

Postal Neighbors with France

Enjoy a brief little foray into the mail that traveled to and from France via neighboring countries in the decades prior to the formation of the General Postal Union. To get things off on the 'wrong foot' we can start with an item that crossed the border in a less conventional fashion.

Missent to England - Redirected to Belgium



- Le Havre Feb 28, 1858
- Le Havre A Paris Feb 28 (verso)
- Angleterre - Belgium crossed out
- PD in box
- Paris A Calais Mar 1 (verso)
- London Mar 2
- Manchester Mar 2 (verso)
- Leigh Mar 3 (verso)
- Try Lieje Belgium in red
- Manchester Mar 3 (verso)
- London Mar 4 (verso)
- P-D in oval
- Angleterre par Ostende Mar 5 (verso)
- Liege Mar 5 (verso)
- 10 - carrier delivery mark

The sender of this letter had some issues with the correct spelling of Liege, Belgium - calling it "Leigh." The clerk on the mail train between LeHavre and Paris had lists of post offices to reference. Finding no "Leigh" in Belgium, he did find it in England near Manchester. Since the rate was the same (40 centimes) either way, he selected the town that matched the spelling best. Once the letter arrived in Leigh, the postmaster there probably sighed a little and wrote "Try Lieje Belgium" and put it back in the mail stream.

Letter Mail to Belgium

40 ctms per 10 gms : Apr 1, 1858 - Dec 31, 1865

Too Late for Quievrain Route - Taken via Tourcoing

Letter Rates to Belgium		
Oct 1, 1849	40 ctms	per 7.5 g
Apr 1, 1858	40 ctms	per 10 g
Jan 1, 1866	30 ctms	per 10 g
Jan 1, 1876 (GPU)	30 ctms	per 15 g



Cambrai May 18, 1860

593 in lozenge

PD in box (red)

Apres Le Depart (too late for mail train)

France Par Tournai May 20 (verso)



Double Weight Letter - via Mouscron (Tourcoing crossing)



Lille Jun 2, 1865

2046 in lozenge

PD in box (red)

France Par Mouscron Jun 2 (verso)

Paturages Jun 3, 1865 (verso)

note offset of Paturages date stamp tying stamps at left



The Tourcoing (France) to Mouscron (Belgium) crossing was, at least early on, the most frequently used railway crossing for the mails between the two nations. In fact, the 1847 convention identified the exchange office pairing of Lille (France) and Tournai (Belgium) as having three mails every day. By 1860, there were several additional options including Quievrain and Erquelinnes.

Letter Mail to Belgium

30 centimes per 10 grams : Jan 1, 1866 - Dec 31, 1875

Tourcoing Crossing

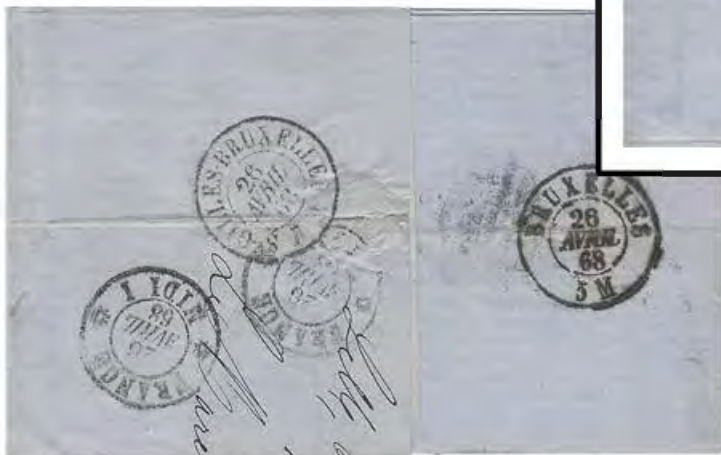
Lille Apr 25, 1868

2046 in diamond

France MIDI | Apr 26, 1868 (verso)

Bruxelles Apr 26, 1868 (verso)

St Gilles . Bruxelles Apr 26, 1868 (verso)



Givet Crossing

Reims Feb 10, 1868

3103 in diamond

Paris A Givet Feb 10, 1868 (verso)

France Namur Feb 11, 1868 (verso)

Namur Feb 11, 1868 (verso)



France and Belgium maintained a number of railway mail border crossings, most of which only had mail made up once per day. The Tourcoing crossing (near Lille) had multiple mail cars per day that crossed at Tourcoing. The other common crossings were at Quievrain near Valenciennes and at Erquillines.

Letter Mail to France

40 ctms per 10 gms : Apr 1, 1858 - Dec 31, 1865

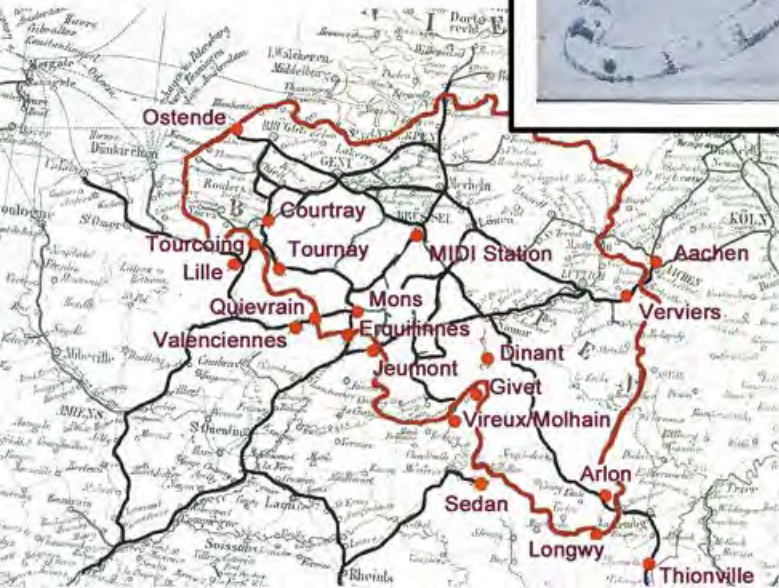
Single Rate Letter



Mons Jul 4, 1864
 Quievrain
 Belg VALnes Jul 5
 Paris Jul 5

Double Rate Letter

Ypres Mar 19, 1865
 France Par Mouscron Mar 19 (verso)
 Tourcoing
 Belg Valenciennes Mar 20 (verso)
 Paris Mar 20 (verso)

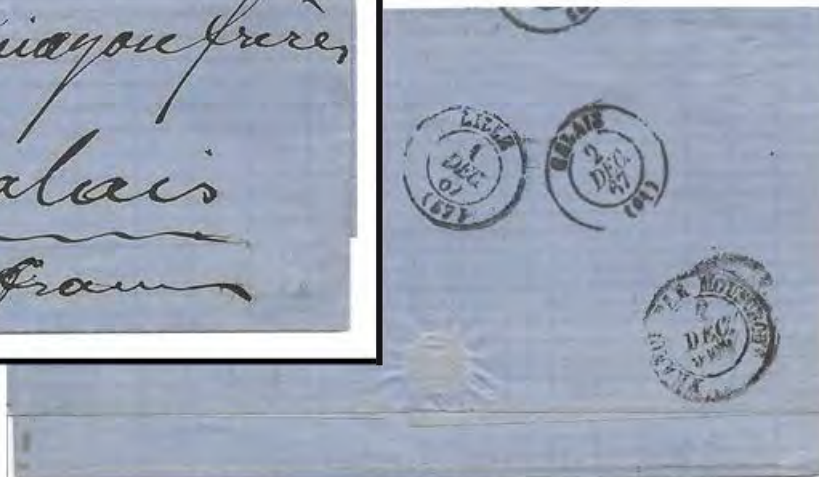


The Calais and Valenciennes mail trains met South of Lille and West of Valenciennes and headed Southwest toward Amiens and, eventually, Paris. Both Tourcoing and Quievrain crossings could receive either of these French exchange markings depending on the train schedules. The Belgian "France Par Mouscron" marking is a positive indicator that the Tourcoing crossing was used. Similarly, a Mons or MIDI marking favor a Quievrain crossing when found in combination with either of these French exchange marks.

Mouscron - Tourcoing - Lille crossing



Anvers Nov 30, 1867
 France Par Mouscron Dec 1 (verso)
 Tourcoing
 Lille Dec 1 (verso)
 Calais Dec 2 (verso)



Chimay - Trelon - Avesnes crossing



Montigny-sur-Sambre (date line)
 Charleroy Mar 6, 1866
 France par Chimay Mar 6 (verso)
 Macon - Trelon
 Belg Avesnes Mar 6
 Erquelines A Paris Mar 6 (verso)
 Charleville Mar 7 (verso)



Rail service continued to expand during the late 1860's in Belgium and France and additional rail crossings became available during that time. The rail via Chimay does not appear in several 1865 maps, but it does appear in 1869 versions. The Belgian government owned significant portions of the Belgian network, in part to avoid the intrusion of outside interests (initially from the Dutch). However, many private lines were developed in the 1860's, including the Chimay Railway.

Letter Mail to France

12 kreuzer per 10 grams : Apr 1, 1862 - Jun 30, 1867



Mainz May 14, 1866

PD

Tour T Strasbourg May 15, 1866

Colmar May 15, 1866 (verso)



The twelve kreuzer rate was split evenly between the Thurn and Taxis post and the French postal services. The mail crossed through Baden and took the train from origin to destination.

Letter Mail to Germany

40 ctms per 10 gms : May 25, 1872 - Dec 31, 1875

P. & E. RUDELLE
BORDEAUX
VINS & SPIRITUEUX

Bordeaux d. 13 April 1874

Zu von Valentin Bohm.



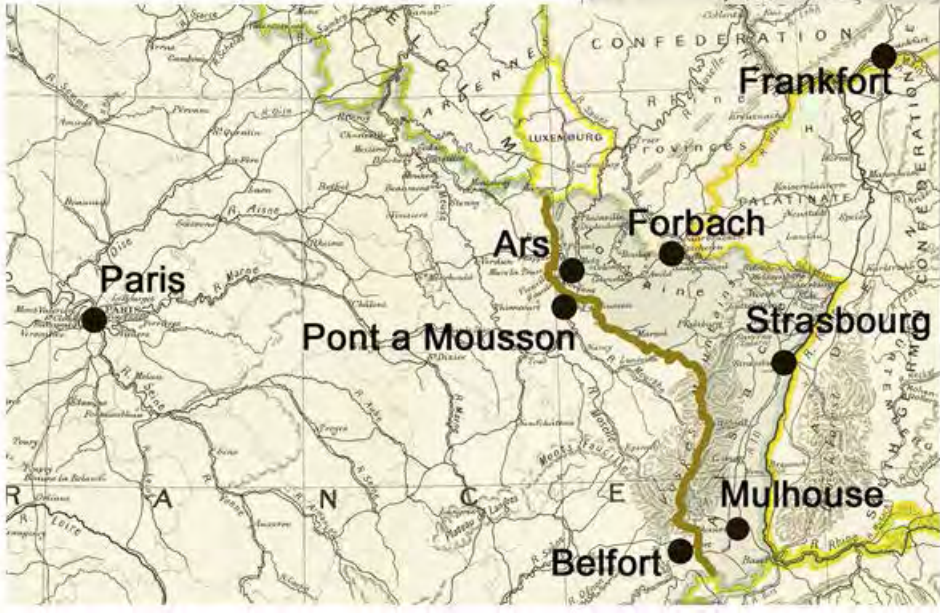
Frankfurt a.M.

Die mir beifolgende Briefe sind
von mir gef. bezogen und
sollten mir von dem
Hrn. Bohm
No. 145
R. 1085. 25/3
sol. Wergelungen
die zu
in der
der
so f. 100
man
die
für
in
in
auf
in

Bordeaux les Chartrons Apr 13, 1874
6307 in diamond

- Bordeaux A Paris (verso)
- Paris A Strasbourg Apr 13, 1874 (verso)
- Frankfort a.M. No 6 Apr 14, 1874 (verso)

Die
als
für
107
150
P. & E. Rudelle



The Alsace and Lorraine regions became part of the new German Empire after the Franco-Prussian War, necessitating new border crossings for the mails. Pont a Mousson and Verdun in the north, Belfort and Montbéliard in the South and Nancy in the central region could be identified as the new crossings. However, most exchange office labor was now performed either in Paris or in the 'ambulante' post offices on the mail trains.

Letter Mail to Switzerland

40 ctms per 7.5 gms : Jul 1, 1850 - Sep 30, 1865

Letter Rates to Switzerland		
July 1, 1850	40 ctm	per 7.5 g
Oct 1, 1865	30 ctm	per 10 g
GPU		
Jan 1, 1876	30 ctm	per 15 g

Geneve Entry



Le Havre May 20, 1857

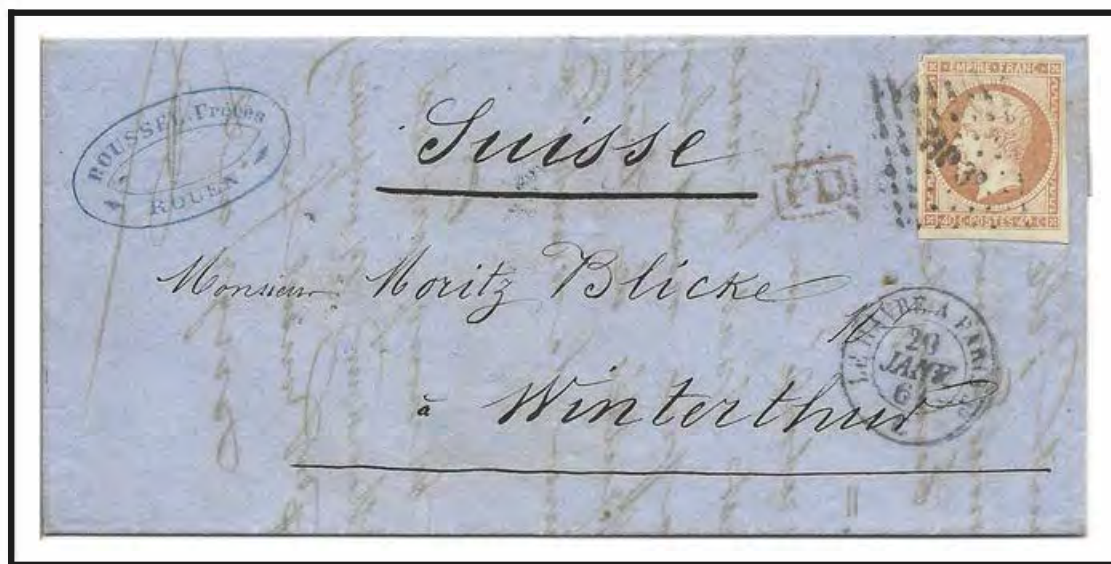
PD in box (red)

Le Havre A Paris May 20 (verso)

Paris May 21 (verso)

Geneve May 22, 1857 (verso)

Basel Entry



Le Havre A Paris Jan 20, 1861

HP30 in lozenge

PD in box (red)

Schweiz Bahnpost Basel Olten Jan 21 (verso)

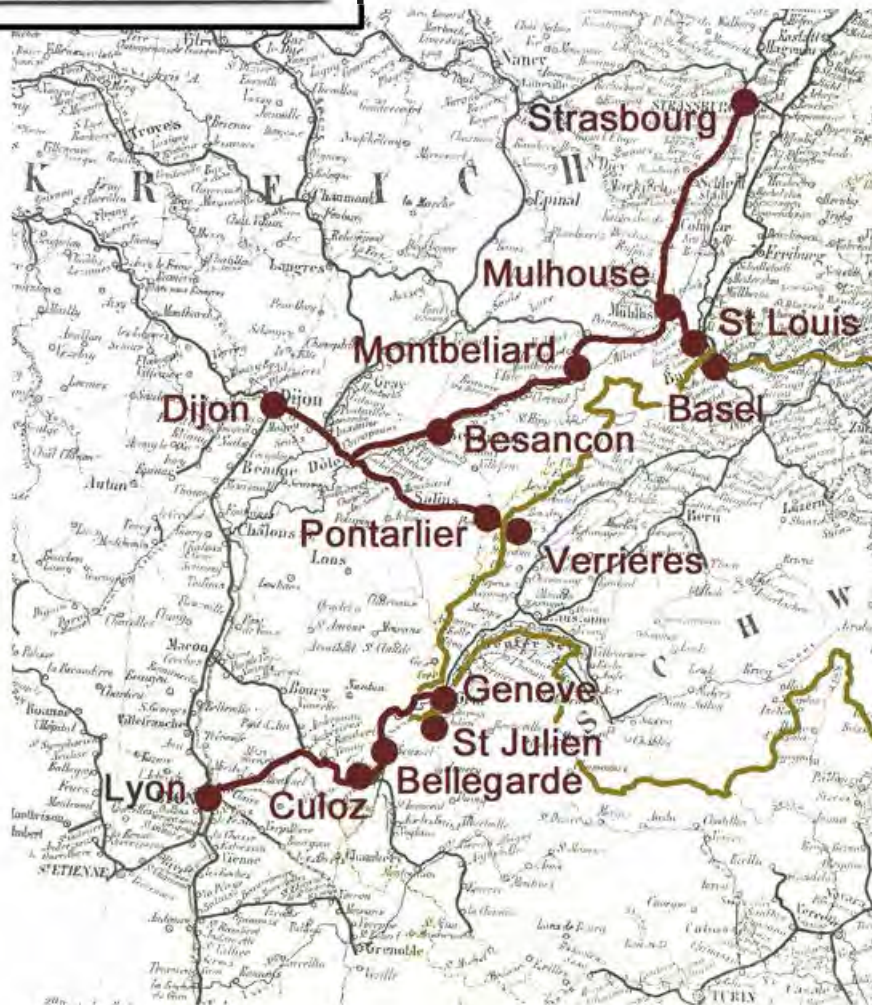
Schweiz Bahnpost Zurich Aarau Jan 21 (verso)

Winterthur Jan 21, 1861 (verso)

Switzerland's internal mail still maintained a distance component to its postal rates, splitting the country into rayons (or distances). To accommodate this system, the postal treaty of 1850 set the maximum amount to be charged for mail between the two countries, rather than an exact amount per weight unit. The French opted to stick with a fixed rate of 40 centimes, while the Swiss varied the amount depending on the distance/rayon from the border. By August 15, 1859, the Swiss abandoned the varied rate system and adopted the flat rate.



Dateline "Bale 27 Oct 1864"
 Basel Bad Bahnhof. Oct 31, 1864
 P.D.
 Suisse St Louis Nov 1, 1864
 7 A-E-D (Huningue)
 Lyon Nov 2, 1864 (verso)



This seems to be an artifact from earlier postal procedures in France.
 AED = Affranchi a l'Etranger jusqu'a Destination
 (Foreign mail paid to destination)
 The numeral ('7') identified the exchange office.



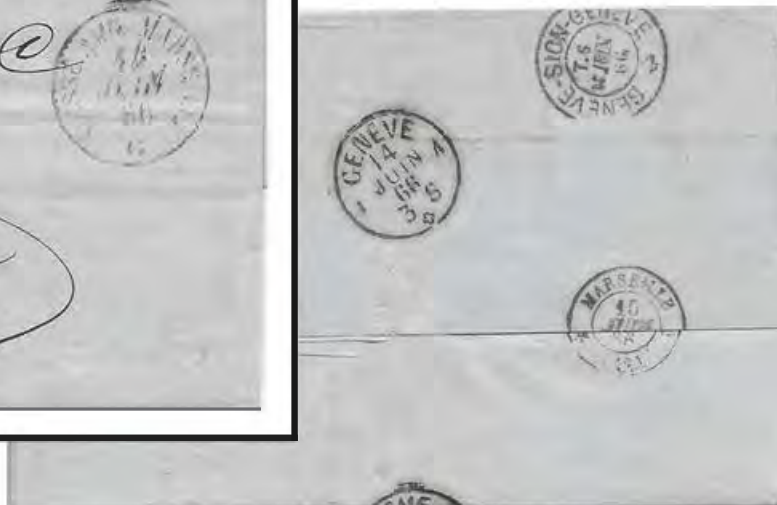
The Bad Bahnhof marking indicated that this item was posted at the rails station serving the Badische Hauptbahn in Basel. Baden and Switzerland entered a treaty agreement on July 27, 1852 to develop a railway station that would be run by Baden railway on Swiss soil in Basel. A temporary building was in place by 1855.

There were several points where mail could be exchanged between Switzerland and France. Each border crossing could service more than one exchange office on each side of the border. The 7 A-E-D marking was applied in Huningue, East of St Louis and on the banks of the Rhine River.....

Via Geneve - Ambulant Marseilles Exchange



Zurich Jun 13, 1866
 Geneve Jun 14 66 (verso)
 Geneve - Sion - Geneve Jun 14 66 (verso)
 Suisse Amb Marseilles Jun 14 66
 Marseilles Jun 15 66 (verso)



Via Basel - Mulhouse exchange office



Zurich May 7, 1868
 Basel May 8 68 (verso)
 Suisse Mulhouse May 8 68

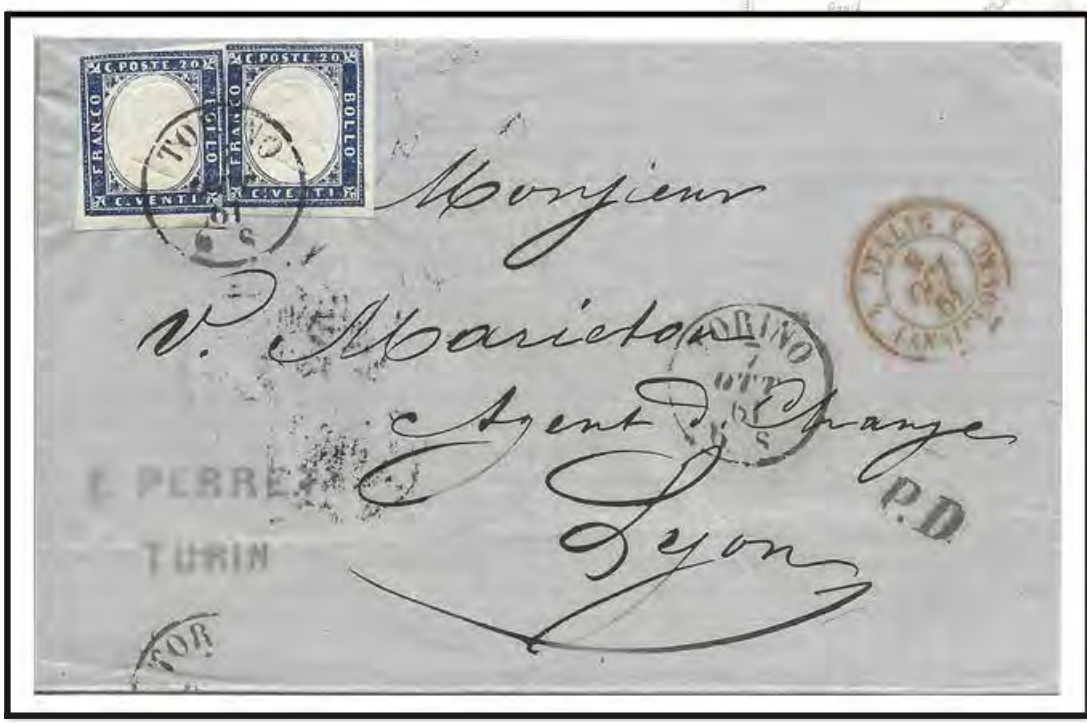
Both of these items were exchanged under the guidelines set forth by the 1865 Swiss-French Postal Convention. Geneve handled most of the mail coming from or going to southern France, Basel handled mail to the northeastern departments and a significant portion of the mail meant to go to and through Paris.

Franco-Sardinian Convention of 1861

40 centesimi per 10 grams : Jan 1, 1861 - Jul 31, 1869



- Torino Oct 7, 1861
- Susa
- Italie Lanslebourg Oct 9, 1861
- St Jean de Maurienne
- Lyon Oct 9 (verso)



The Franco-Sardinian Convention of 1861 set rates that were used as Italy went through the process of unification. These rates were extended for use in Naples and Sicily on October 1, 1861.

The Treaty of Turin (Mar 24, 1860) ceded the Duchy of Savoy and the County of Nice to France (from Sardinia) which was confirmed by plebiscite not long after the signing of the treaty. The Modane tunnel, under construction since 1857 was now partially in France.

Letter Mail to Italy

40 ctms per 10 gms : Aug 1, 1869 - Dec 31, 1875

Double Weight Letter



Marseilles Mar 24, 1872
2240 in diamond

Modane-Torino Ambulante Mar 25, 1872
(verso)

Napoli Mar 26, 1872 (verso)



With the rapid expansion of rail service and the increasing use of these rail lines to transport mail, mobile (ambulante) post offices were common in Europe. Rather than being off-loaded to a stationary post office for processing, these mobile offices performed exchange office duties. A railway marking, such as this Modane-Torino marking would typically be affixed to illustrate the exchange of mails between the two countries.

Letter Mail to France

12 cuartos per 7.5 grams : Feb 1, 1860 - Aug 30, 1870
5 centime "entry fee" to France: Feb 1, 1860 - Jul 15, 1869



Santander Jul 15, 1864
Espana Irun Jul 16 (verso)
Espagne St Jean de Luz Jul 18
Paris Jul 18 (verso)

1864 Queen Isabella II Issue



The primary mail crossings between France and Spain were limited to one Western and one Eastern location. Direct rail connections were slow to be established in part because Spanish and French rail were on different gauge track.

Letter Mail to France

12 cuartos per 7.5 grams : Feb 1, 1860 - Aug 30, 1870

2nd Rate Letter Short Paid
60 centimes per 7.5 grams for unpaid rate

Santander Apr 16, 1867 (docket)
red marking? (verso)
coastal steamer to Bayonne
Espagne St Jean de Luz Apr 21
Bayonne Apr 21 (verso)

Franqueo Insuficiente
(insufficient postage paid)
2 (in blue) - double rate letter
90 (in blue) - 90 centimes due
9 (handstamp) - 9 decimes due

Due Amount Calculation
60 ctm x 2 = 120 ctm
less 12 cuartos paid = 30 ctm



2nd Weight Letter
Entry Fee Terminated : Jul 15, 1869



Jerez de la Frontera, Cadiz Jun 10, 1870
Madrid Jun 12 (verso)
Espagne St Jean de Luz Jun 14
Paris Jul 18 (verso)

The entry fee for letter mail from Spain to France was due only when the letter was properly prepaid to destination. Unpaid or short paid mail was charged a higher amount per rate (60 centimes versus 40 centimes). The top item was not charged the entry fee because it did not properly pay for a double rate letter. The second item was mailed after the entry fee was ended in France, but before the next postal agreement went into affect that Fall.

Maritime Letter Mail to Spain

40 ctms per 10 gms + 3 cuartos : Feb 1, 1860 - Dec 31, 1875



Barcelona carrier distribution marking



Eug^e Hains Marseille
 Marsella Apr 5, 1865 letter dateline
 Spanish Coaster - *Guadalete*
 2 in circle of bars (Spanish obliterator)
 Admon de Cambio Barcelona 3 C^{tos}
 Cartero Meccion 7A (verso)
 Barcelona Apr 7, 1865 (verso)



The *Guadalete*, known as the *Jose Maria* in the early 1900's

Coastal steamships ran cargo, passengers and the mail from port to port, though mail carriage decreased as speedier rail transport became available. The *Guadalete* was launched on March 31, 1861 and was owned by Segovia Cuadra & Co in Sevilla, Spain at the time it carried this mail item. The ship was sold in 1885 and continued to be in service to different companies with various names until 1965 when it was broken up.

Letter Mail to Spain

40 ctms per 10 gms : Sep 1, 1870 - Dec 31, 1875



15 ct large numeral (1873)
25 ct blue (1871)



Bordeaux les Salinieres
Oct 12, 1874
6308 in diamond
Malaga Oct 18, 1874 (verso)



By 1874, rail transport from the border to Malaga was in place. Spain's railways used a different track gauge than France's lines. Possible reasons attributed to this decision included the desire to slow a potential invader (France) and the need for more powerful engines to navigate steep inclines.

The post office at Les Salinieres in Bordeaux was (and still is) located by the Garonne River.