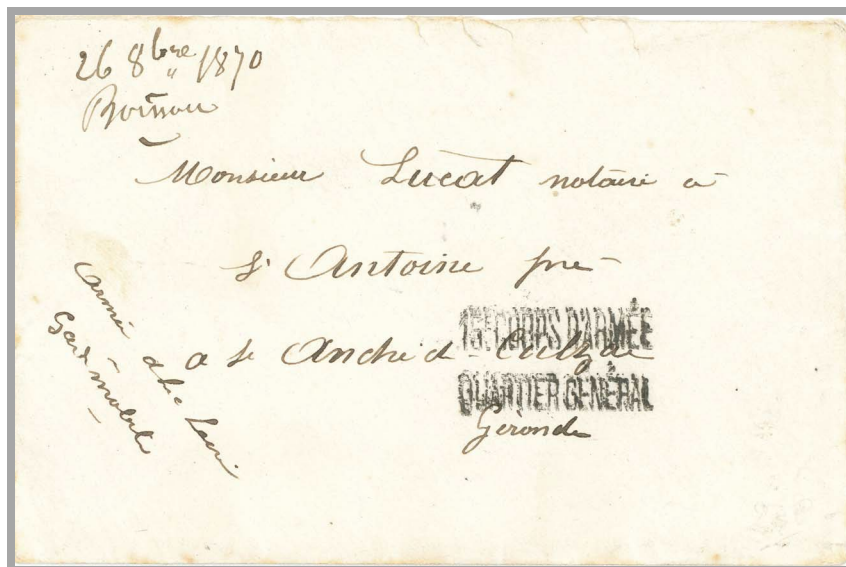
Area of military operations for the campaign on the Loire River

## Campaign on the Loire

### 1<sup>re</sup> Armée de la Loire: October 6-27



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



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



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

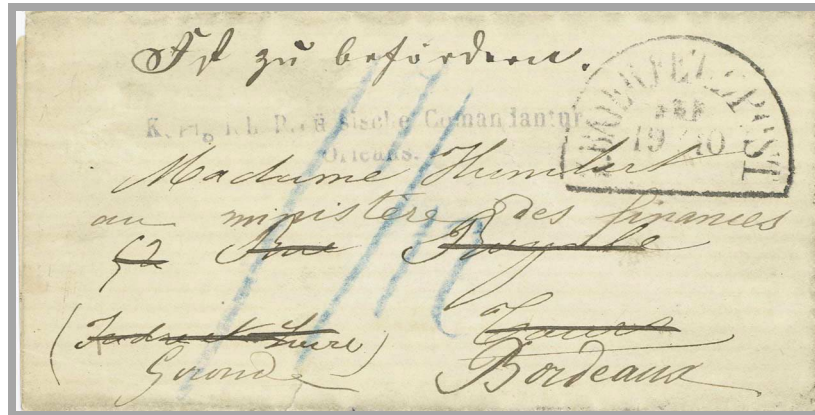


## Campaign on the Loire

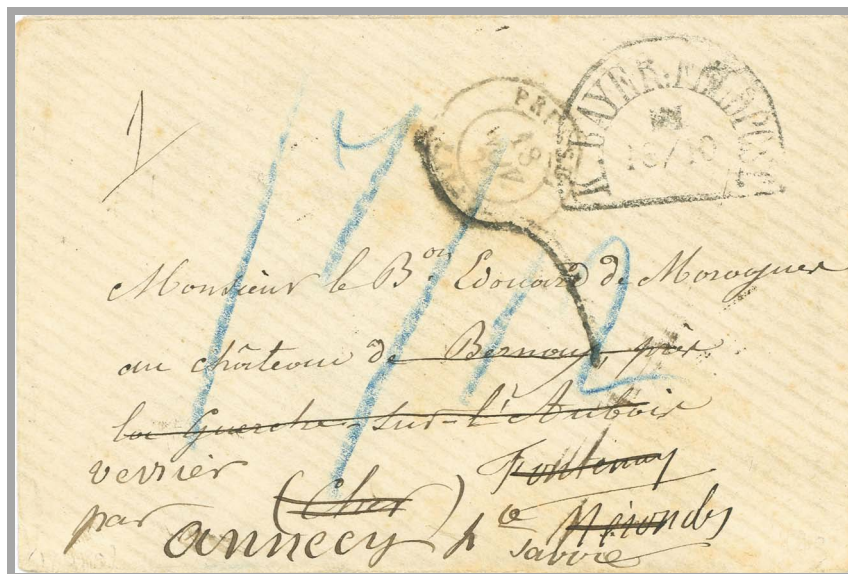
### Von der Tann Detachment: October 6 – November 5



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 1<sup>st</sup> Bavarian Corps, the 22<sup>nd</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> Bavarian Corps’ 2<sup>nd</sup> Division Bureau III – arrived January 6



Posted unpaid on October 16 at the 1<sup>st</sup> Bavarian Corps’ 2<sup>nd</sup> 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

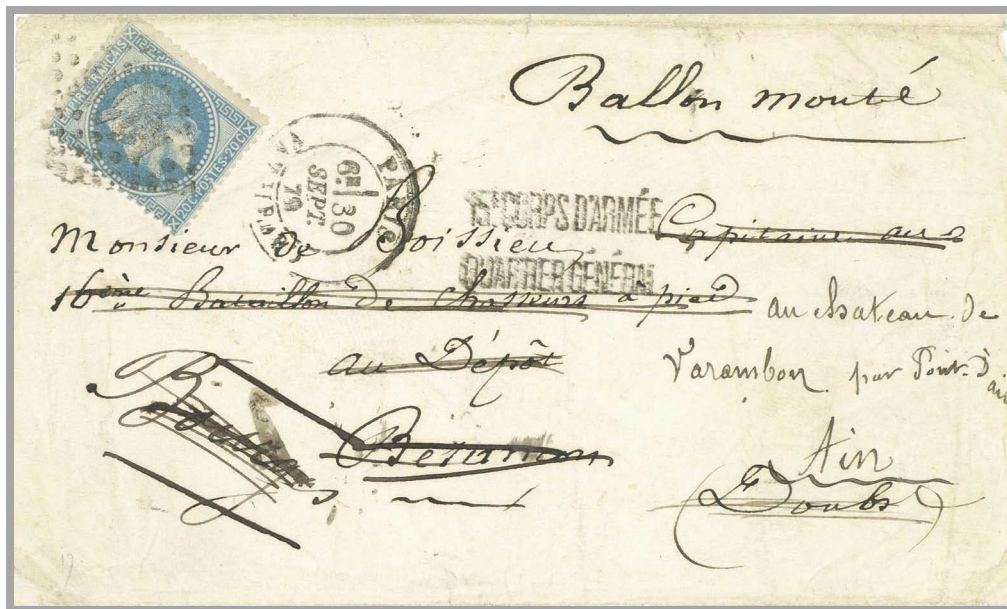


## Campaign on the Loire

### First Battle of Orléans: October 10-11



On October 10, the von der Tann Detachment attacked the French 15<sup>th</sup> 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 22<sup>nd</sup> Division and 4<sup>th</sup> 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 16<sup>th</sup> Chasseurs depot in Besançon – arrived October 17  
Forwarded to 15<sup>th</sup> Corps at Bourges on October 20 – **Headquarters arrival postmark de Boissieu had been killed on October 11 at Aydes during the 15<sup>th</sup> Corps retreat**



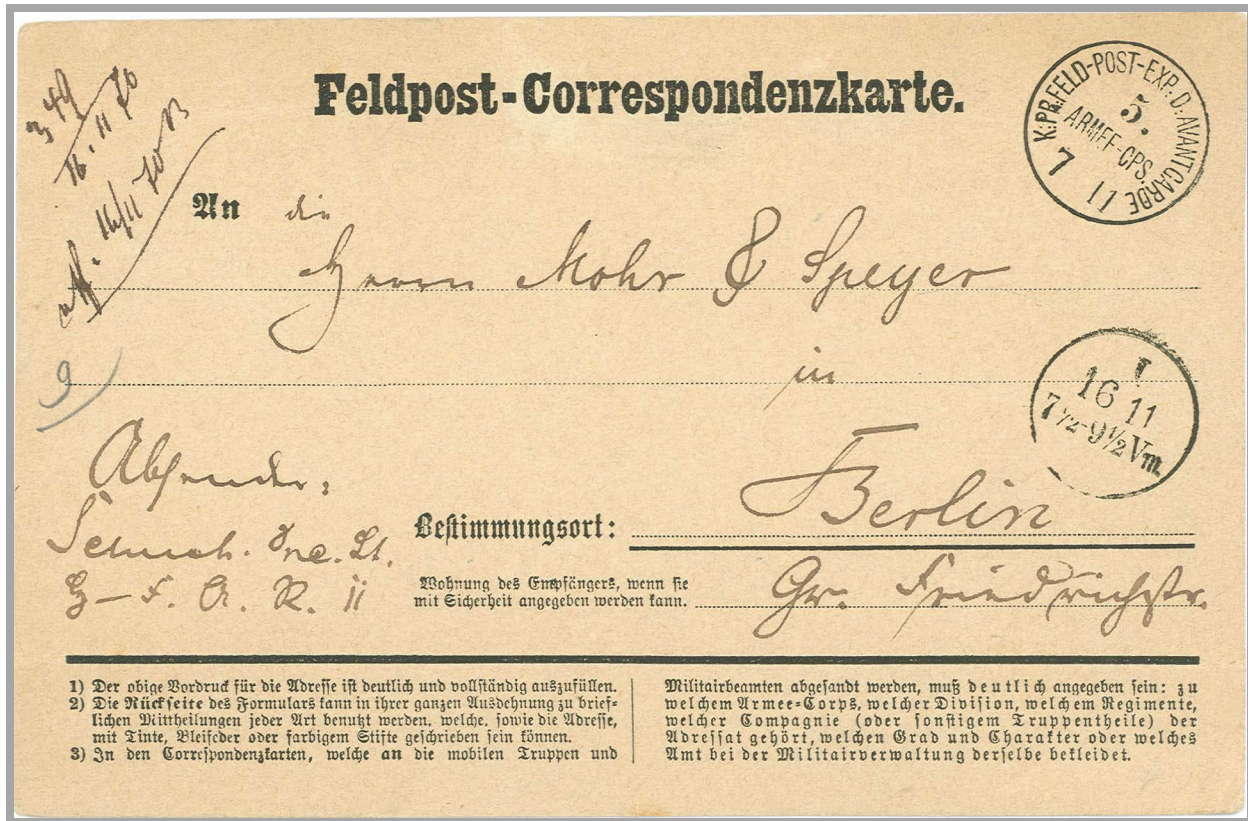
German lithograph of the October 10 combat at Artenay

# Campaign on the Loire

## Battle of Châteaudun: October 18



On their return to Paris from Orléans, the German 22<sup>nd</sup> Division and the 4<sup>th</sup> 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 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division bureau  
4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry used the "5. Armee-Cps Avantgarde" postmark - from the 11<sup>th</sup> Artillery Regiment



"Bataille de Châteaudun" by A. Hoffmann



# Campaign on the Loire

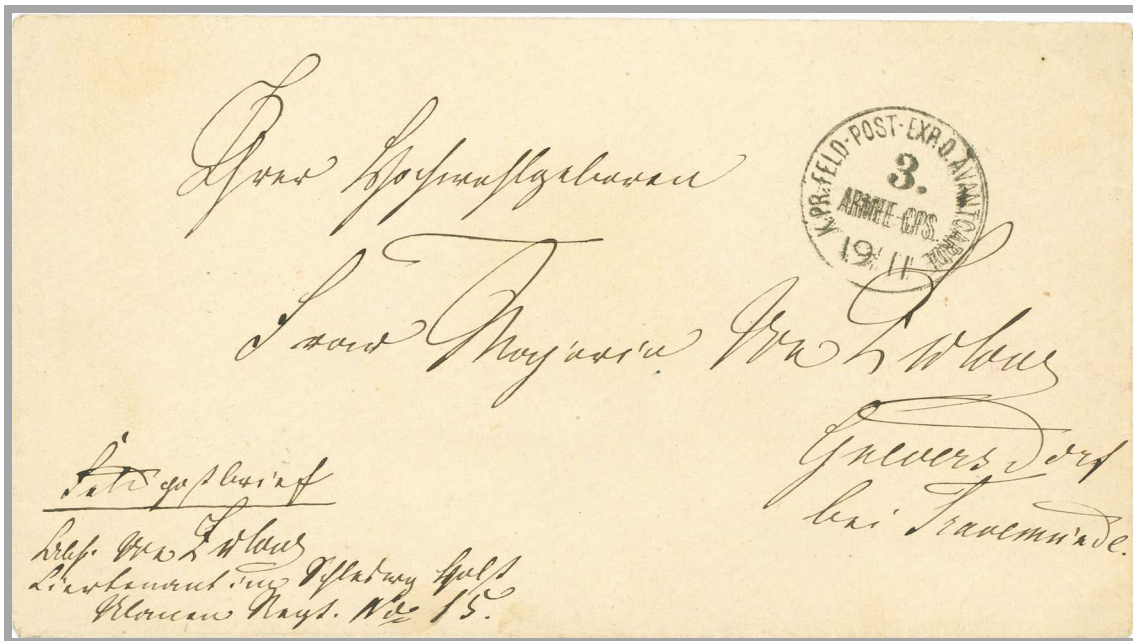
## Mecklenburg Detachment: November 6-24



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



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



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

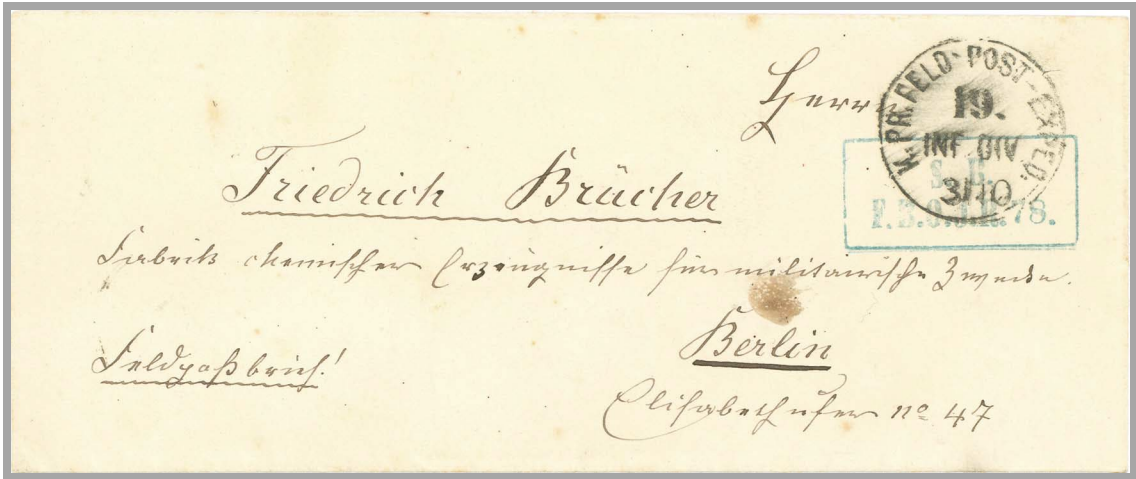


# Campaign on the Loire

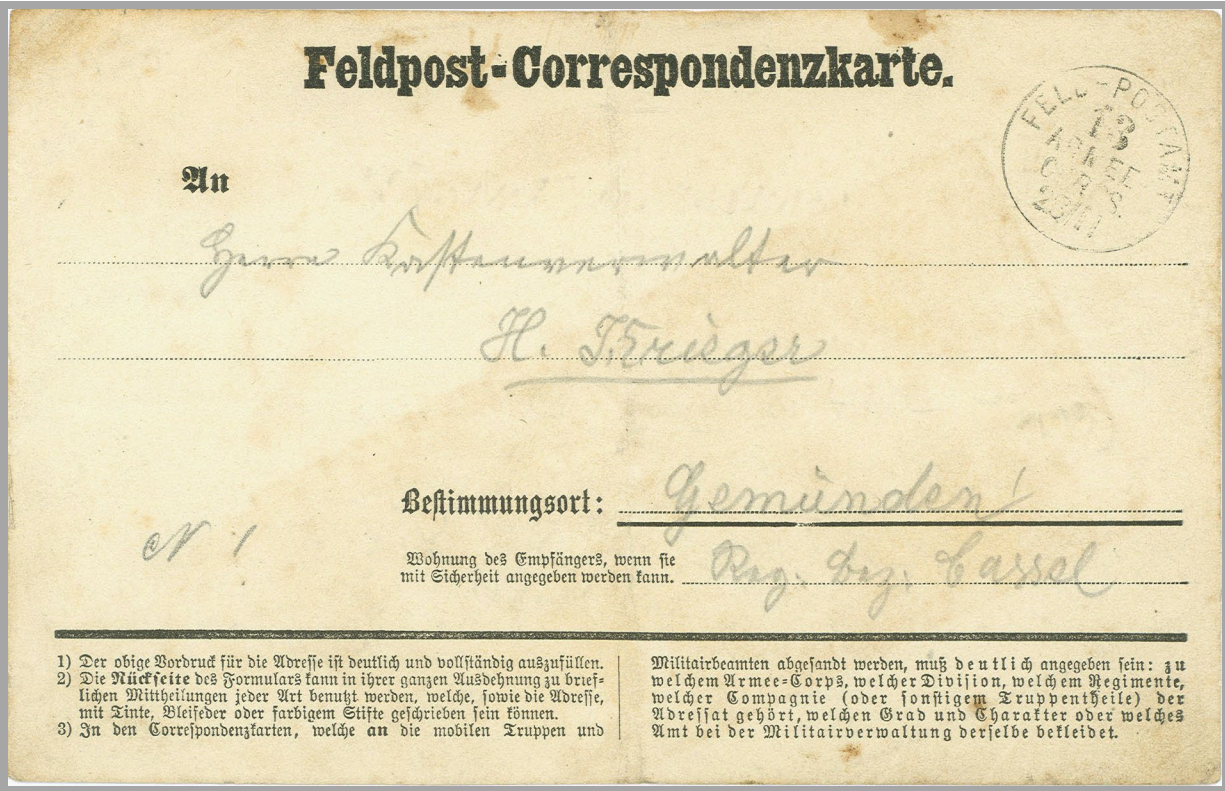
## II Army Advance to Orléans: October 28 – November 30



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 10<sup>th</sup> Corps' 19<sup>th</sup> Division bureau departing from Metz  
Blue 78<sup>th</sup> Ostfriesland Infantry Regiment handstamp – arrived November 2 in Berlin



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

## Campaign on the Loire

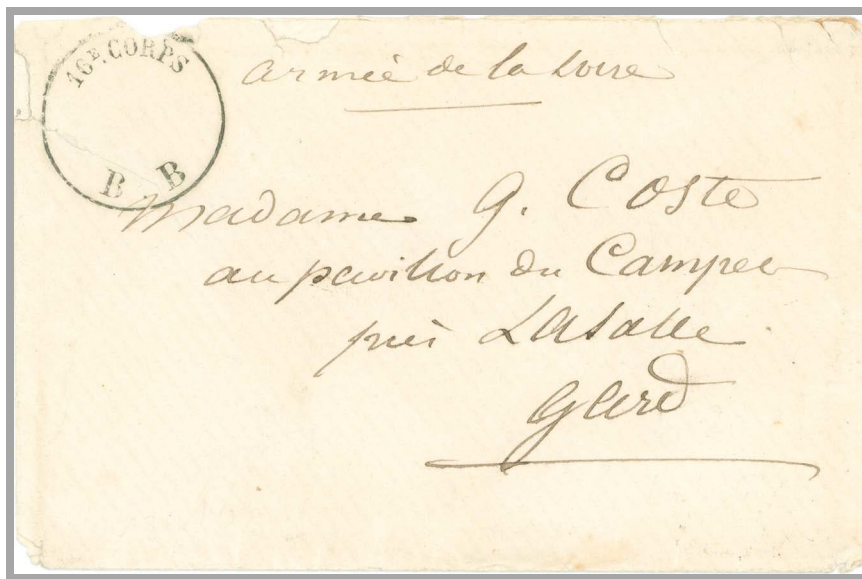
### French Advance on Orléans: October 28 – November 8



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



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



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



## Campaign on the Loire

### French Advance on Orléans: October 28 – November 8



The 16<sup>th</sup> Corps took a position west of Orléans, with the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and Cavalry Divisions of the 15<sup>th</sup> Corps on their right. The 15<sup>th</sup> Corps' 1<sup>st</sup> 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 6<sup>th</sup> Dragoons Regiment in the 15<sup>th</sup> Corps Cavalry Division of the 1<sup>re</sup> Armée de la Loire



Docketed November 1 and postmarked “16<sup>e</sup> Corps B.A.” at the 1<sup>st</sup> 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”)

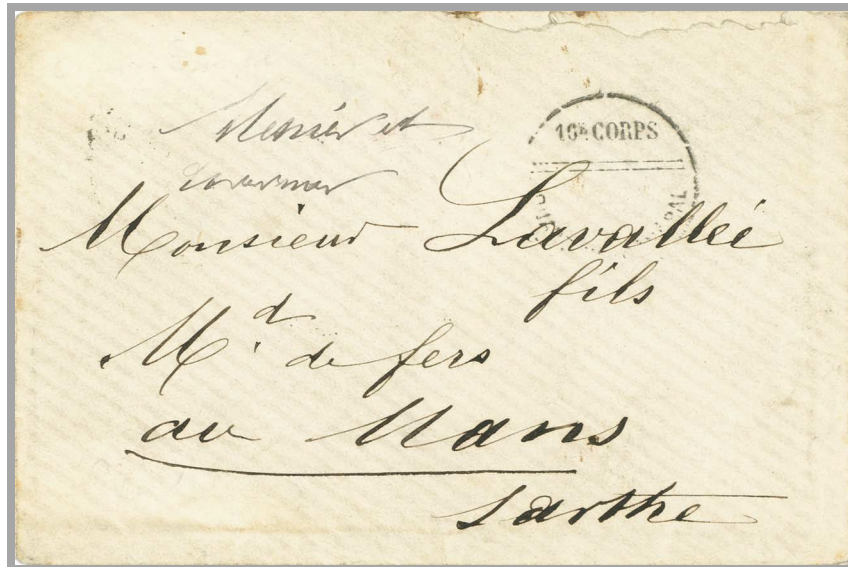


## Campaign on the Loire

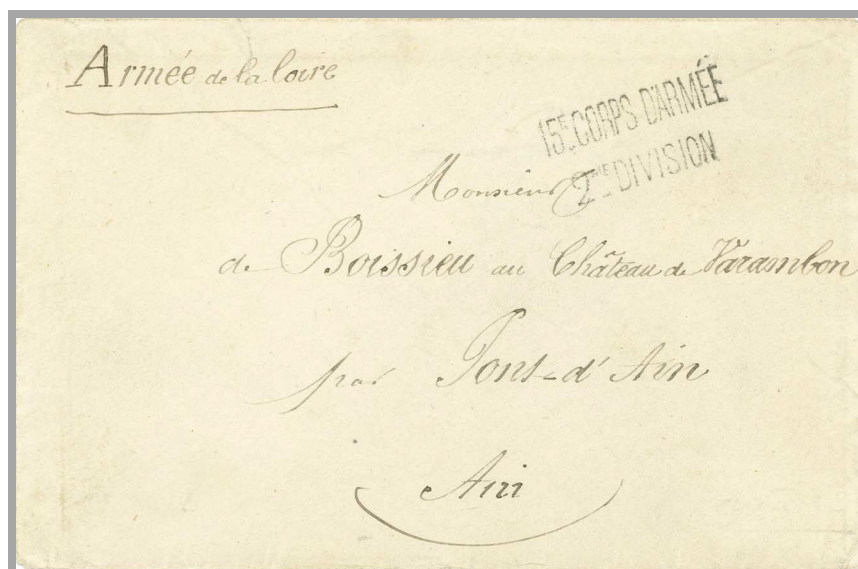
### Second Battle of Orléans: November 9



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



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



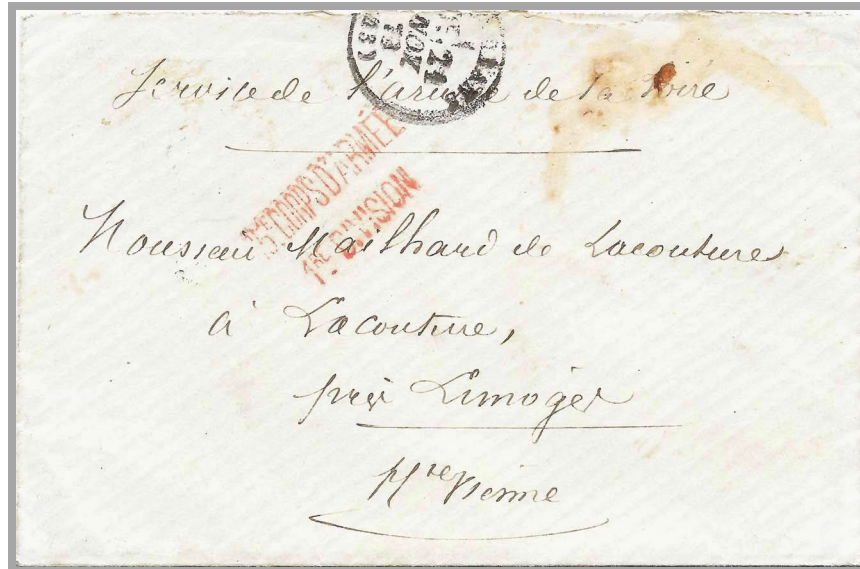
Posted November 8 at the 15<sup>th</sup> Corps' 2<sup>nd</sup> Division bureau – arrived November 10  
2<sup>nd</sup> Division's 5<sup>e</sup> Bataillon de Marche de Chasseurs à Pied fought on November 9

## 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 15<sup>th</sup> Corps was east of Artenay, and the 16<sup>th</sup> Corps was between Coulmiers and Artenay.



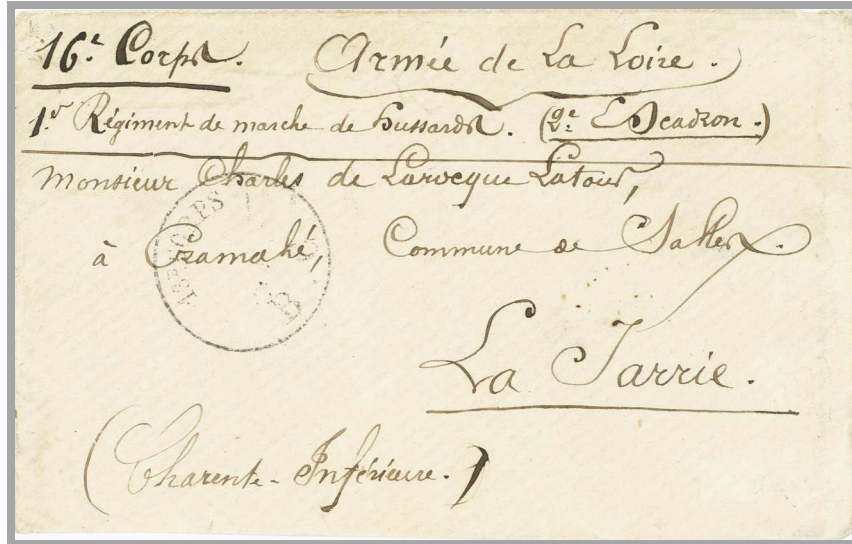
Dated November 20 at Chevilly (north of Orléans) by brigade commander Général Minot  
Postmarked in red at the 15<sup>th</sup> Corps' 1<sup>st</sup> Division bureau – November 21 Orléans transit



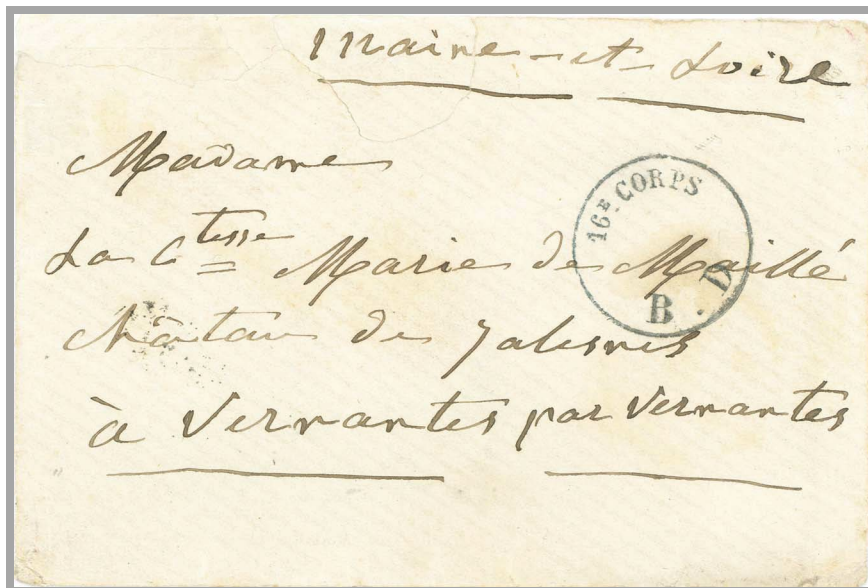
Postmarked in red at the 15<sup>th</sup> Corps' 3<sup>rd</sup> Division bureau near Artenay  
From the 69<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Garde Mobile de l'Ariège – arrived December 1 at Foix

## Campaign on the Loire

### French Defense of Orléans: November 10 – December 3



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



Dated November 22 at Vilarçon by cavalry commandant Armand de Maillé  
**Postmarked in blue** at the 16<sup>th</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Corps launched a diversionary attack on the German 10<sup>th</sup> 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 56<sup>th</sup> Regiment (10<sup>th</sup> 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**



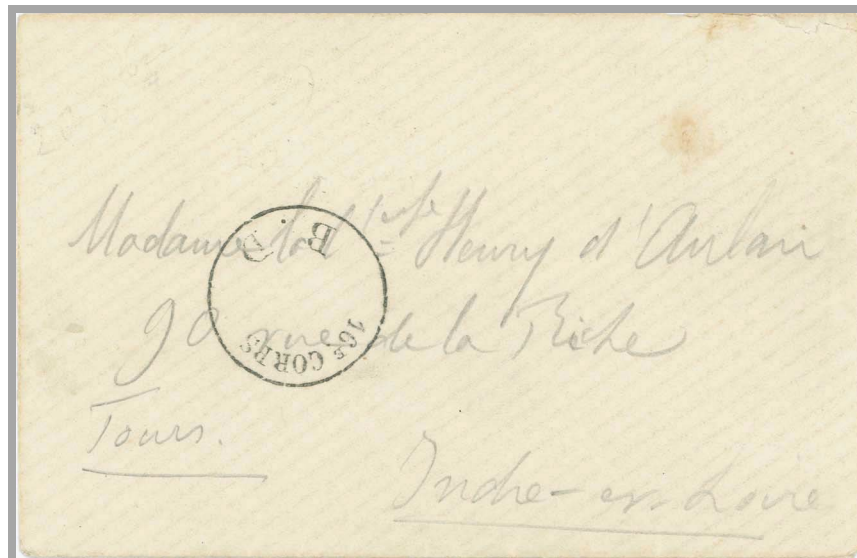
“Battle of Beaune-la-Rolande”

## Campaign on the Loire

### Battle of Patay: December 1



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



Dated November 26 by Captain Henry d'Aulain of the 4<sup>th</sup> Dragoons march regiment  
Posted at the 16<sup>th</sup> 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 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Corps attacked the I Bavarian Corps at Loigny. Reinforcements from the German 17<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> Divisions pushed the French back to Patay.



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



“Bataille de Loigny” by Charles Castellani (1879)

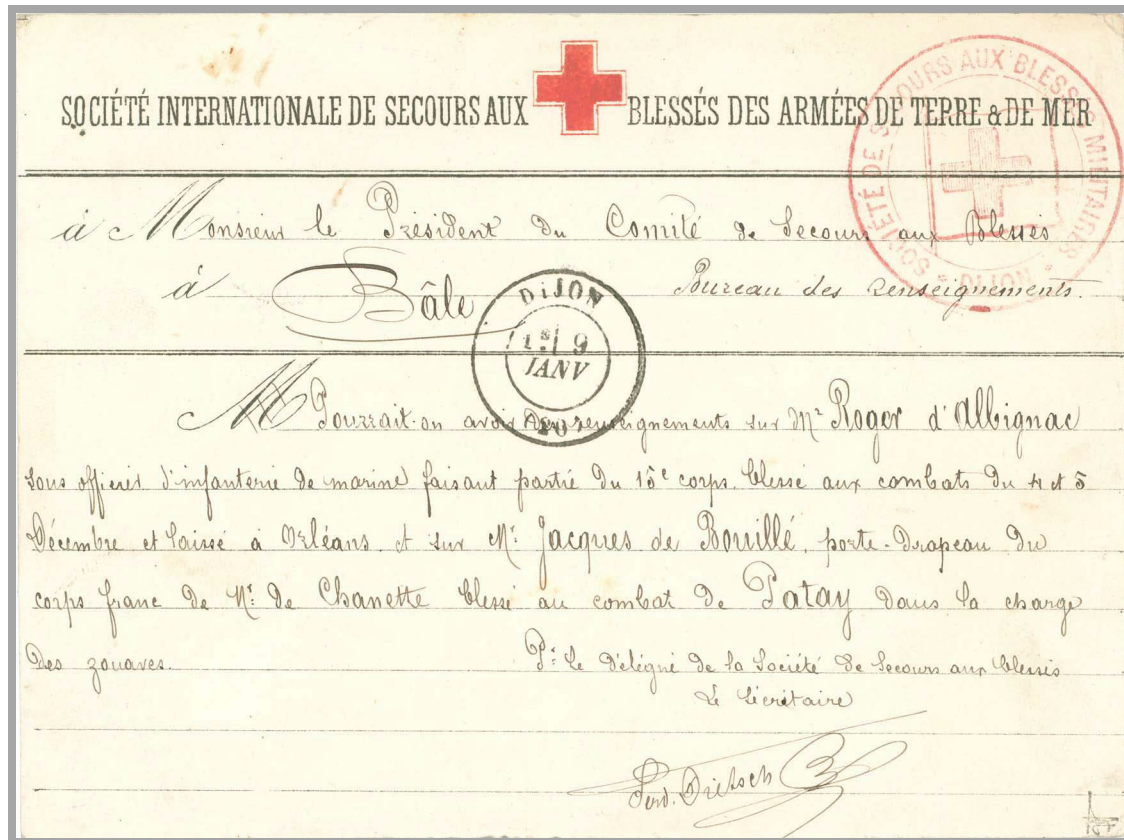


## Campaign on the Loire

### Third Battle of Orléans: December 3-4



On December 3, the German 9<sup>th</sup> Corps and Mecklenburg advanced south toward Orléans, while the 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 15<sup>th</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> Bavarian Corps at the Battle of Orléans

## Campaign on the Loire

### 2<sup>e</sup> Armée de la Loire: December 6 – January 31



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



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



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

## Campaign on the Loire

2<sup>e</sup> Armée de la Loire: December 6 – January 31



The 2<sup>e</sup> 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 9<sup>th</sup> Corps moving along the south bank of the Loire toward Blois. The 3<sup>rd</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Corps stayed near Orléans to protect against the French 1<sup>re</sup> Armée south of Orléans at Bourges.



Dated east of Orléans on December 9 – posted next day at the II Army headquarters bureau  
From the 79<sup>th</sup> (Hannover) Regiment of the 10<sup>th</sup> 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<sup>e</sup> Armée de la Loire in a series of brutal battles around Beaugency. The French held their positions but, flanked by the German 9<sup>th</sup> Corps at Blois, retreated to Vendôme on December 11-13.



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



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



# Campaign on the Loire

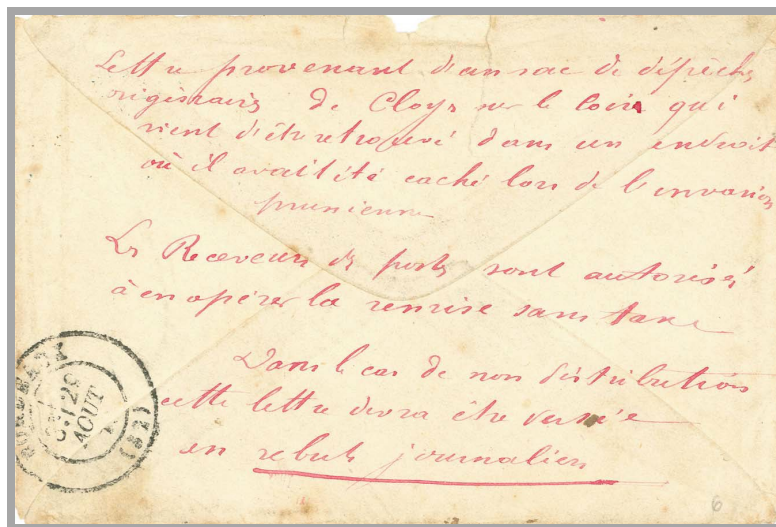
## Battle of Vendôme: December 15



The German 3<sup>rd</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Corps engaged the 2<sup>e</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> Corps' 4<sup>th</sup> Division  
21<sup>st</sup> 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

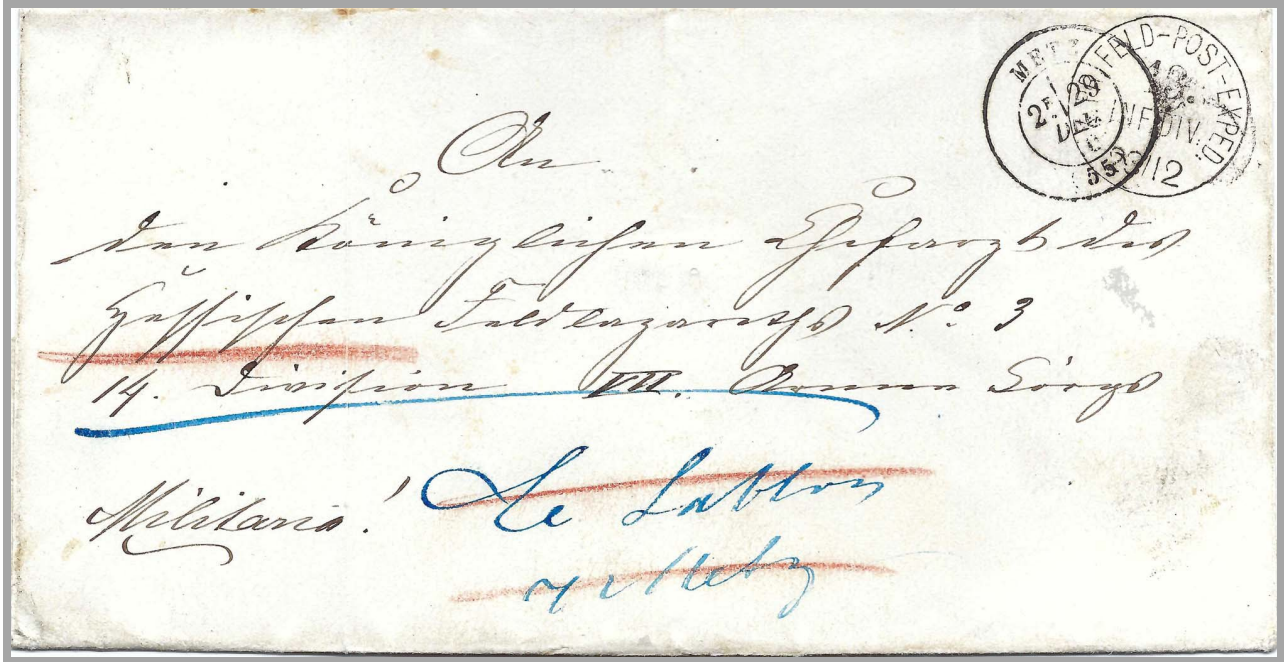


# Campaign on the Loire

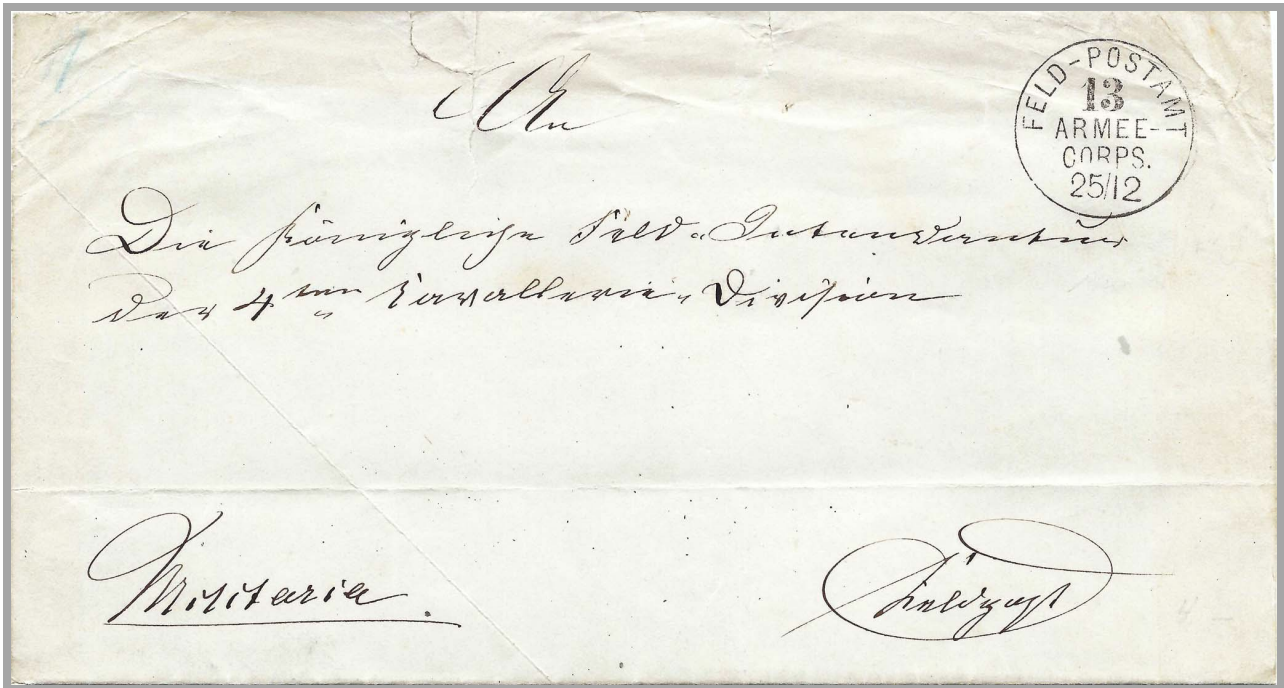
## German Reorganization: December 16-31



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



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



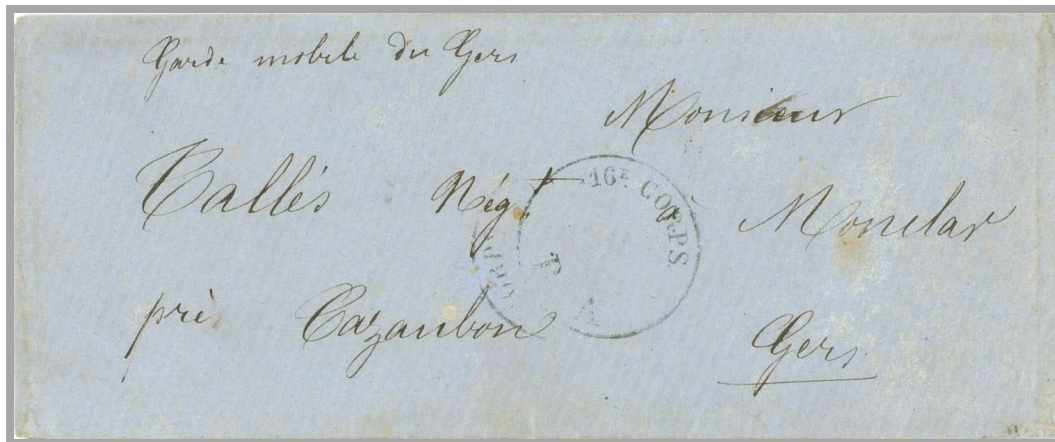
Posted December 25 at the 13<sup>th</sup> Corps headquarters bureau at Chartres – to 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division

## Campaign on the Loire

### 2<sup>e</sup> Armée de la Loire at Le Mans: December 21 – January 12



With the German II Army no longer in active pursuit, the 2<sup>e</sup> 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 16<sup>th</sup> Corps' 1<sup>st</sup> Division Bureau A  
85<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Garde Mobile du Gers (17<sup>th</sup> Corps) transferred to depleted 16<sup>th</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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<sup>e</sup> Arm e retreated west to Laval on January 17. The German 3<sup>rd</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> 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<sup>e</sup> Armée de la Loire at Laval: January 17-31



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



Postmarked January 31 with **rare boxed "Postes 19<sup>e</sup> Corps"** marking  
"P.P." for free frank – February 2 Aurillac transit postmark



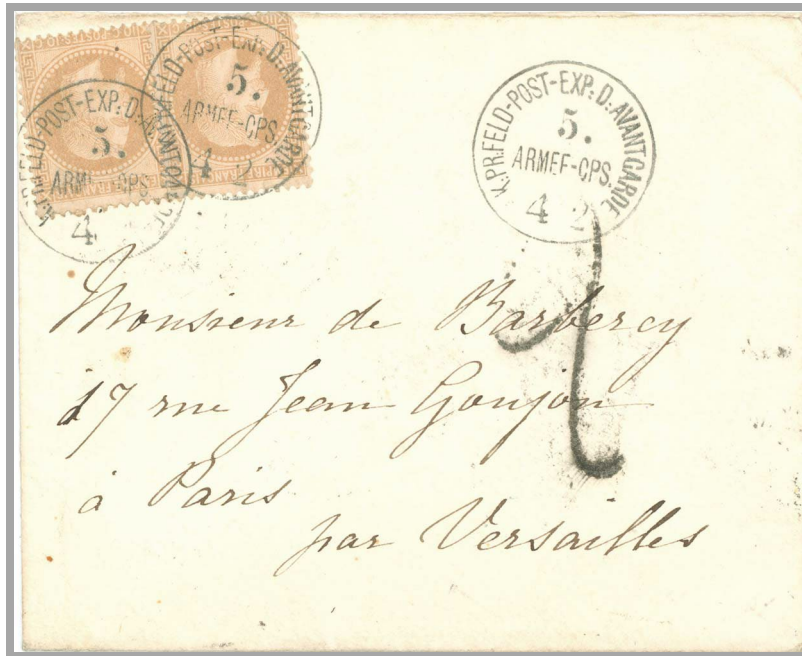
Postmarked "Armée de l'Ouest" on January 25 at the 21<sup>st</sup> Corps HQ bureau at Laval  
Private blue cachet of the **21<sup>st</sup> Corps Commanding General** – arrived January 27

## Campaign on the Loire

### German Occupation of Alençon: January 12 – March 7



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



Endorsed from the 6<sup>th</sup> Ulanen Regiment at a horse-breeding farm in Alençon  
10c "Lauré" stamps **cancelled by 4<sup>th</sup> 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 13<sup>th</sup> Corps HQ bureau  
From a Lieutenant in the 75<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the 17<sup>th</sup> 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<sup>e</sup> Armée Postes Grand Quartier Général” in Poitiers on March 5  
Private “2<sup>e</sup> Armée de la Loire Etat-Major Général” unit marking – arrived March 6



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



# Campaign on the Loire

## Armistice: January 31 – March 7



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



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



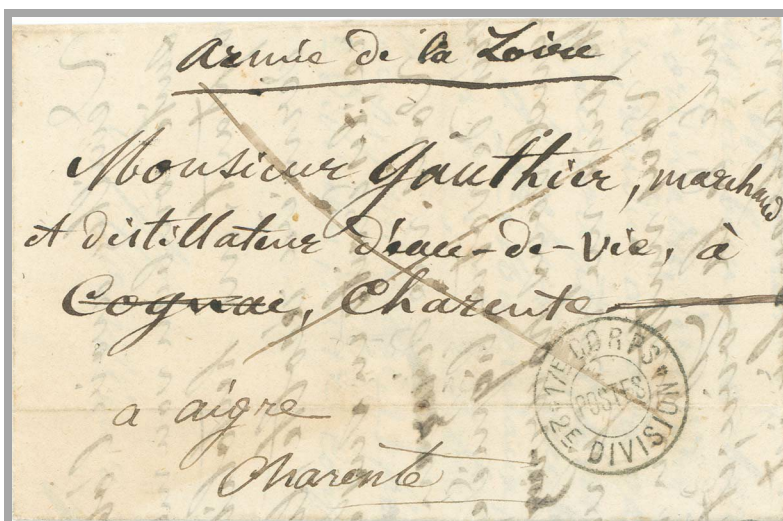
**Prepaid 60c double-weight registered rate** on March 3 at the 19<sup>th</sup> Corps' 1<sup>st</sup> Division bureau  
Postmarked that day in transit at nearby Thouars – arrived March 6 in Lyon

## Campaign on the Loire

Armistice: January 31 - March 7



The 2<sup>e</sup> 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 17<sup>th</sup> Corps' 2<sup>nd</sup> Division bureau  
From the 64<sup>th</sup> March Regiment in the 2<sup>e</sup> Armée de Bretagne - arrived February 26



Dated February 1 near Nantes - posted at the 17<sup>th</sup> Corps' Cavalry Division bureau  
Countersigned by Col. de Lacombe of the 8<sup>th</sup> Hussards Regiment in the 2<sup>e</sup> 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<sup>e</sup> Armée de la Loire and the 2<sup>e</sup> 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<sup>e</sup> 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**

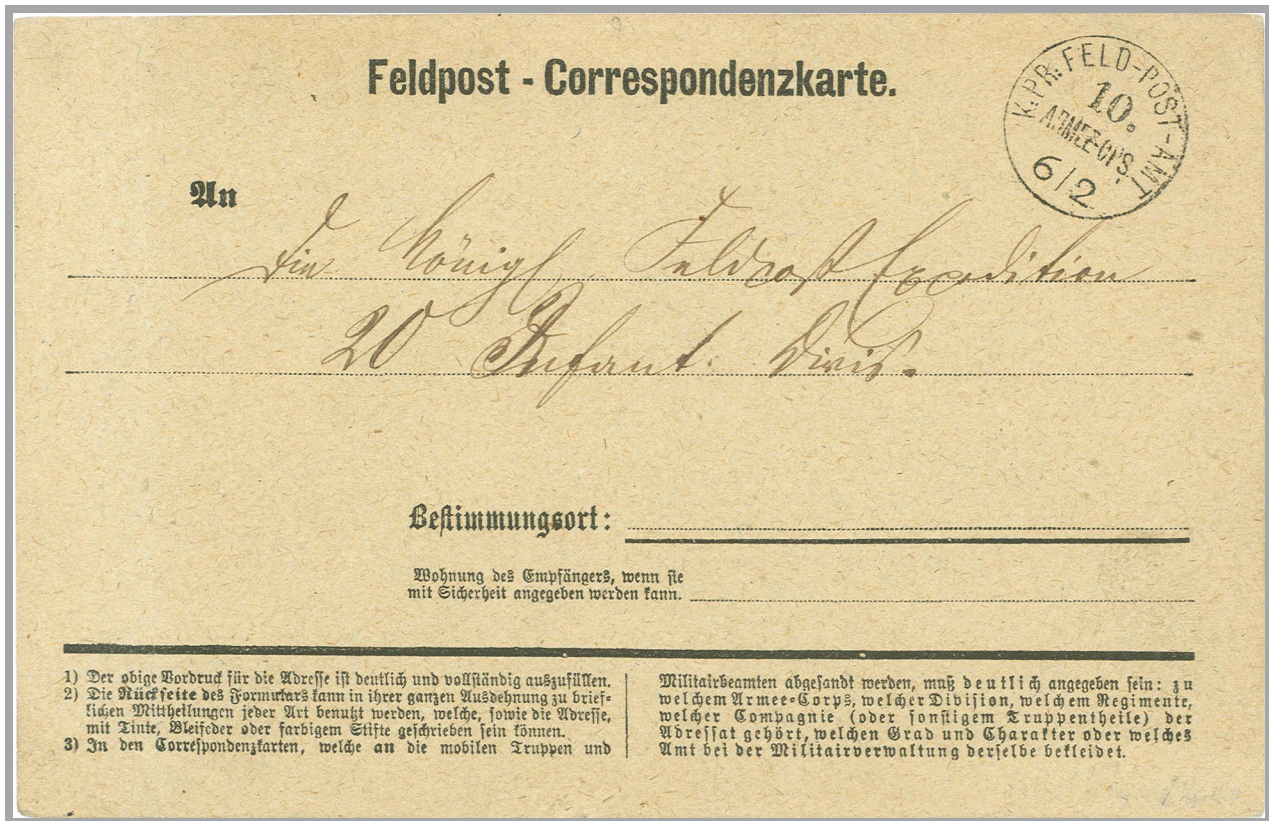


# Campaign on the Loire

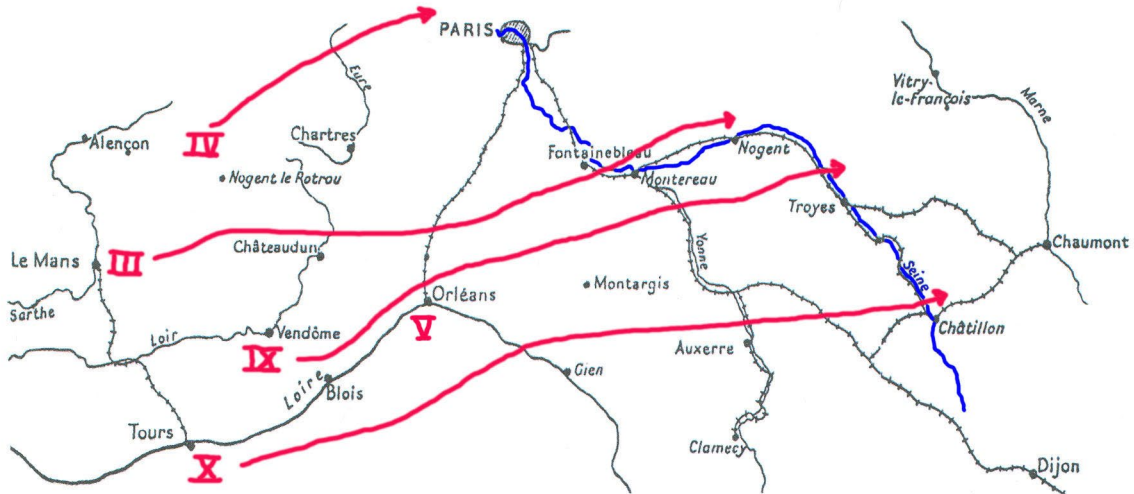
## Armistice: January 31 – March 7



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 10<sup>th</sup> Army Corps bureau – to a 20<sup>th</sup> Division soldier



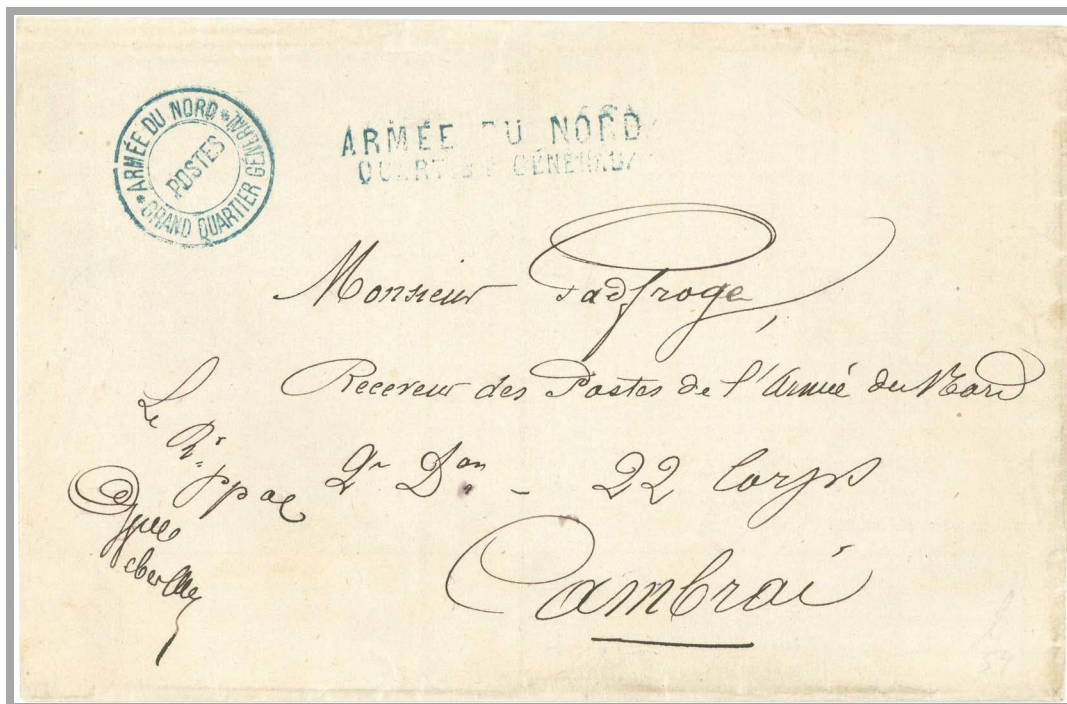
Map of the withdrawal of German corps (red roman numerals) from the Loire region

## Campaign in the North

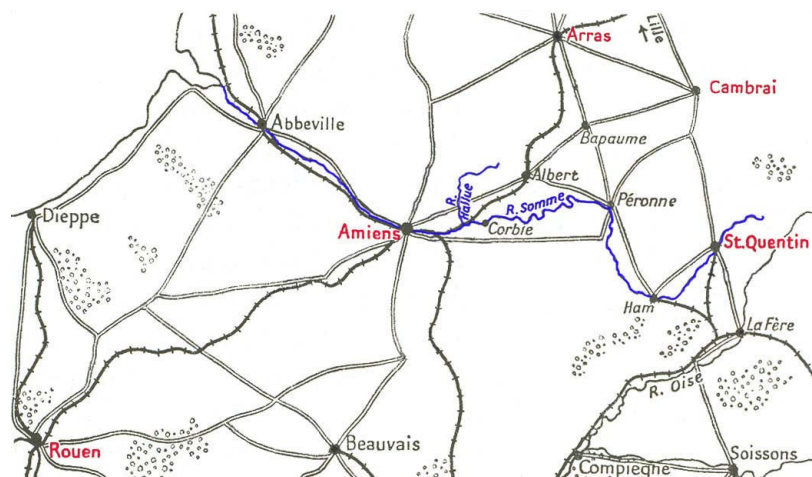
### Historical Summary: October 17 – March 7



- 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 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> 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 22<sup>nd</sup> Corps payeur at Cambrai



Area of military operations for the Campaign in the North



# Campaign in the North

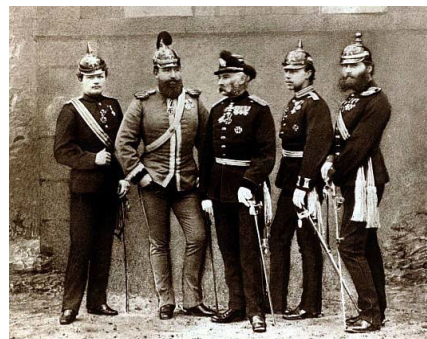
## German Advance into the North: September 26 – November 20



On September 26, the German IV Army detached the 12<sup>th</sup> (Saxon) Cavalry Division and the 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 12<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division bureau  
From the 2<sup>nd</sup> Garde Infantry Regiment – arrived November 5 in Düsseldorf



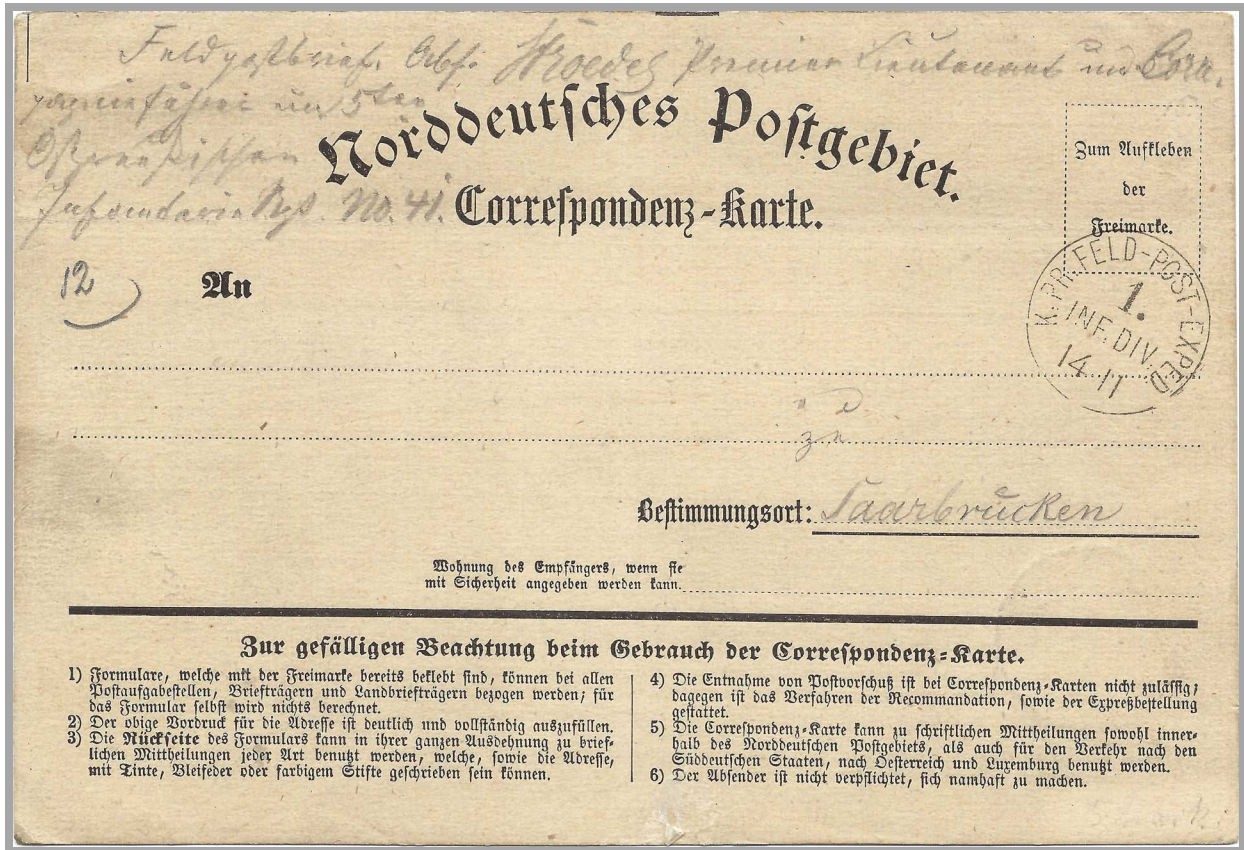
Photograph of soldiers in the 12<sup>th</sup> (Saxon) Corps

# 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 (1<sup>st</sup> Corps, 8<sup>th</sup> Corps and 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division) for service in the North. They reached the Soissons area on November 20.



Posted November 14 at the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division bureau - besieged Mézières November 2-25  
From the I Army's 41<sup>st</sup> 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 (1<sup>st</sup> Corps, 8<sup>th</sup> Corps and 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division) attacked the French 22<sup>nd</sup> Corps east of Amiens. The French retreated north to Arras.

**Feldpost-Correspondenzkarte.**

**An** *Lehrmann Hoff*

**Bestimmungsort:** *Elberfeld*

Wohnung des Empfängers, wenn sie mit Sicherheit angegeben werden kann. *Bürgerstr. 174*

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 Correspondenzarten, welche an die mobilen Truppen und Militärbeamten abgesandt werden, muß deutlich angegeben sein: zu welchem Arme.-Corps, 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 near Amiens on November 27 – posted the next day at the I Army HQ bureau  
From the 7<sup>th</sup> Konigs-Husar Regiment of the 8<sup>th</sup> 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 8<sup>th</sup> Corps attacked the French Armée de Rouen, which retreated to Le Havre on December 7. The 1<sup>st</sup> 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.

Stamp: FELDPOST-EX. 1. ARMEE-CORPS. 612

Datelined near Rouen – posted December 6 at 1<sup>st</sup> 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 22<sup>nd</sup> Corps.



Posted December 9 at the Armée du Nord headquarters bureau by 22<sup>nd</sup> Corps payeur  
Postmarked December 10 in transit at nearby Lille – arrived December 15



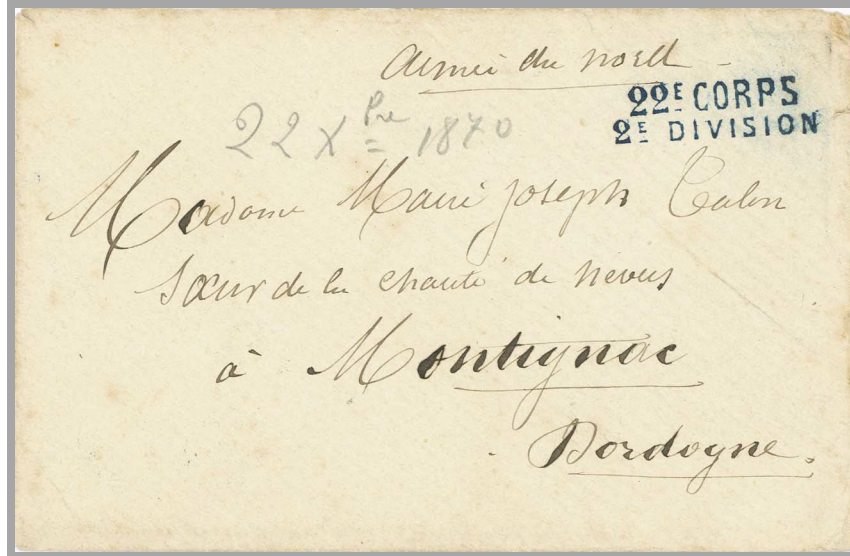
Posted January 9 at the 22<sup>nd</sup> Corps' 2<sup>nd</sup> Division bureau – free frank per "P.P."  
Postmarked January 10 in transit at nearby Arras – arrived January 12

# Campaign in the North

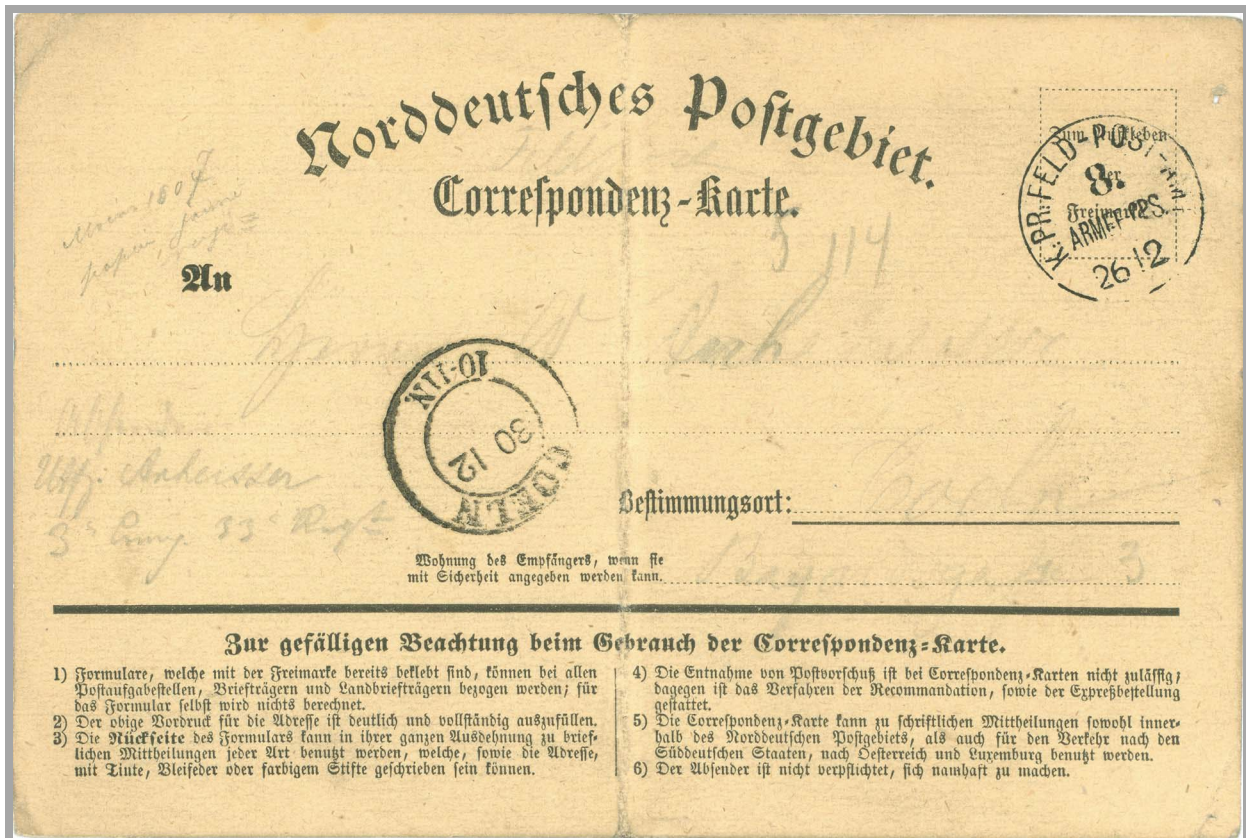
## Second Battle of Amiens: December 23



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 22<sup>nd</sup> Corps' 2<sup>nd</sup> Division bureau  
Arrived in southern France on December 26



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

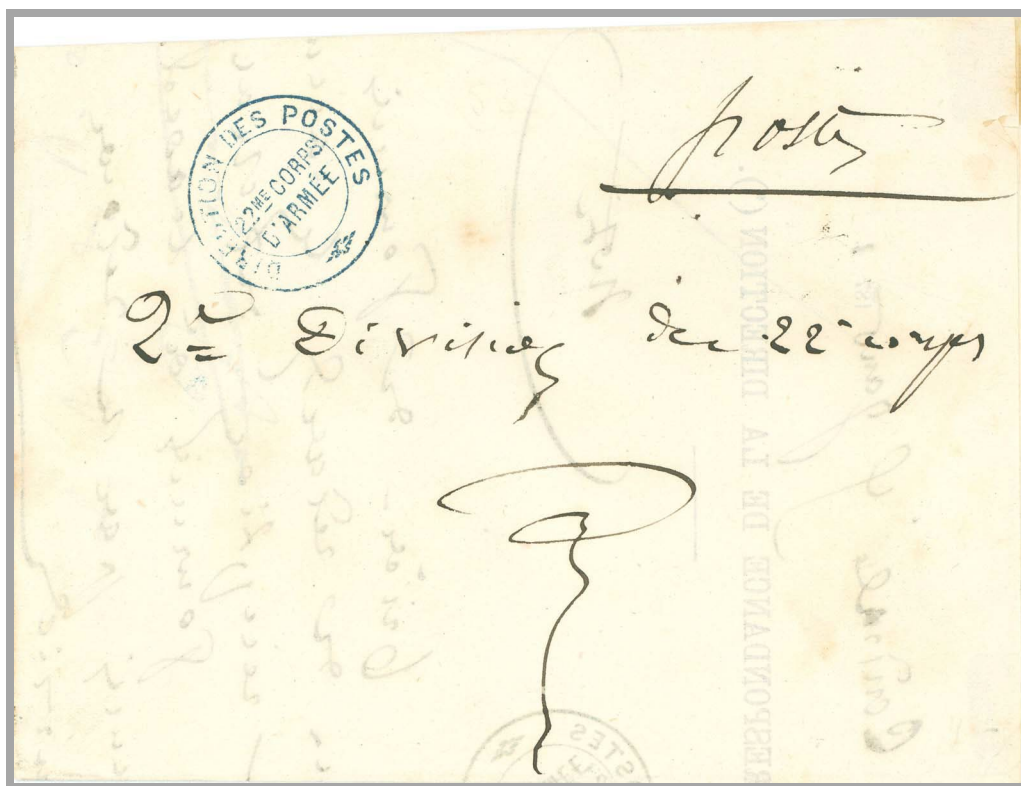


## Campaign in the North

### Battle of Bapaume: January 3



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



Dated January 5 at Cambrai - postmarked "Direction des Postes 22<sup>me</sup> Corps d'Armée"  
Sent to the military postmaster of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Corps' 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 22<sup>nd</sup> 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 militärischen  
Befehl angehalten

Posted prepaid 20c on January 10 in occupied Bischweiler – **blue military censor mark**  
Addressed 24<sup>th</sup> Regiment depot - soldier was assigned to 22<sup>nd</sup> Corps’ 68<sup>th</sup> 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 73<sup>rd</sup> 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:*  
*W. Anheiser*  
*König. Regim. Urd. u. G.*  
*Regim. u. Fil. Regim.*  
*N. 33*  
*3. Comp.*

tes **Armee-Corps.**  
te **Division.**  
tes **Regiment N<sup>o</sup>**  
te **Compagnie.**  
te **Schwadron.**  
**Batterie.**

*8.*  
*K. P. F. L. W. S. K. P. D. RESERVE*  
*ARMEE-CORPS*  
*20/1*

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 farbigen Stifte geschrieben sein können.  
4) In Privat-Angelegenheiten ist eine Recommendation der Correspondenzkarten nicht gestattet.

Posted at 8<sup>th</sup> 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<sup>e</sup> Corps Postes 1<sup>ère</sup> Division” cancels on 20c Bordeaux Issue stamps for postage via Belgium  
“23<sup>e</sup> 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 22<sup>nd</sup> Corps' 2<sup>nd</sup> Division bureau near Cambrai  
"P.P." mark for free frank – from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division's military postmaster



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

# Campaign in the North

Armistice: January 31 - March 7



Posted prepaid 20c in occupied Rouen - addressed to the 22<sup>nd</sup> Corps' 2<sup>nd</sup> 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<sup>e</sup> Corps Postes 2<sup>e</sup> Division" arrival mark - incorrect 30c postage due



## Campaign in the North

Armistice: January 31 – March 7



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



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



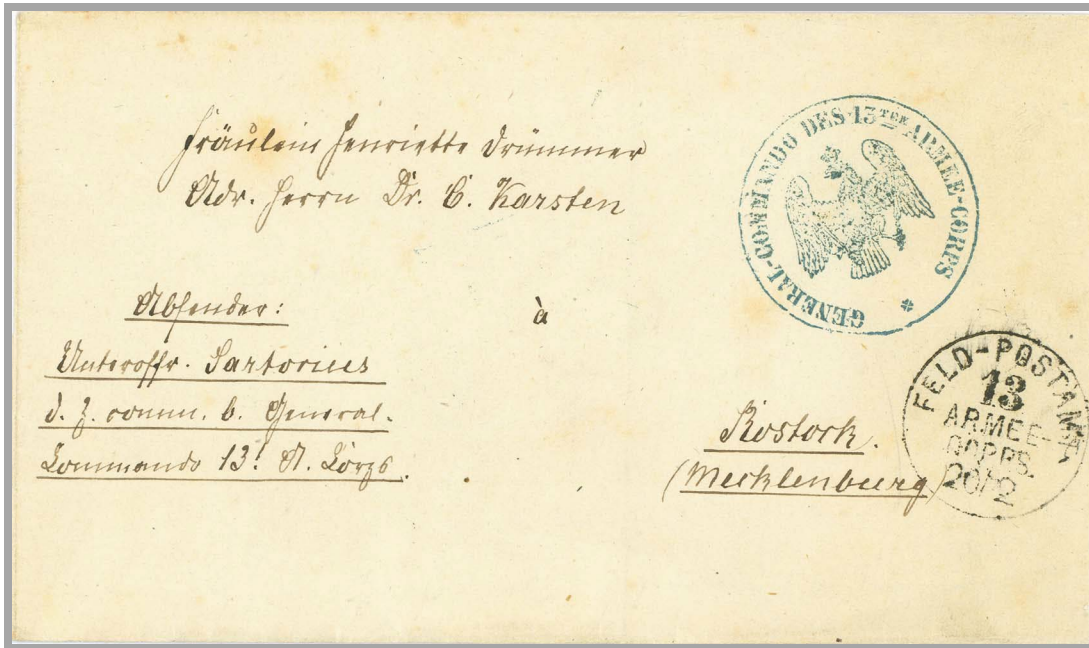
Posted February 22 at the 23<sup>rd</sup> Corps' 2<sup>nd</sup> Division bureau – arrived February 23

# Campaign in the North

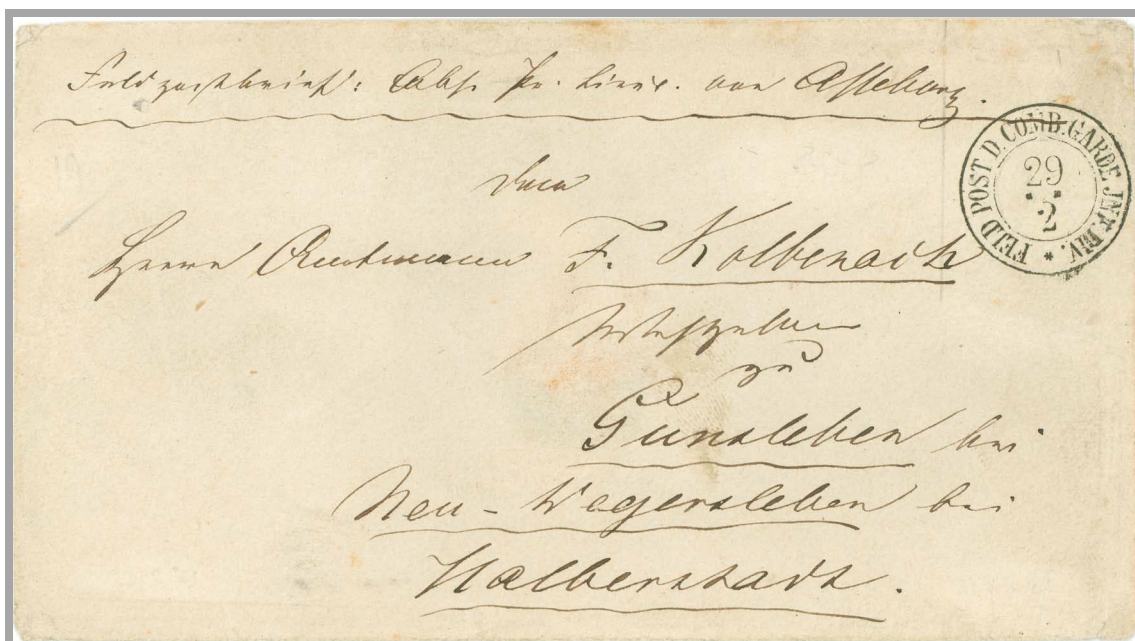
## Armistice: January 31 – March 7



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 13<sup>th</sup> Corps HQ bureau – **blue 13<sup>th</sup> Corps Commander mark**  
13<sup>th</sup> 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 14<sup>th</sup> Army Corps: September 30 – February 13



The German 14<sup>th</sup> 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 14<sup>th</sup> Corps bureau at Dijon – arrived December 26 in Mustrin  
Blue “K. Train-Reg Leit. Esc. 14 A. Corps” private unit marking



Map of 14<sup>th</sup> Corps advance (in green) from Strasbourg

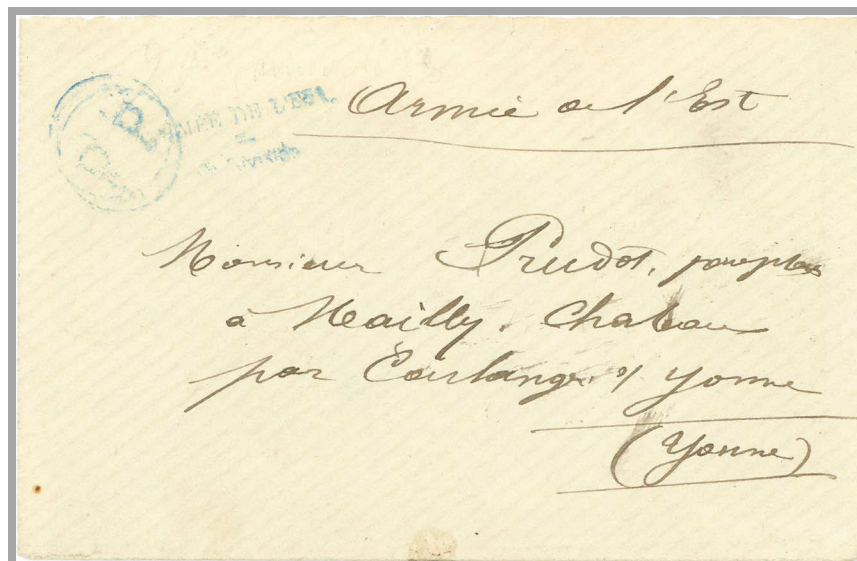




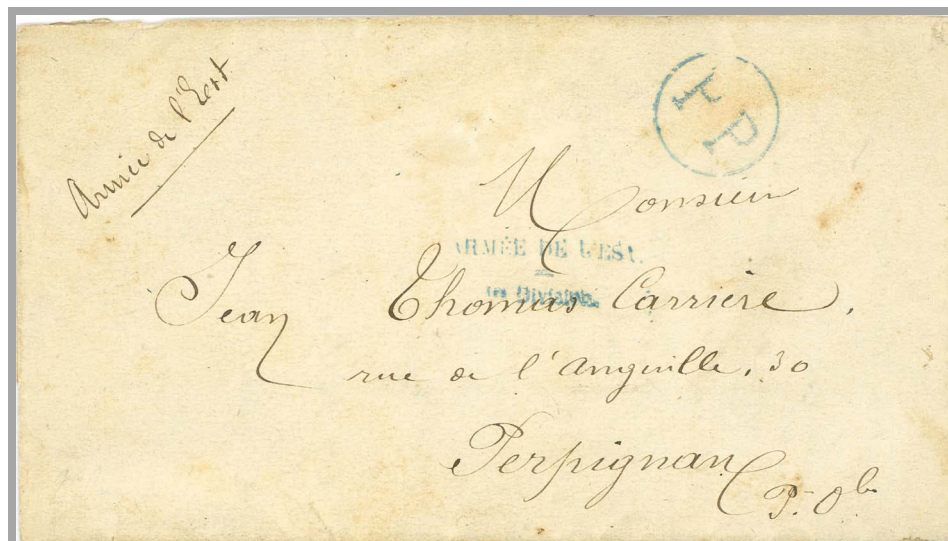
## Campaign in the East

### 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 20<sup>th</sup> Corps, so surviving mail is rare.



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



ARMÉE DE L'EST.  
1<sup>re</sup> Division.

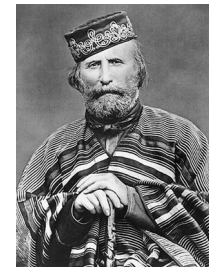
Dated November 4 at Auxon (near Besançon) by a payeur officer in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade  
Postmarked "Armée de l'Est 1<sup>re</sup> Division" - distinctive blue "P.P." for free frank  
Arrived November 9 in Perpignan - **this army was in existence for only 25 days**



## 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<sup>er</sup> Gal”**  
From the 4<sup>e</sup> Légion de Garde Nationale Mobilisée du Jura - arrived February 15 in Mareuil

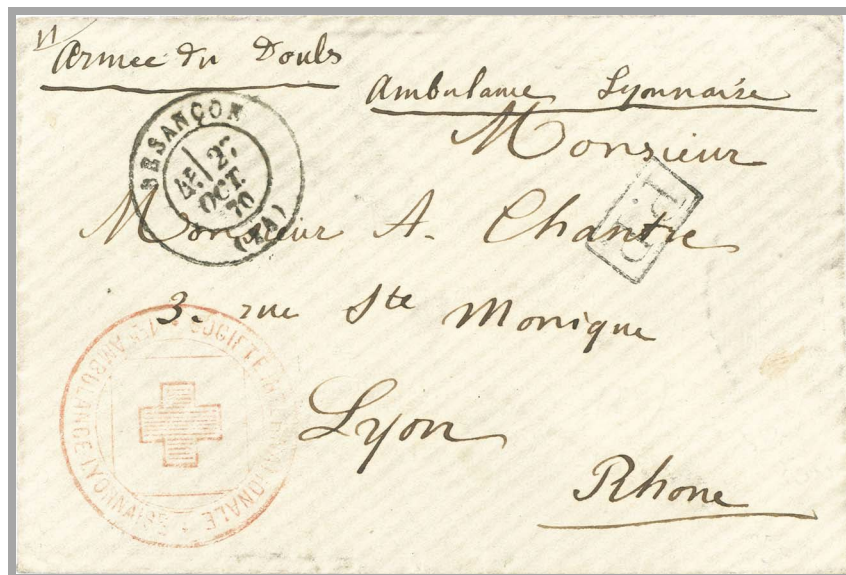


## Campaign in the East

### Battle on the Ognon River: October 22



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



Posted with free frank on October 27 in Besançon – endorsed “Armée du Doubs”  
**Red “Société Internationale 1<sup>er</sup> 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<sup>me</sup> 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 14<sup>th</sup> 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



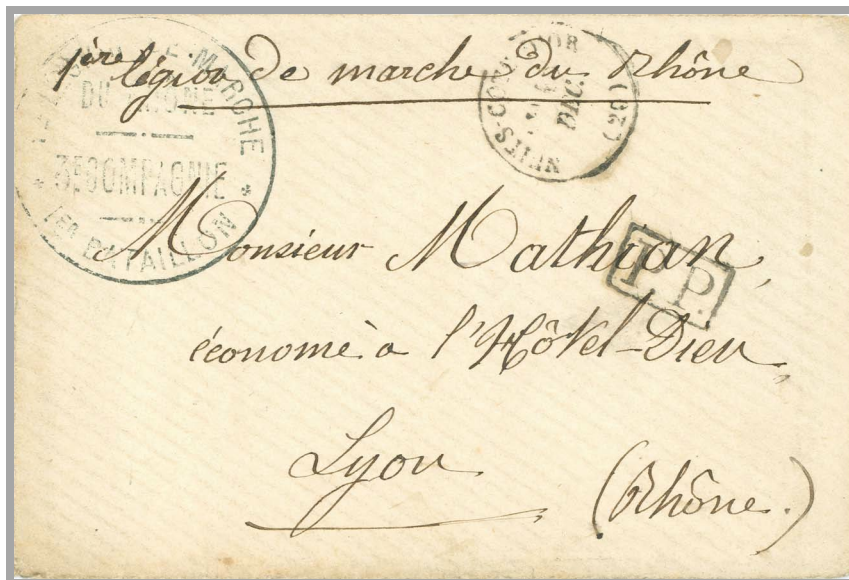
Postmarked "GR.BAD.FELDPOST" on November 11 in Dijon - small type is rarer  
Black "Gr. Bad. 3 Infanterie Reg. 3. (Fues.) Bat." unit marking - arrived November 15

# 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<sup>re</sup> Légion de Marche du Rhône



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

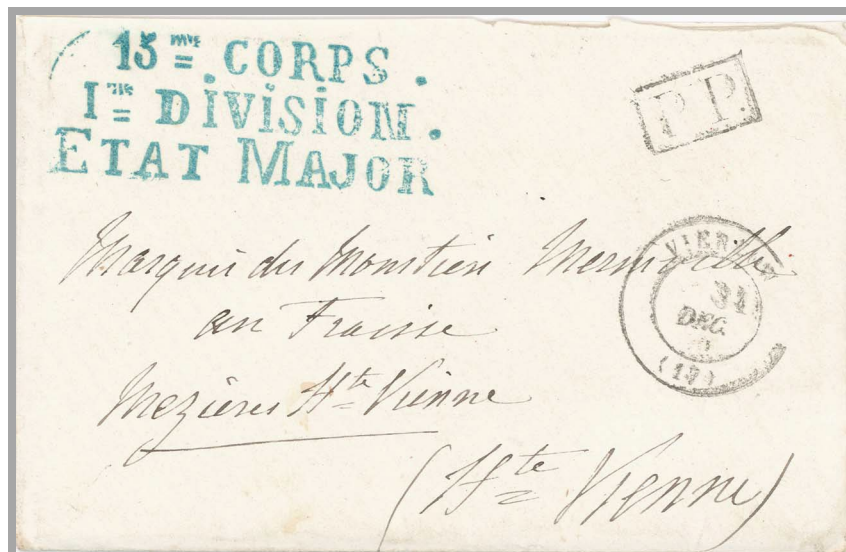




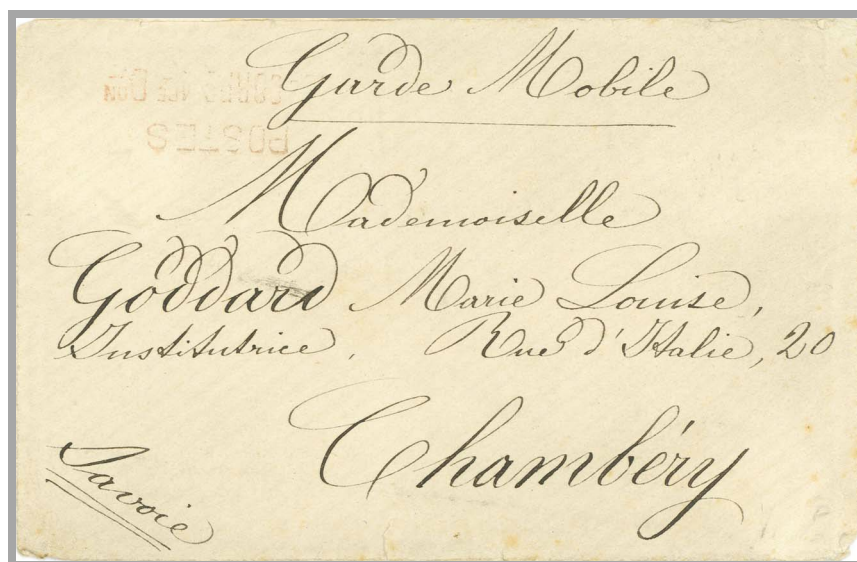
## Campaign in the East

### 1<sup>re</sup> Armée Moves East: December 19 – January 8

On December 19, Général Bourbaki's 1<sup>re</sup> Armée (15<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> 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 15<sup>th</sup> Corps private unit marking – arrived January 2 in Mézières



New style "Postes 15<sup>e</sup> Corps 1<sup>re</sup> Don" fieldpost postmark was introduced January 1  
Applied in red enroute to Clerval - arrived January 7 in Chambéry

## Campaign in the East

### 1<sup>re</sup> Armée Moves East: December 19 – January 8



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



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



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

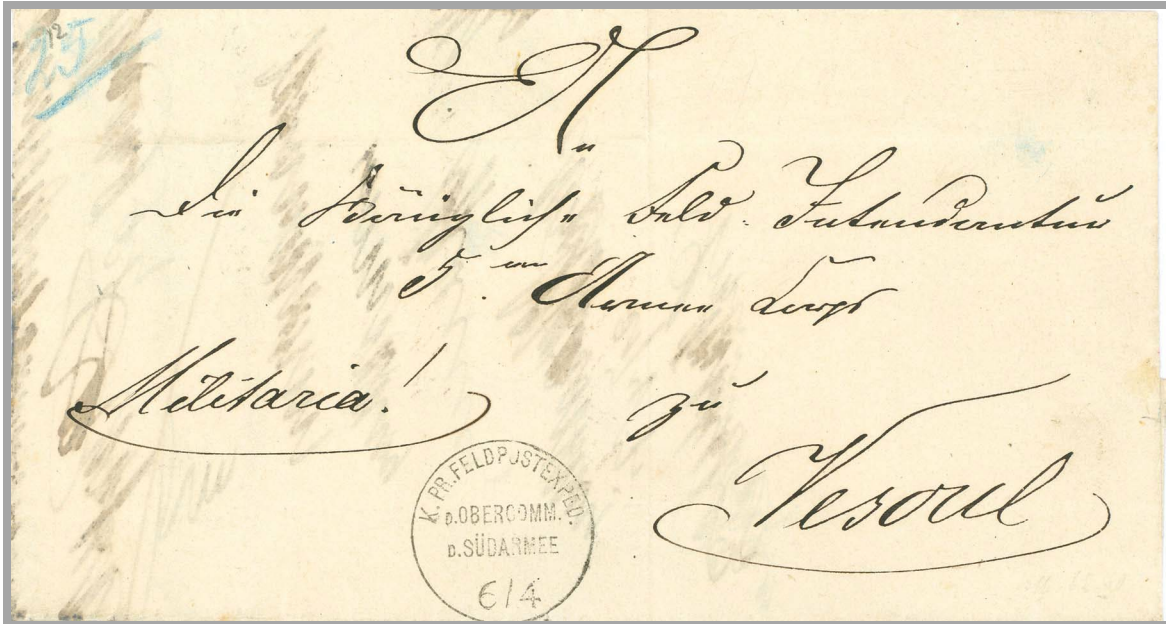


# Campaign in the East

## German Sud Army: January 6 – March 31



On January 6, the German 2<sup>nd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Corps were detached from the II Army and combined with the 14<sup>th</sup> Corps to form the Sud Army (91,000 men) to operate against Bourbaki's 1<sup>re</sup> 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 5<sup>th</sup> Corps at Vesoul during the occupation period



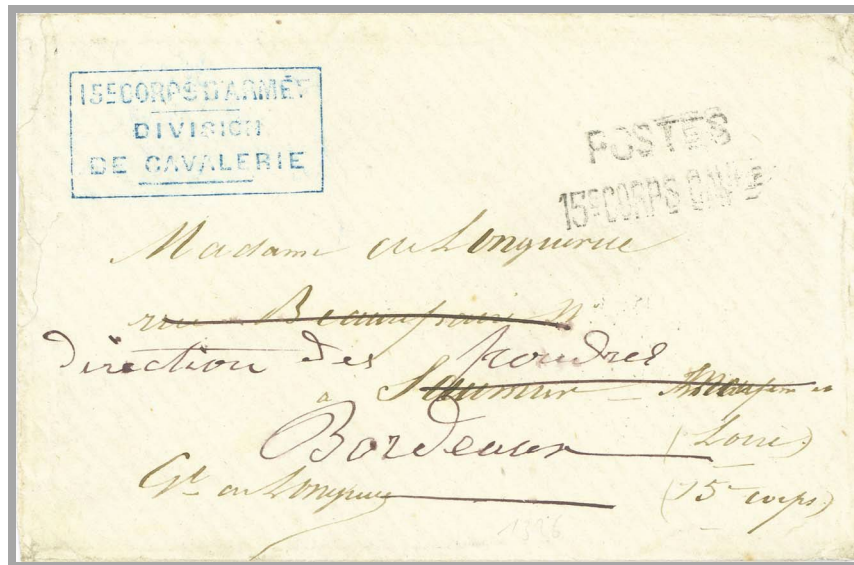
Map of the Sud Army advance (in gold) and the French retreat (green)

## Campaign in the East

### Battle of Héricourt: January 15-17



The French 1<sup>re</sup> Armée attacked the out-numbered 14<sup>th</sup> 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<sup>e</sup> Corps Cav<sup>le</sup>” 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<sup>re</sup> 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<sup>e</sup> Corps Quartier G<sup>al</sup>” 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<sup>re</sup> Armée: January 18-31



On January 19, the Sud Army learned of the 1<sup>re</sup> 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 7<sup>th</sup> Corps HQ bureau near Pontarlier – arrived February 10



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



# Campaign in the East

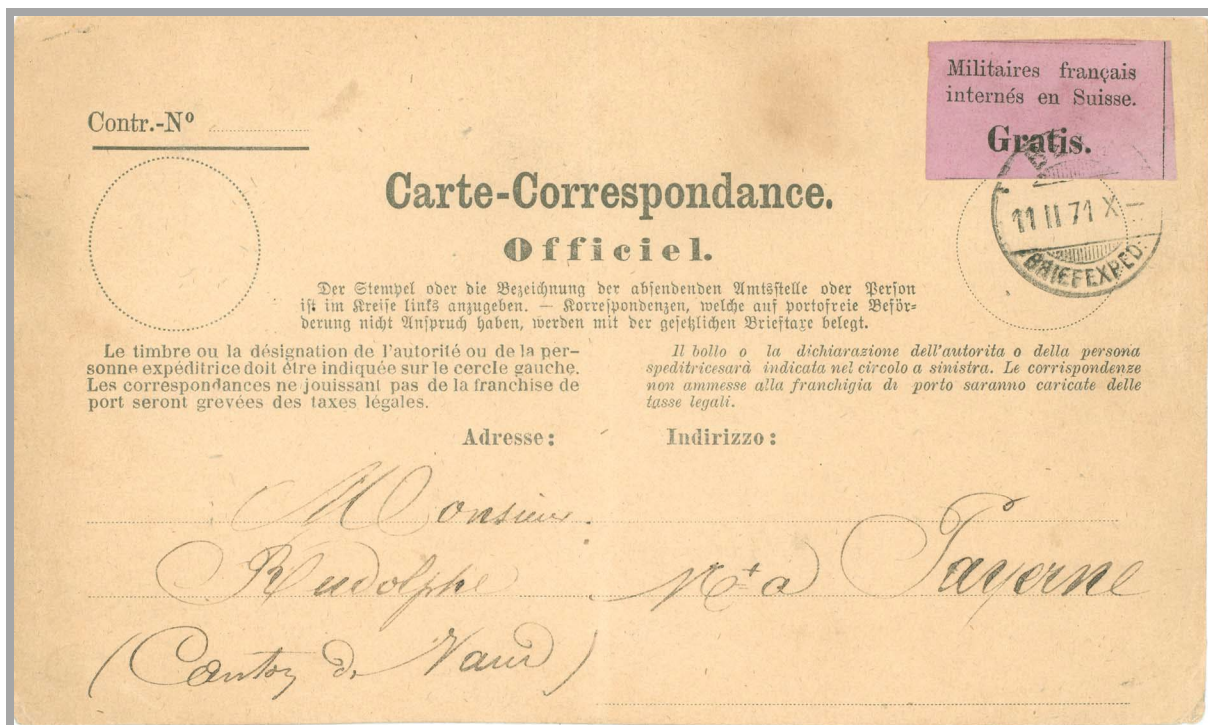
## 1<sup>re</sup> Armée Internment in Switzerland: February 1 – March 16



On February 1, the 1<sup>re</sup> 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<sup>er</sup> du mois prisonnier avec toute l'armée" – arrived February 6



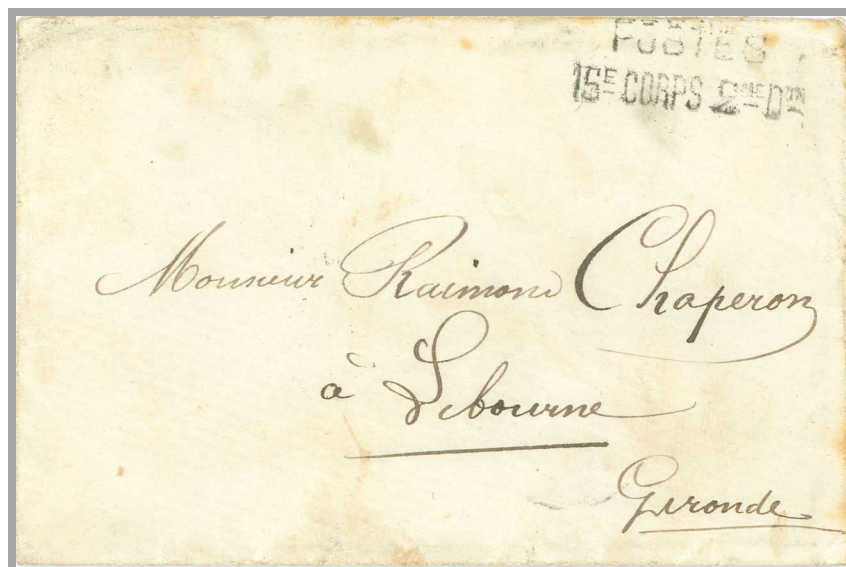
Official card posted February 11 in Berne by a 3<sup>e</sup> Régiment de Zouaves (20<sup>th</sup> Corps) internee "Gratis" label unusually tied by Berne postmark – they were not intended to be cancelled



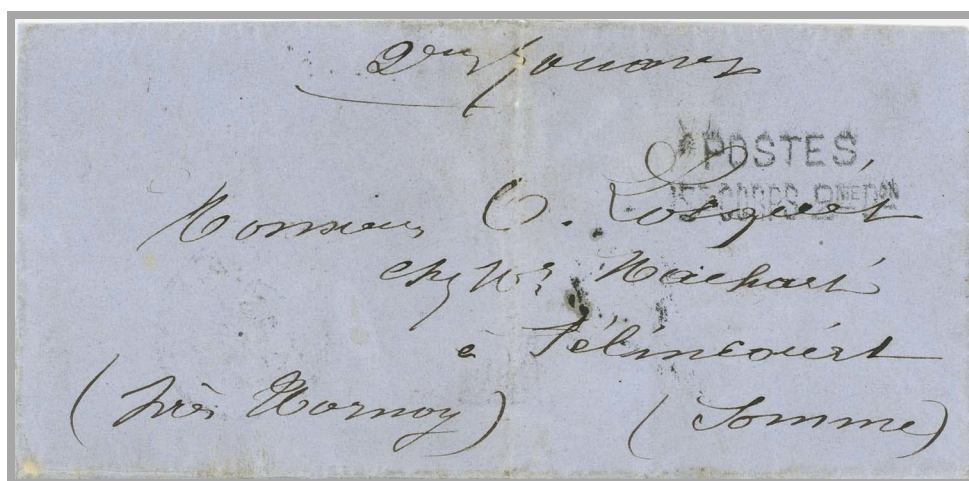
## Campaign in the East

### Armistice: February 13 - March 31

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



Postmarked "Postes 15<sup>e</sup> Corps 2<sup>me</sup> Div" - March 11 Besançon transit  
Arrived March 15 in Libourne



Dated March 16 near Besançon by a 2<sup>e</sup> Régiment de Marche de Zouaves soldier  
Posted at 15<sup>th</sup> Corps 2<sup>nd</sup> Division bureau - March 17 Besançon transit - arrived March 22  
**Latest known 1<sup>re</sup> 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



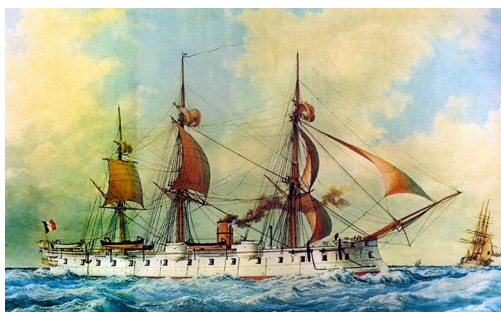
## French Naval Campaigns

### 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



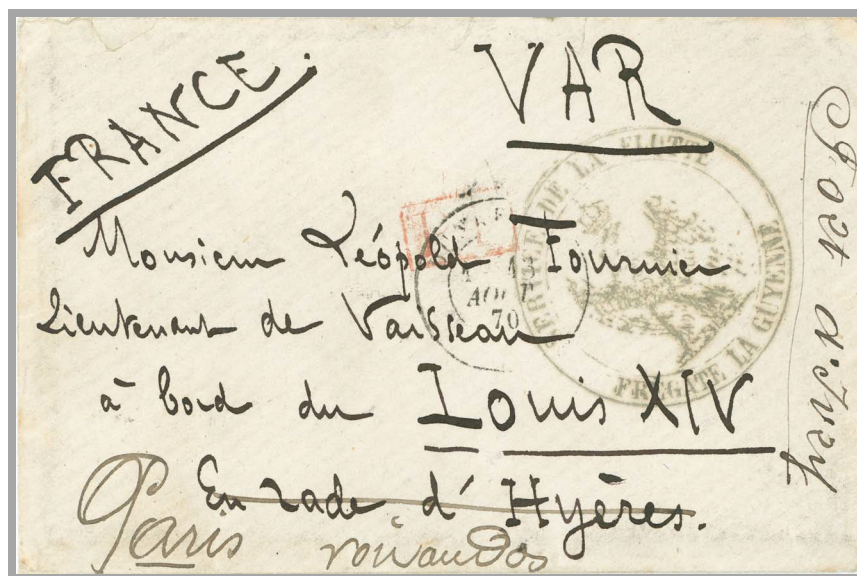
Image of reverse (90%)



## 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

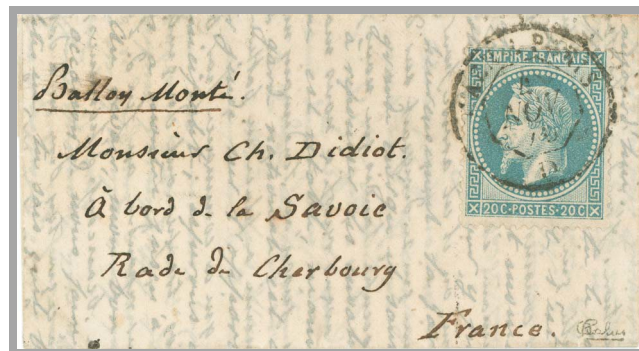




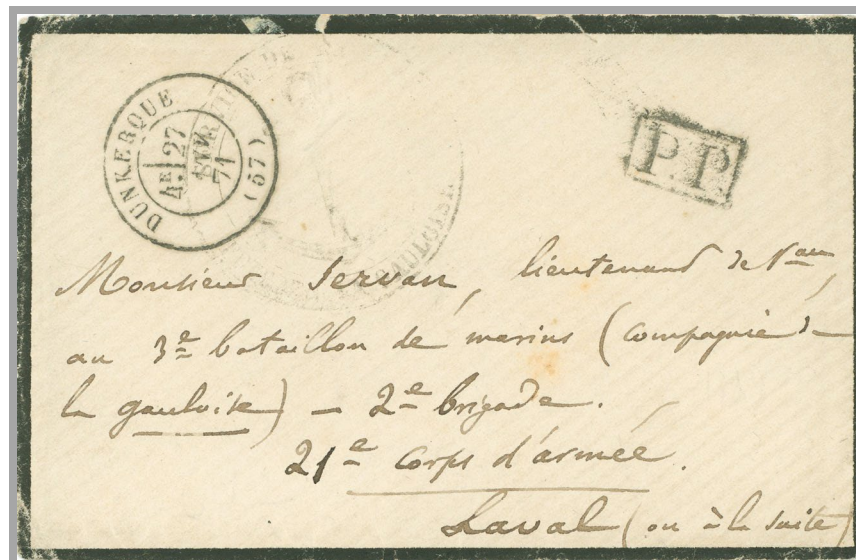
## French Naval Campaigns

### 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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

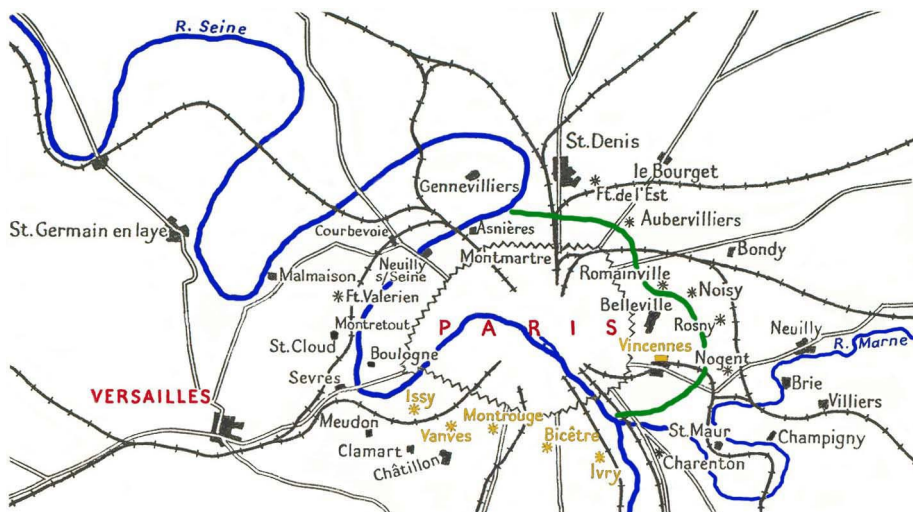
## Historical Summary: April 6 – June 10



- 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 5<sup>th</sup> Corps commander Général Clinchant



Dated May 11 at Versailles from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps – modified ex-23<sup>rd</sup> 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<sup>e</sup> Armée de la Loire and the Armée du Nord postmark devices, some of which were modified.



Ex-2<sup>e</sup> Armée de la Loire “19<sup>e</sup> 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-23<sup>rd</sup> Corps’ “<sup>E</sup> Corps Postes 2<sup>E</sup> Division” postmark  
2<sup>nd</sup> Corps’ 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 – **2<sup>nd</sup> 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: 4<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.

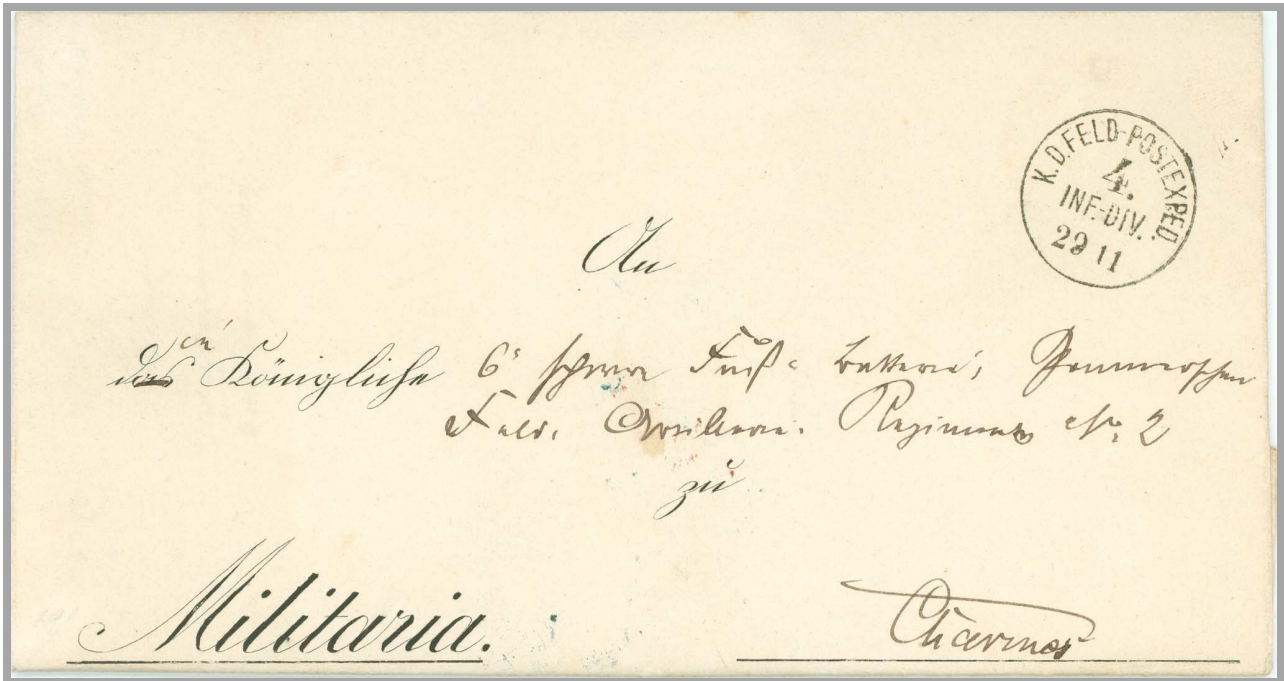


March 15, 1872 “Feldpost Amt der Occupations-Armee” postmark from HQ bureau at Nancy  
March 16 Feldpost Relais No. 25 (Ligny) transit – arrived March 16 at the 6<sup>th</sup> Division bureau

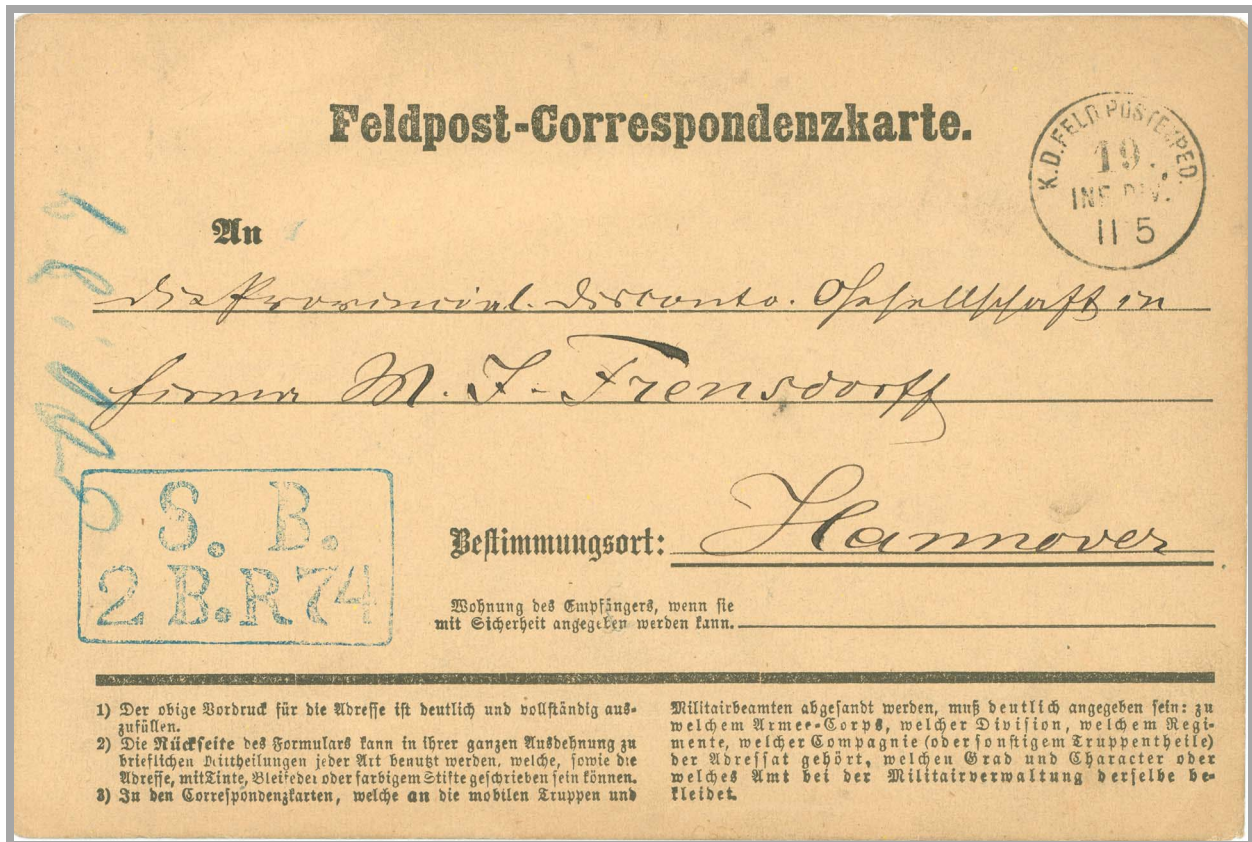


Post-War German Occupation of France

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



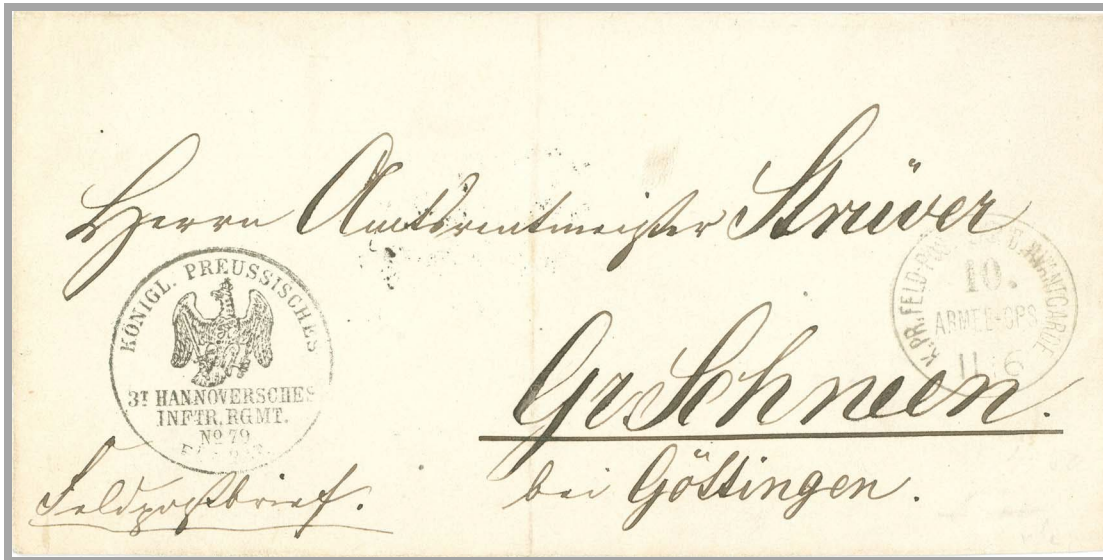
Dated November 27, 1872 at Épinal – posted two days later at the 4th Division bureau



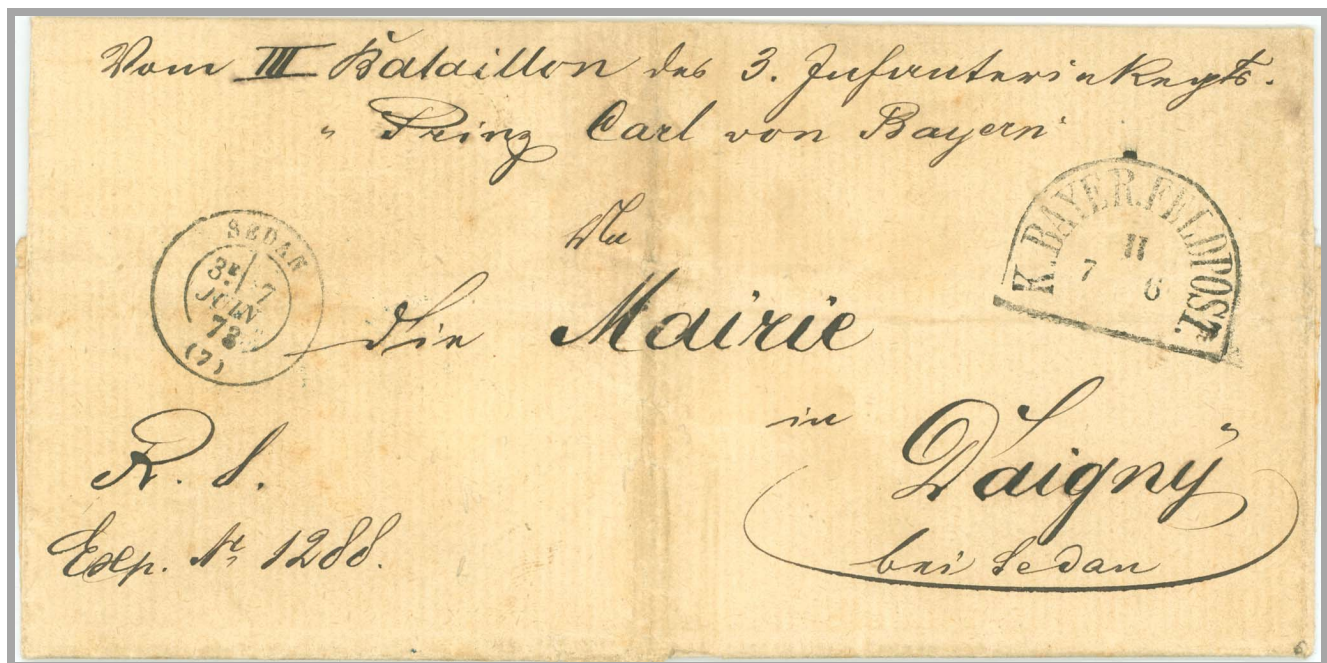
Dated May 11, 1873 at Nancy and posted that day at the 19th Division bureau

Post-War German Occupation of France

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



Posted June 11, 1871 at the 10<sup>th</sup> 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