

1870-71 FRANCO-PRUSSIAN WAR SIEGE MAIL

Background: The Franco-Prussian War began on July 16, 1870, and the French were soon in disorderly retreat from their eastern frontier. During the rapid German westward advance, a number of fortified cities were bypassed and isolated by sieges ranging in duration from two weeks to four months. The last city to surrender was Belfort, which capitulated on February 16, 1871. To maintain letter communications between these besieged fortresses and unoccupied France, a variety of partially successful methods for transmission of the mails were employed, including manned and unmanned balloons, line-crossers, *Boules de Moulins*, and diplomatic or Red Cross couriers. Because of the short duration of these sieges, most of this mail is rare, but incoming mail is considerably rarer than outgoing mail.

Scope and Study: Letters which crossed enemy lines are exhibited from all sieges for which incoming or outgoing siege mail is known. The majority of the exhibit focuses on Paris, and mail is shown from all 66 balloons known to have carried mail. Special emphasis is on privileged and confided mail, and considerable original research is contained in the classification of such mail. Regular balloon mail is strongly represented, as is diplomatic pouch mail, *Boules de Moulins* attempts at return mail, and rare line-crosser mail in both directions. For Metz and Belfort, both balloon mail and line-crosser mail are shown. Much original research is also contained in this portion of the exhibit. From Neuf-Brisach, Schlestadt and Strasbourg, very rare line-crosser mail is included.

Presentation: The first section, comprising six frames, is dedicated to Paris balloon mail. Each of the 66 mail-carrying balloons is listed chronologically, followed by a selection of unusual usages and destinations. The seventh frame displays Parisian line-crosser, *Boules de Moulins*, and diplomatic pouch mail. The final frame covers the remaining sieges. Highlights include a comprehensive display of Metz Pharmacists' and Engineers' balloon mail, the only known example of siege mail from Schlestadt and very rare balloon mail from Belfort. For each page, the siege is identified at the top of the page. The type of mail is described in the upper left corner, and the upper right corner summarizes what is notable about the page; greater detail is provided in the body of the page.

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Neptune" - September 23, 1870

Aérostiers Cachet



Aérostiers mail posted September 24 at Tours train station – this letter arrived September 26 in Fécamp

One of only two Aérostiers cachets known from this balloon



Posted September 18 with military free-frank – September 27 (1e levée) arrival near Tours too early for next balloon

Rare Paris rue des Feuillantines 30c tax datestamp – crossed out to acknowledge free frank

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Neptune" - September 23, 1870

Government Mail

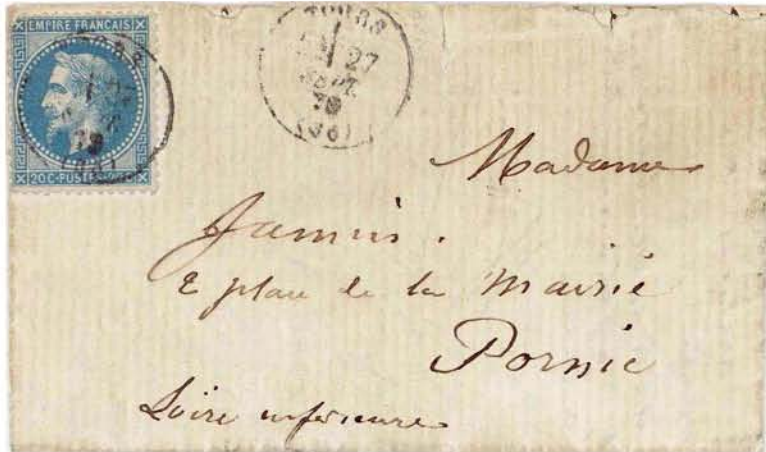


Letter dated September 22 from General Vinoy, commander of 13th Corps - only-known *Ministre de la Guerre* (1) cachet
Carried in official government sack which arrived September 24 at Tours - **only official mail known from this balloon**

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Ville de Florence" - September 25, 1870

Privileged Mail



Balloon landed near occupied Triel – confided mail taken to Tours September 27 via Meulan and Mantes
Pli confié datelined Paris 24 7bre 1870 and posted September 27 in Tours by pilot – illegible arrival mark



Letter showing rare marking and extra franking of *levée exceptionnelle* (special collection) – arrived September 29

Regular mail was routed via Mantes and Le Mans, illustrated by this cover's September 27 Le Mans transit

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Etats Unis" - September 29, 1870

Official Mail



Letter dated September 25 from General Vinoy - *Gouvernement de la défense Nationale* mail confided to official sack
Balloon landed September 29 near Nantes, but official sack not opened until the 30th at Tours - arrived Nantes October 2



Letter from Postal official mailed at *Paris Etranger* bureau - earliest known usage (only 30 covers known in total)

Arrived in Moscow October 6 (Julian calendar) - arrival marks in Russia are rare

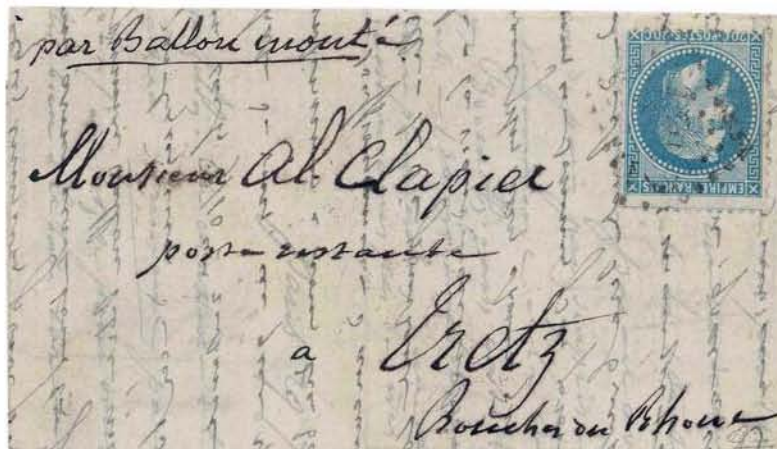
1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Céleste" - September 30, 1870

Confided Mail



Balloon landed near Dreux and most confided mail processed there – Dreux's *gros chiffres* 1352 is typical cancel
Pli confié with October 6 Habsheim arrival - *Dreux petits chiffres du gros chiffres* 1352 – fewer than 5 known



Pli confié datelined Paris 29 7bre 1870 – arrived October 5 in Tretz - *Dreux gros chiffres* 1352 cancel

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Non Denommé No. 1" - September 30, 1870

Captured Mail



Postcard posted Sept. 28 with no arrival - **captor's gothic note** "Here is a souvenir from the balloon. I sent one to Hans"



Postcard to the USA with no arrival marks - balloon carried only 1125 cards (all captured) so survivors are scarce

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Armand Barbès" - October 7, 1870

Privileged Mail



Aérostiers mail was jettisoned over occupied Luzarches and smuggled to Magny-en-Vexin via occupied Pontoise
Pli confié datelined *Paris 5 Octobre* with *Aérostiers cachet* - posted October 8 at Magny-en-Vexin - no arrival mark



Letter posted October 1 - **returned to Rebut** **October 5** after linecrosser failed to carry it successfully out of Paris

Given to Paris (SC) bureau on October 6 for forwarding by this balloon - arrived in St. Sébastien October 10

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Georges Sand" - October 7, 1870

Privileged Mail



October 5 **earliest known use of Paris (SC)** - Oct. 8 Lille à Paris C transit characteristic of this balloon - arrived Oct. 11

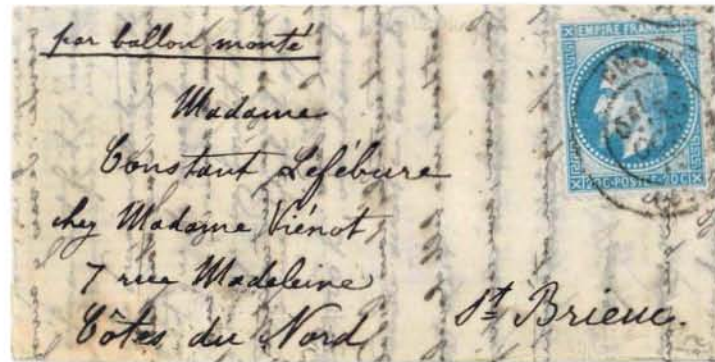


Confided to balloon pilot Revillod (per text) who had **Aerostiers cachet** applied - arrived October 11
Text reference to Revillod proves October 8 Calais à Paris D transit on aerostiers mail is from this balloon

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Washington" - October 12, 1870

Confided Mail



Balloon landed near Cambrai - confided mail left at nearby Douai on October 13

Pli confié datelined 7 Octobre midi - posted at Douai on October 13 (5th collection) - arrived October 17



Pli confié datelined Montrouge 4 Octobre 1870 with **Gouvernement de la défense Nationale** cachet for official sack

Official mail processed at Douai train station one day later than confided mail - arrived October 17 in Dijon

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Louis Blanc" - October 12, 1870

Lille à Paris Transit



Plie confié dated October 10 with **Aerostiers cachet** - mail processed Oct. 12 at Lille, shown by *Lille à Paris D* transit



Regular mail processed a day later - very unusual to identify 'Louis Blanc' regular mail - **sent to occupied France**

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Godefroy Cavaignac" - October 14, 1870

Privileged Mail



14th Corps officer's letter datelined Courbevoie Oct. 6 – **rare doubling of Paris (SC) postmark** – arrived Oct. 16



Plie confié datelined Nogent fort Oct. 12 – **carried by passenger Keratry**, who was on diplomatic mission to Spain

Keratry passed through Marignane October 17 en-route to ship for Spain – arrived Toulon October 18

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Jean Bart #1" - October 14, 1870

Confided Mail



Balloon landed near Nogent – confided mail left October 15 at Troyes – Troyes gros chiffres 4034 is typical cancel
Pli confié datelined Paris 13 8bre – **only two examples with Troyes October 15 (1st collection) datestamp are known**

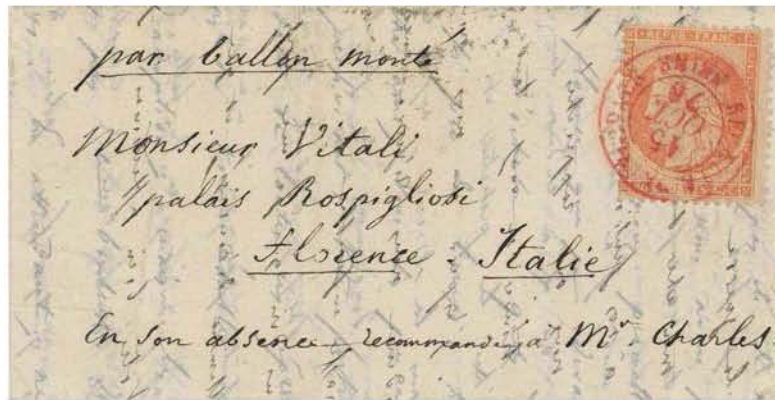


Pli confié datelined October 13 – carried in official sack and processed at Tours – **rare P.P. cancel**

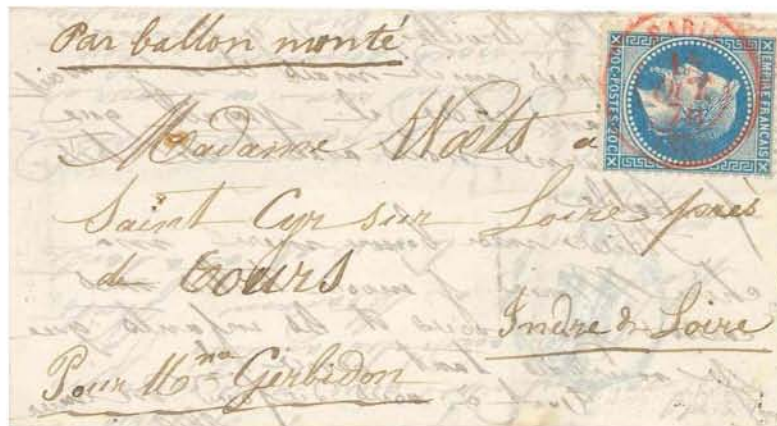
1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Jules Favre #1" - October 16, 1870

Privileged Mail



Letter posted October 15 at rare **Recette Principale Seine bureau** - arrived in Italy October 23
Use of 40c Siege stamp 3 days before official issuance on October 18 – earliest known usage

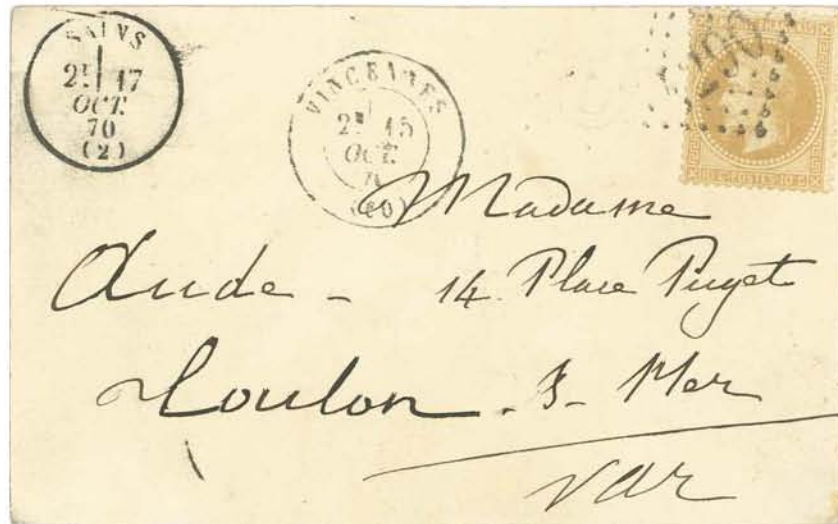


Posted October 15 at Paris (SC) bureau – this mail processed October 19 (1st collection) at Tours

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Jean Bart #2" - October 16, 1870

Jettisoned Mail



Postcards from this balloon jettisoned as ballast near Soissons to evade enemy fire – recovered on the ground Oct. 17-18
Small number of cards postmarked at recovery points – this shows the very rare **October 17 Sains recovery postmark**



Postcard with rare **October 18 Anizy-le-Chateau recovery postmark** – arrived in occupied territory March 14, 1871

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Victor Hugo" – October 18, 1870

Confided to Balloon Builder

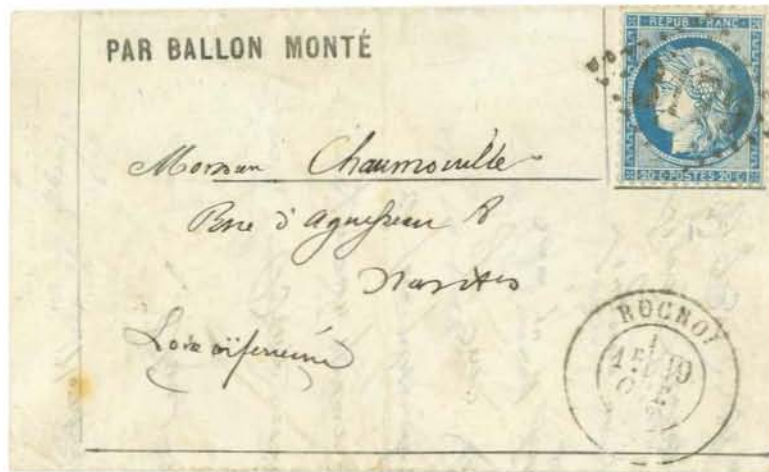


Balloon landed October 18 in occupied territory - confided mail processed October 21 at Tours – *gros chiffres* 3997 cancel
Pli confié datelined *Dimanche 16 8bre* with **Aérostiers** cachet and green *Maire du 18e Arrondt. de Paris* private cachet

1870-71 Siege of Paris

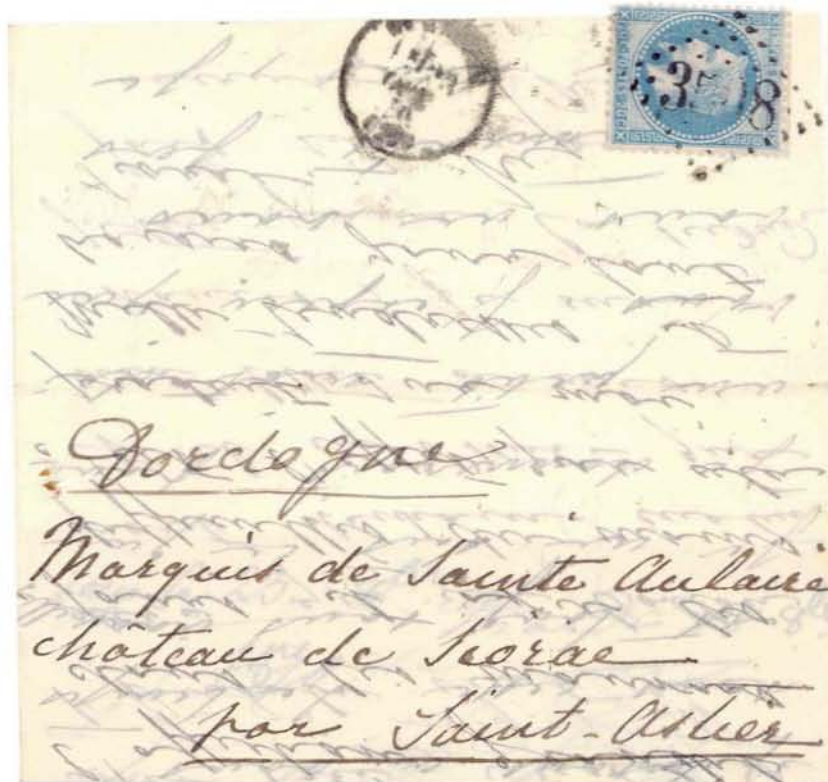
Balloon "République Universelle" - October 19, 1870

Confided Mail



Part of this balloon's confided mail went north via Rocroi to Tours; the other part went south October 22 via Dijon

Pli confié datelined October 19 – northern mail processed October 19 at Rocroi – arrived October 26



Pli confié datelined 18 8bre - **confided to passenger Tristan de l'Heroube** – southern mail postmarked Oct. 23 at arrival

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Garibaldi" - October 22, 1870

Confided to Balloon Builder



Pli confié datelined Oct. 19 with **Aéroliers cachet** – processed Nov. 1 on *Granville à Paris ambulant* near destination



Pli confié datelined October 18 with **Aéroliers cachet** – processed November 2 at Nantes, close to destination

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Montgolfier" – October 25, 1870

Confided Mail



Balloon was captured upon its landing in Germany - passengers escaped with a very small amount of confided mail
Pli confié datelined *Camp de Rosny 18 8bre 1870* - **confided to passenger Col. Le Boudec** by one of his ex-soldiers
Letter posted October 30 at Pontarlier on French frontier - arrived November 2 in St. Brieuc - *ex-Francois, Courtois*



Pli confié datelined 23 8bre - **confided to passenger Col. Delapierre** of 62e Regt. - arrived November 5 in St. Malo

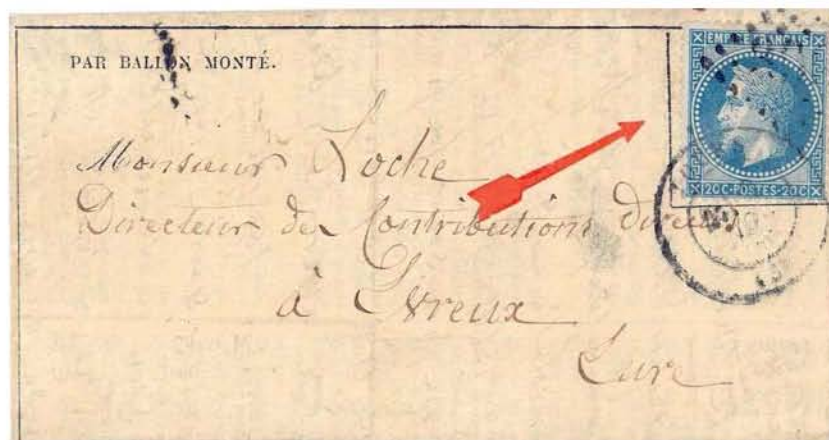
1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Vauban" - October 27, 1870

Confided Mail



Balloon landed Oct. 27 in occupied territory - confided mail processed Oct. 28 at Bar-le-Duc or Nov. 2 at Tours
Pli confié datelined Oct. 24 with **Ministre des Travaux publics** cachet - Oct. 28 Bar transit for Nov. 5 arrival in Nantes



Pli confié datelined *Mercredi 26 octobre* - processed November 2 (4th collection) at Tours - arrived Evreux November 3

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Bretagne" - October 27, 1870

Confided Mail



Confided and official mail was processed October 29 near landing point at occupied Fresnes-en-Voevre
 Letter datelined *Paris jeudi 20 octobre 70* - **confided to M. Leveillé** for special handling - arrived November 10



Pli confié datelined *Paris le 19 Octobre 1870* - confided to Nadar's *Aérostiers* company - arrived November 10
 Balloon carried only confided mail (no Post Office mail) - **only four covers are known with *Aérostiers* cachet**

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Colonel Charras" – October 29, 1870

Confided to Balloon Builder



Balloon landed near occupied Langres - confided mail taken to Tours via Chaumont

Pli confié (no dateline) with *Aéroliers cachet* processed November 1 (4th collection) at Tours - arrived November 3

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Fulton" – November 2, 1870

Privileged Mail



Balloon landed November 2 near Angers - pilot's confided mail posted at Angers train station

Plie confié datelined October 30 and **confided to pilot Cezanne** (per text of letter)

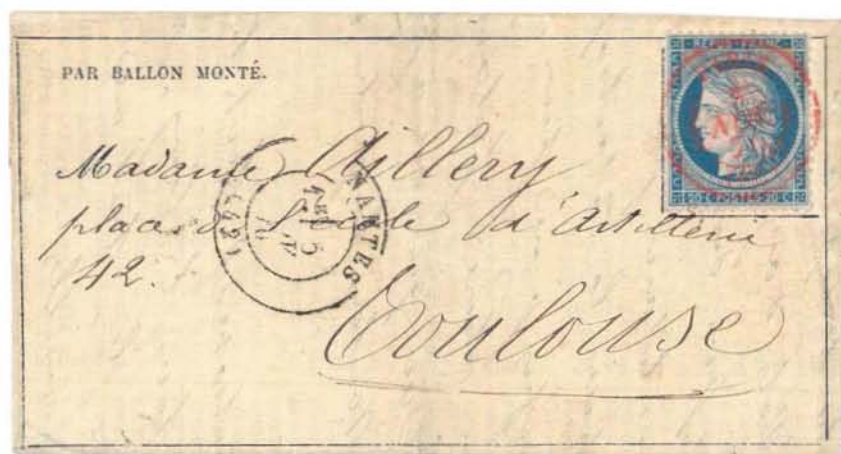


Paris (SC) mail processed November 2 at Angers - very little Paris (SC) mail known from this balloon

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Ferdinand Flocon" – November 4, 1870

Postmarked at Landing Point



Paris (SC) mail processed November 5 (1st collection) at Nantes - *cachet d'atterrissage* - arrived November 6



Pli confié datelined Nov. 2 and processed Nov. 5 at Nantes landing point - *gros chiffres 2602* and *cachet d'atterrissage*

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Galilée" – November 4, 1870

Confided Mail



Balloon was captured near Chartres, but confided mail was saved and posted at Le Mans *ambulant* bureau
Pli confié datelined Paris, le 4 Novembre 1870 - Le Mans 'mute' *ambulant* cancel - arrived November 8 in Besançon



Pli confié datelined Dimanche 30 Octobre 1870 - posted Nov. 5 at Bur. Ambulants (Ouest) of Le Mans - arrived Nov. 7

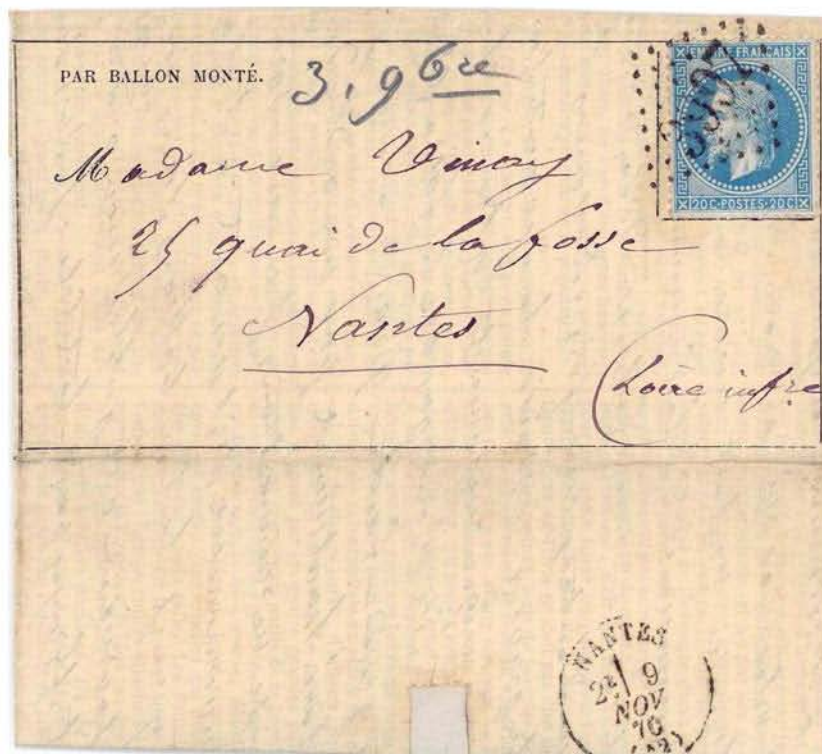
1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Ville de Chateaudun" – November 6, 1870

Privileged Mail



Balloon landed near Chartres, and all mail was taken November 8 to Tours for processing
November 5 Paris (SC) letter - transited November 9 on *Caen à Paris ambulant* - arrived November 10



Plie confié datelined Nov. 3 from Gen. Vinoy, commander of 13th Corps - gros chiffres 3997 of Tours - arrived Nov. 9

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Non Dénommé #3" – November 7, 1870

Confided Mail



Private balloon which carried no Post Office mail - landed November 7 in occupied territory near Brie Comte Robert

Pli confié datelined *Paris le 6 9bre dimanche soir* - **gros chiffres 627 of Brie Comte Robert** - arrived November 10

Only known letter with this landing postmark - *ex-Blum*

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Gironde" – November 8, 1870

Confided Mail



Balloon landed near Evreux - mail processed on *Paris à Cherbourg* railroad line which runs through Evreux

Pli confié datelined *Paris 6 Novembre 1870* - November 9 *Paris à Cherbourg* ambulant markings - arrived November 9



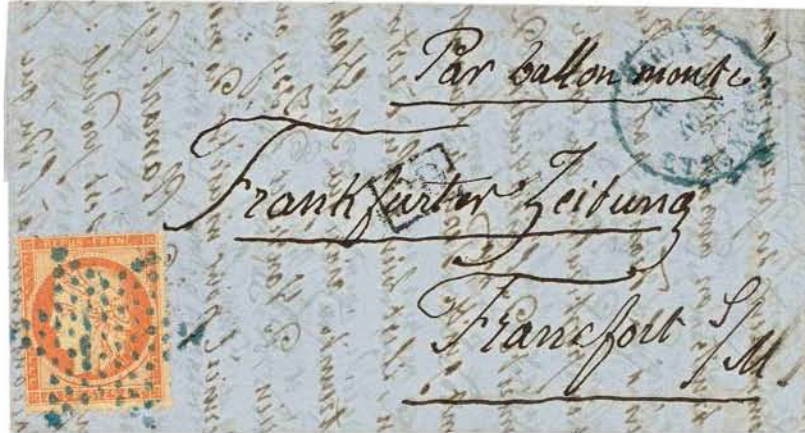
Pli confié datelined 3 Novembre from *Fort de Romainville* - **confided to sailor Galley** (per text), pilot of the "Gironde"

Galley posted letter at his home port of Toulon (*gros chiffres 3981*) - arrived November 14 in Etoile

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Daguerre" – November 12, 1870

Privileged Mail



Balloon landed in occupied territory near Fontainebleau and was captured - half of mail hidden and saved
Seinguerlet news report posted Nov. 9 at **Paris Étranger bureau** - transited Nov. 29 on *Marseille à Paris ambulant*



Letter posted Nov. 9 in Paris - received rare **November 17 (4th collection) Fontainebleau transit** - arrived Dec. 2
Two sacks of mail saved by groundskeeper at Ferrières - taken to occupied Fontainebleau for clandestine forwarding

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Niepce" – November 12, 1870

Confided Mail



Balloon carried only confided and official mail (no Post Office mail) - passengers went via occupied Arcis to Tours
Pli confié datelined *Paris le 25 Octobre 1870* - posted Nov. 16 at Arcis-s-Aube - arrived Nov. 28 - ex-Courtois, Levett



Pli confié datelined *Paris, 11 9bre 70* - **confided to passenger Dagron** per endorsement on front of letter
 Dagron delayed posting letter until December 1 at Tours – arrived December 2 – **one of two such letters known**

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Général Uhrich" – November 18, 1870

Confided to Balloon Builder



Balloon landed near occupied Luzarches - confided mail processed there on November 20 (1st collection)

Pli confié (no dateline) with rare **red Dartois & Yon Aéroliers cachet** - fewer than 10 known

Dartois & Yon balloon builder company formed in November - used red ink for a few days before switching to blue ink

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Archimède" – November 21, 1870

Foreign Postmarks



Balloon landed in Holland - mail taken to Lille on November 22 via Turnhout, Belgium

Pli confié datelined Nov. 15 - **posted at Turnhout Nov. 21 - French franking accepted** - arrived Nov. 24 - *ex-Blum*



Posted November 20 at Paris (SC) bureau - marked with **Dutch 'P.D.'** on landing - arrived London Nov. 29

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon “Égalité” – November 23, 1870

Confided Mail



Private balloon which carried no Post Office mail - landed November 23 in Belgium - mail processed at Le Havre

Pli confié datelined 2 Octobre '70 - posted November 25 at Le Havre - arrived in Chateauroux November 28



Confided mail carried in official sack taken to Tours for posting on November 28

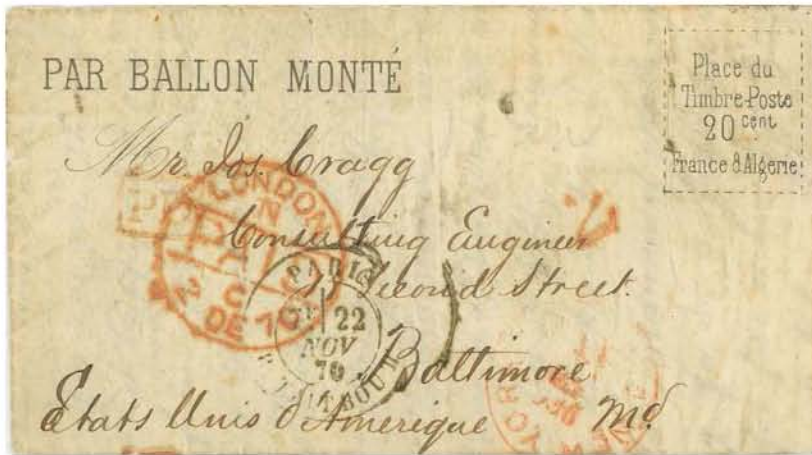
Pli confié datelined Paris 1er Novembre 1870 - posted at Tours - arrived in Pornic November 29

Fewer than ten pieces of mail known from this balloon

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon “Ville d’Orléans” – November 24, 1870

Crash Mail



One mail sack jettisoned in North Sea and recovered at Mandal – mail forwarded via Holland and London
Posted Nov. 22 in Paris – franking lost in sea – classic **December 2 London transit** – arrived USA Dec. 14



Posted Nov. 24 – franking lost in sea – **Dec. 5 Moerdijk, Holland transit** – arrived Dec. 5 – *ex-Francois, Courtois*

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Ville d'Orléans" – November 24, 1870

Confided to Balloon Builder



Balloon landed in Norway – *Aérostiers* mail generally processed in transit or upon arrival

Pli confié datelined Paris 23 9bre 1870 - rare **blue *Aérostiers* cachet** - processed December 16 on arrival in Pau

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Jacquard" – November 28, 1870

Paris (SC) Crash Mail



Balloon was lost at sea – Paris (SC) mail recovered at Bryher and processed December 24 through London
Posted November 26 – franking lost at sea – **London December 24 transit** – arrived in Belgium December 25



Posted November 27 – franking lost at sea – rare **December 25 Angl(eterre) Boulogne** entry mark

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Jacquard" – November 28, 1870

Falmouth Cachet de Repêchage



Balloon lost at sea – some mail washed ashore December 2-3 at Falmouth, England

Plie confié dated November 26 – franking lost at sea – **Falmouth DE 3 cachet** – arrived Dec. 12



Posted November 25 in Paris – letter damaged in water, but franking retained – **Falmouth DE 3 cachet de repêchage**

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Jules Favre #2" – November 30, 1870

Confided Mail



Balloon landed on Belle Isle – mail taken Dec. 2 via Lorient – confided mail processed in transit or on arrival

Pli confié datelined 30 9bre – stamps cancelled by **Belgian ambulant 'EV'** – arrived Belgium December 7 – *ex-Courtois*



Pli confié datelined Paris 21 9bre 1870 - **Aérostiers cachet** – stamp cancelled at Pau upon December 3 arrival

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Bataille de Paris" –December 1, 1870

Confided Mail



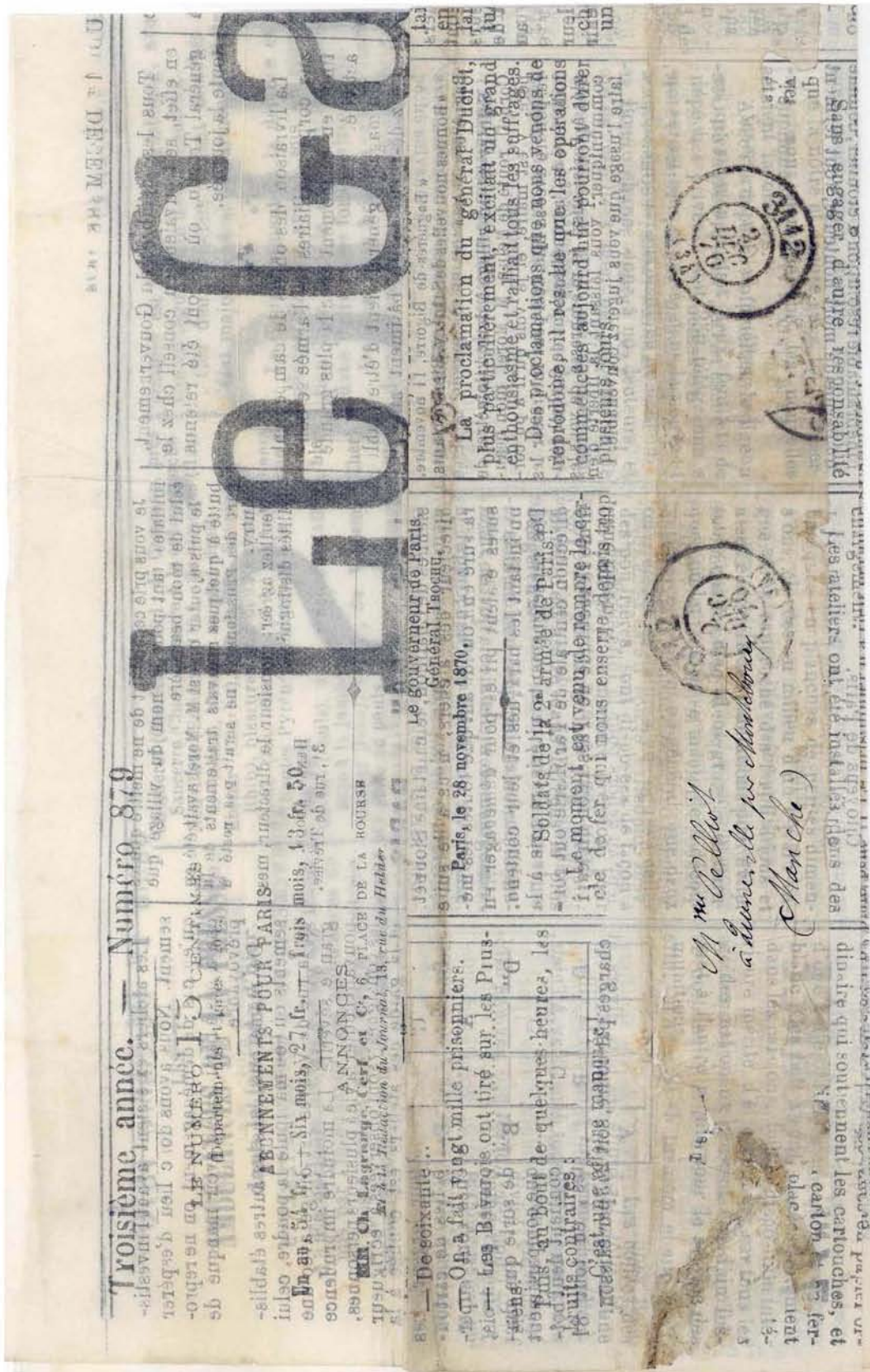
Balloon carried no Post Office mail, and landed near Vannes – confided mail processed December 3 at Tours

Plie confié dated November 29 – gros chiffres 3997 of Tours – **five letters known from this balloon**

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Volta" – December 2, 1870

Only Letter Known From This Balloon



1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Franklin" – December 5, 1870

Nantes Cachet d'Atterrissage



Balloon landed near Nantes – mail processed there on December 5

Plie confié dated Montrouge fort Dec. 2 and **confided to sailor Marcia, pilot of the balloon** (per text) – arrived Dec. 8



Posted December 1 by Col. de Camas, brigade commander in 3e Armée - transited **Nantes December 5** (7th collection)

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Armée de Bretagne" – December 5, 1870

Privileged Mail



Balloon landed near Saumur – Post Office mail processed December 7 at Nantes

Soir newsletter posted December 3 at Paris (SC) bureau – transited *Caen à Paris ambulant* December 8



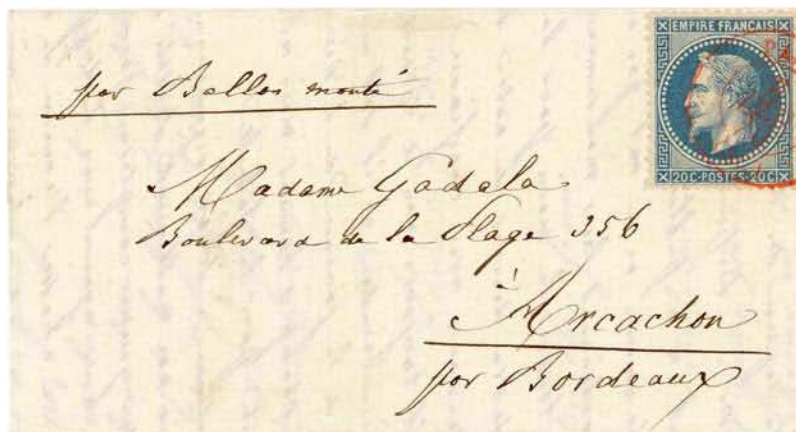
Plie confié datelined December 2 – **Saumur December 6** *cachet d'atterrissage* – arrived December 10 with 30c due

Ex-Courtois, Levett

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Denis Papin" – December 7, 1870

Privileged Mail



Balloon landed near Ferté Bernard - mail processed December 7 on *Paris à Bordeaux ambulant* at Tours

Posted December 6 at Paris (SC) bureau – arrived Arcachon December 8



Pli confié datelined December 6 - stamp cancelled *ambulant PB (Paris à Bordeaux)* - arrived December 11

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Général Renault" – December 11, 1870

Confided to Balloon Builder



Aérostiers mail processed December 11 in occupied Foucarmont and smuggled to Dieppe for forwarding by sea
Pli confié datelined Paris 9 Xbre 1870 – one of only four Aérostiers cachets known from this balloon – arrived Dec. 22



Posted December 9 at Paris (SC) bureau - **December 11 Foucarmont cachet d'atterrissage** - arrived December 21

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Ville de Paris" – December 15, 1870

Captured Confided Mail



Balloon landed in Germany and all mail was captured

Plie confié dated December 15 with special **15 DECE 1870 Aerostiers cachet** – no arrival in Yvetot – franking is missing



The Germans returned a small amount of the captured mail in July 1871

Posted December 13 in Paris – **rare July 26, 1871 Paris transit** – franked with 5c *Empire* stamps

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Parmentier" – December 17, 1870

Confided Mail



Balloon landed in occupied territory – passengers went to Bordeaux December 21 via Bourges on December 19

Pli confié dated December 14 – posted December 19 at Bourges – arrived December 29 – *ex-Blum, Levett*



Pli confié datelined *Paris le 10 Xbre 1870* – carried in **official sack** and posted December 21 in Bordeaux

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Gutenberg" – December 17, 1870

Confided Mail



Balloon carried no Post Office mail and landed in occupied territory – mail taken December 26 to Moulins-s-Allier

Pli confié datelined *Paris 15 Xbre 1870* – posted December 25 (5th collection) at Moulins – arrived Alencon December 29

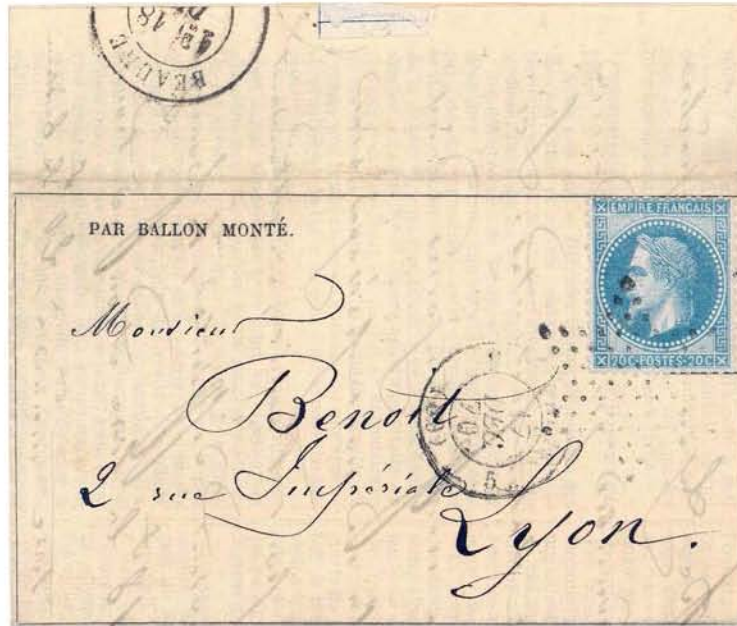


Pli confié datelined *Fort de Rosny 6 Dbre 1870* - posted Dec. 26 on *Auxerre à Paris ambulant* - stamp cancelled on arrival

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Davy" – December 18, 1870

Privileged Mail



Balloon landed December 18 near Beaune – official mail taken December 19 to Bordeaux

Posted December 17 at Paris Route 5 – **Beaune December 18 (1e) cachet d'atterrissage** – arrived December 19



Plie confiée datelined Dec. 7 and **carried in official sack** – posted Dec. 20 (5th collection) at Bordeaux – arrived Dec. 21

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Général Chanzy" – December 20, 1870

Captured Aerostiers Mail

MAI 18 DECEMBRE

Troisième année — Numéro 96

LE

LE

de Séraphore à Marseille

Trois mois, 13 fr. 50

ABONNEMENTS POUR PARIS

Les souscripteurs ne sont pas rendus

Ch. Lagrange, Cerf et Co, 5, rue de la Harpe

...la poudre n'était qu'à moitié brulée.

(Sont les signatures des officiers.)

...nous serait plus que facile d'y emporter les po-

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Lavoisier" – December 22, 1870

Privileged Mail



Balloon landed near Angers – mail taken via Angers to Bordeaux December 23

Plie confié posted December 23 in Bordeaux – arrived Cabourg December 28 – **five plies confiés known**



Posted Dec. 21 at Paris (SC) bureau – received rare **December 23 Angers (99) bureau de passe cachet d'atterrissage**

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Délivrance" – December 23, 1870

Confided to Balloon Builder



Balloon landed near La Roche-s-Yon – confided mail taken to Bordeaux December 23

Plie confié with **Aerostiers cachet** – unfranked, so taxed 30c – arrived Cherbourg January 5 – *ex-Levet*


1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Rouget de l'Isle" – December 24, 1870

Rare Confided Mail

La Ferte-Macé 24th, 1870 —
Cher Monsieur —
Parti ce matin à 3 H^{rs} par le ballon le
Rouget de l'Isle je suis arrivé ici ce matin
à 60 lieues de Paris, à 9 heures, bien
portant et sans avoir trop souffert des froids.
Je vais me mettre en route de suite
pour Commanche, et quelques jours après
je serai près de vous —
A bientôt donc et tout à vous
E. Glachant

Remarquez que cette lettre
n'appartient
Monsieur Alfred Saglio
Fourchambault
Nièvre



Balloon carried no Post Office mail and landed near La Ferte-Macé – 3 letters known posted there Dec. 24 (2nd collection)

Pli confié given to passenger Glachant – posted at La Ferte-Macé with additional note from Glachant – arrived Jan. 4

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Merlin de Douai" – December 27, 1870

Confided to Balloon Builder



Balloon carried no Post Office mail and landed near Vierzon – confided mail taken to Bordeaux December 30

Pli confié datelined *Vendredi 23 Xbre 70* – **blue Aérostiers cachet** – posted Bordeaux December 30 – arrived January 4

Pilot created private cachet: **BALLON MERLIN DE DOUAI CAP. GRIZEAUT, LIEUT. TARBÉ**

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Tourville" – December 27, 1870

Privileged Mail



Balloon landed at Eymoutiers – mail via Limoges December 28 (1st collection for confided mail; 7th for regular mail)

Pli confié datelined Paris 25 Décembre 1870 – rare December 27 Eymoutiers cachet d'atterrissage

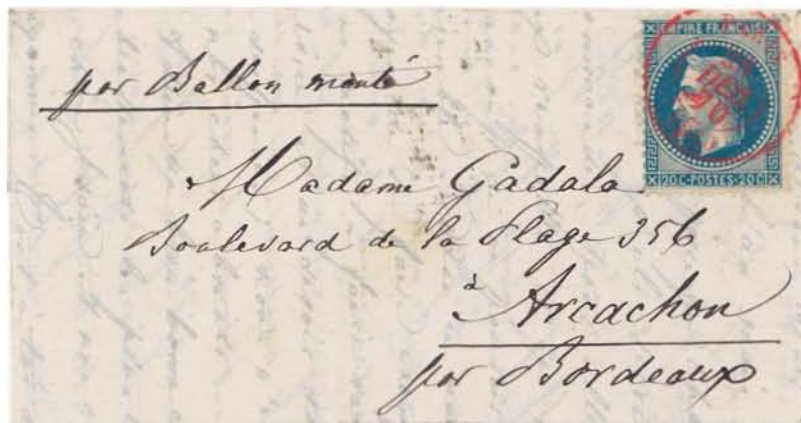


Posted December 23 at Paris (SC) bureau – received rare **December 28 Limoges transit** – arrived December 30

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Bayard" – December 29, 1870

Privileged Mail



Balloon landed near La Roche-s-Yon – mail taken to Nantes on December 30
Posted December 28 at Paris (SC) bureau – arrived in Arcachon on December 31



Pli confié datelined December 27 – processed December 30 (5^e) at Nantes – **fewer than 5 examples known**

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Armée de la Loire" – December 31, 1870

Confided to Balloon Builder



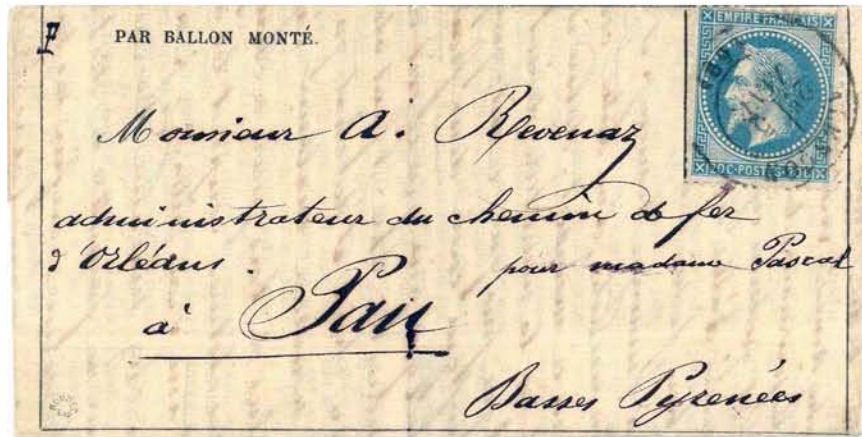
Balloon landed near Le Mans – some confided mail taken to Bordeaux on January 2

Plie confié with *Aerostiers cachet* – stamp cancelled *gros chiffres 532* of Bordeaux – arrived January 6

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Newton" – January 4, 1871

Postmarked Near Landing Spot



Balloon landed in occupied territory – mail taken via Mortagne to Alençon on January 5

Pli confié datelined 2 Janvier 1871 – posted January 5 (2nd collection) at Alençon – arrived January 7 in Pau



Posted January 3 with **civilian free frank at the Paris (SC) bureau** – rare **January 5 (1st collection) Alençon transit**

Addressed to Justice Minister of the Bordeaux Government

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Duquesne" – January 9, 1871

Confided Mail



Balloon landed in occupied territory – passengers went to Bordeaux on January 14 via Lille and Valenciennes
Pli confié datelined 7 janvier 1871 – cancelled *ambulant* LCI (Lille à Calais) – arrived in Belgium on January 11



Pli confié (no dateline) **confided to pilot Richard** - processed January 12 at Valenciennes – arrived January 14 in Caen
Instructions given on front of letter for return mail via (unsuccessful) dirigible "Labrousse"

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Gambetta" – January 10, 1871

Confided to Balloon Builder



Balloon landed near Auxerre – confided mail processed on Auxerre à Paris railroad bureau

Pli confié datelined Paris 30 Xbre 9h du soir – **blue Aérosters cachet** – stamp cancelled *ambulant AP* (Auxerre à Paris)

Fewer than ten Aérosters cachets are known from this balloon

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Kepler" – January 11, 1871

Privileged Mail



Balloon landed near Laval – mail taken January 12 to Bordeaux

Dateline Vincennes, but processed January 9 (last collection) at rare **Paris (RC) bureau** – only two examples known



Pli confié dateline January 10 and **carried in official sack** – posted January 13 in Bordeaux – arrived January 13

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Monge" – January 13, 1871

Rare Confided Mail



Balloon carried no Post Office mail and landed near Chateauroux – official sack taken to Bordeaux on January 16

Pli confié datelined *Paris 4 Janvier 1871* - carried in official sack - posted January 17 in Bordeaux - arrived January 18

Only letter known from this balloon

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Général Faidherbe" – January 13, 1871

Confided to Balloon Builder



Balloon landed near Ste. Foy-la-Grande - all mail processed there and forwarded via Bordeaux

Pli confié datelined Paris, 13 Janvier with *Aérostiers* cachet - posted January 14 at Ste. Foy - arrived January 16

One of only two known *Aérostiers* cachets from this balloon

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Vaucanson" – January 15, 1871

Postmarked at Landing Spot



Balloon landed near Lille – mail taken to Lille; most was processed at the *Lille à Paris* railroad bureau

Pli confié datelined *Paris 14 janvier 71* - January 15 *Lille à Paris* *ambulant* - arrived January 24

Passenger purchased 20c type II Bordeaux stamp at Lille to pay postage – only two examples known



Posted January 14 at Paris (SC) bureau – **January 15** *Lille à Paris* *cachet d'atterrissage* – arrived January 17

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Steenackers" – January 16, 1871

Rare Confided Mail



Balloon landed in Holland and carried no Post Office mail – official sack taken to Bordeaux January 23

Pli confié datelined *Paris le 13 Janvier 1871* – processed January 23 (7th collection) at Bordeaux – arrived January 24

Carried in official government sack; rare official cursive **Ministère des Finances Directeur Général des Postes**



Pli confié datelined *Paris 15 Janvier 1871* - confided by Col. Filippi to balloon passenger Lt. Gobron from his command

Stamp cancelled *petits chiffres* 338 (Bastia) upon January 30 arrival – **only two letters known from this balloon**

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Poste de Paris" – January 18, 1871

Confided to Balloon Builder



Balloon landed in Holland – all mail processed at Lille on January 20

Plie confié datelined January 13 – stamp cancelled *ambulant LC2 (Lille à Calais)* – arrived Amsterdam January 21

Only two *Aerostiers* cachets known from this balloon

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Général Bourbaki" – January 20, 1871

Privileged Mail



Balloon landed near Reims in occupied territory – mail processed January 23 on *Paris à Givet ambulant*
Plie confié datelined January 17 and **carried in official sack** – posted January 30 in Bordeaux – arrived Jan. 31



Posted January 18 at Paris (SC) bureau – **January 23 Paris à Givet ambulant** – arrived Tours February 3

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon “Général Daumesnil” – January 22, 1871

Privileged Mail



Balloon landed in Belgium – mail processed January 23 at Lille; official sack arrived in Bordeaux January 27

Posted January 21 at Paris (SC) bureau – red **Ministère de l'Interieure Cabinet du Ministre cachet** – arrived January 28



Plie confié datelined Jan. 21 and **carried in official sack** – posted Jan. 27 (5th collection) in Bordeaux – arrived Jan. 28

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Torricelli" – January 24, 1871

Privileged Mail



Balloon landed near Amiens – mail taken to Bordeaux via Abbeville January 26

Posted January 23 at Paris (SC) bureau - civilian free frank – rare **Gouvernement de la défense Nationale** cachet

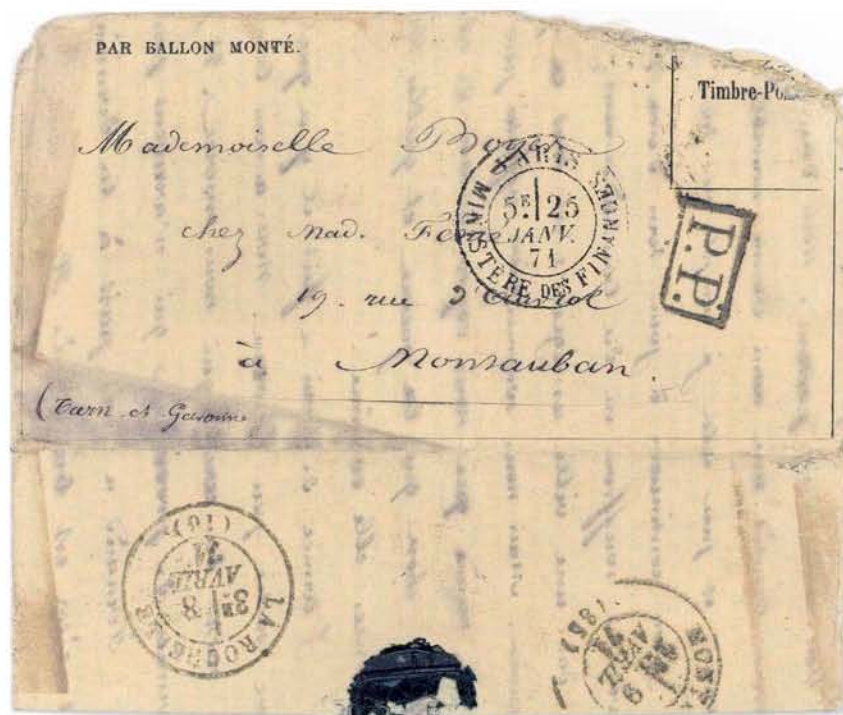


Pli confié processed on *Paris à Calais ambulant* (at Abbeville) – arrived January 29 – ex-Blum

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Richard Wallace" – January 27, 1871

La Rochelle Recovery Postmarks



Balloon was lost at sea off Arcachon – two small batches of mail washed up at La Rochelle on February 12 and April 8

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon "Richard Wallace" – January 27, 1871

Recovery Postmark

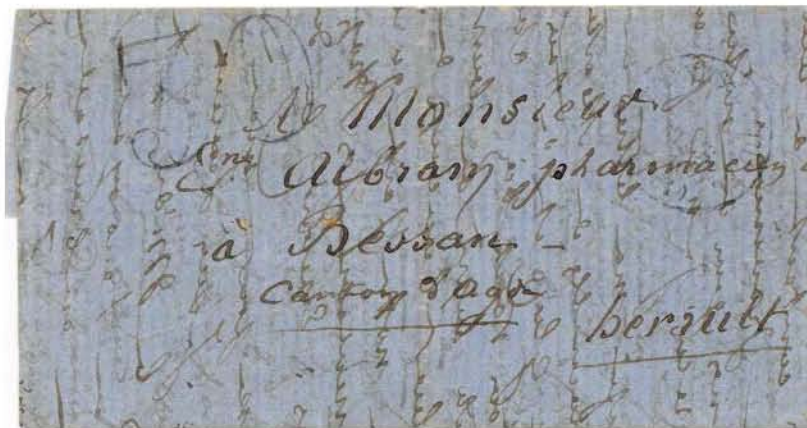


Balloon was lost at sea off Arcachon – some mail washed up at La Tremblade, Ars-en-Ré, and La Rochelle
Posted January 24 at **Second Army Bureau F** (at Les Lilas) – franking lost in sea, but trace of red AFF cancel remains
Very rare **February 13 La Tremblade cachet de repêchage** – arrived in Algeria February 25

1870-71 Siege of Paris

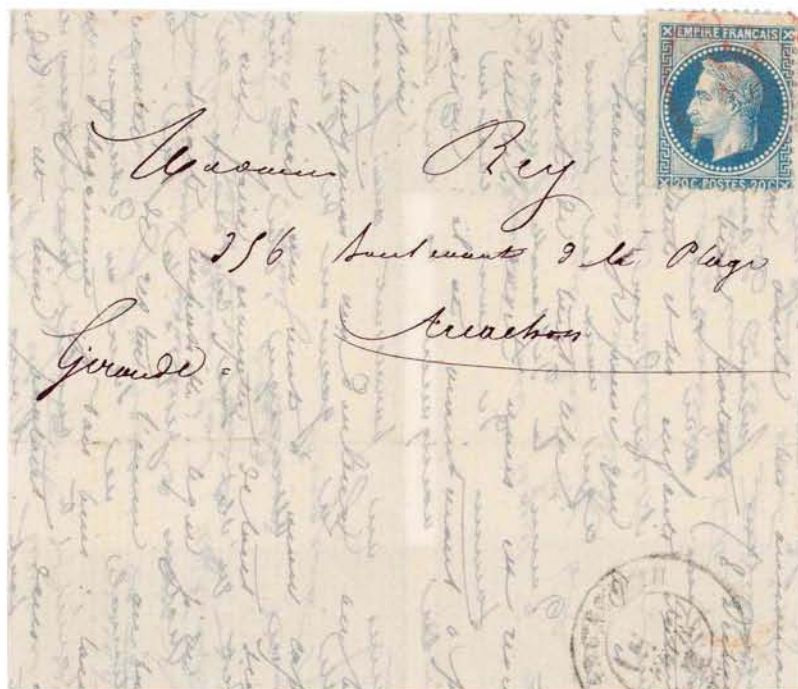
Balloon "Général Cambronne" – January 28, 1871

Last Balloon of Siege



Balloon landed near Alençon - confided mail taken to nearby Villaines-la-Juhel on February 1 (1st collection)

Unfranked *pli confié* datelined *Paris le 26 Janvier* - postmarked at Villaines - **one of three *plis confiés* known**



Posted January 27 at Paris (SC) bureau - arrived February 2 - **fewer than 5 Paris (SC) covers known from this balloon**

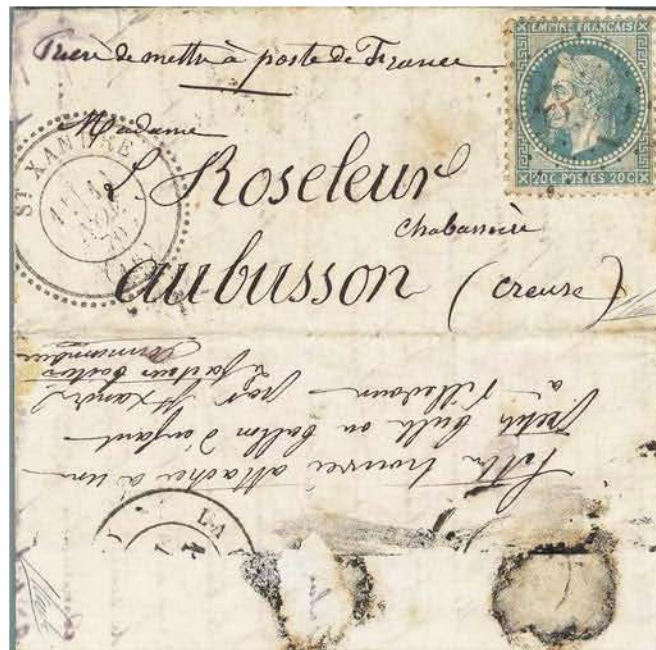
1870-71 Siege of Paris

Roseleur's Private "Gravilliers" Balloon Post

Successful Unmanned Balloons



Dated Paris January 24, 1871 – letter recovered January 30 at Gisors – arrived February 9
21 toy balloons were successful (with one letter attached to each) out of a total of about 100 attempts



Dated "43eme Balloon Gravilliers Paris le 2 Novembre 70" – recovered November 11 at St Xandre
Manuscript note: "letter found attached to a child's balloon...Postman Germandun" – arrived November 13

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Unusual Frankings on Balloon Mail

Smaller Denomination Stamps



Posted December 23 in Paris with five 1c stamps and a 5c stamp paying the 10c postcard rate

Balloon “*Delivrance*” - use of obsolete 1862 Issue stamps is very unusual



Posted October 3 at **13e Corps Headquarters bureau** with five 2c “laure” stamps making up 10c postcard rate

“A.R.A.L” cancel - arrived October 24 - Balloon “*Jean Bart No. 2*”

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Unusual Frankings on Balloon Mail

Tête-Bêche Pairs



Posted December 12 in Paris with 10c bistre-jaune tête-bêche pair paying 20c rate – arrived December 28

Balloon “Parmentier” – **blue cachet Garde Natle Mobile de l’Ain 40me Regt Provisoire**



Posted December 3 in Paris with 10c bistre-brun tête-bêche pair – arrived December 7 - Balloon “Franklin”

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Armée du Rhin September 3 - November 29

13th Corps 1st Division in Paris



Dated *Nogent le 29 7bre 1870* and posted September 29 at 13th Corps 1st Division bureau AL

Datestamp as cancel is rare; normal cancel was 'AR13eC' killer - balloon "Celeste" - arrived October 6



Overpaid postcard mailed November 6 at 13th Corps 1st Division bureau AL - rare use of **1862 20c stamps**

Arrived in Ireland on November 11 - balloon "Gironde" - military mail to foreign destinations is rare

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Armée du Rhin September 3 - November 29

14th Corps 1st Division in Paris



Dated *Clichy la Garenne 10 9bre 1870* and posted November 11 at ***Armée Française 14e Corps A bureau***
Red datestamp as cancel - captured mail from balloon “Daguerre” - no arrival marks



Dated *Clichy la Garenne il 28 Ottobre* and posted October 29 at 14th Corps 1st Division bureau
Balloon “Fulton” - letter arrived November 10 in Italy - foreign mail is rare

1870-71 Siege of Paris

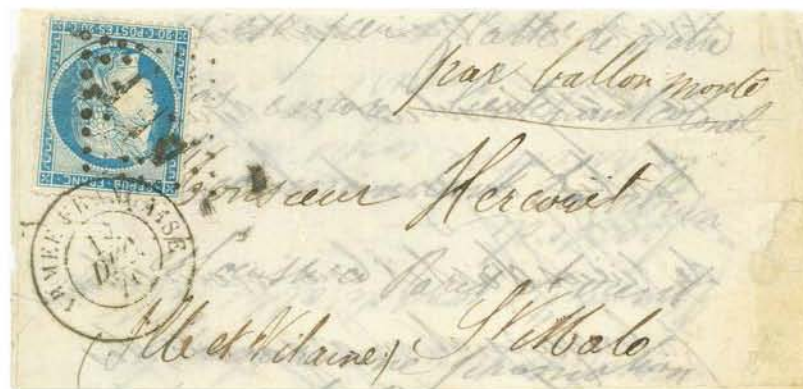
2^e Armée November 30 - January 27

2nd Corps Headquarters in Paris



Dateline *Les Lilas* le 25 Janvier 1871 - posted January 26 at 2nd Corps Headquarters Bureau F – red ‘AFF’ cancel

Balloon “Richard Wallace” which was lost at sea - 20c of 30c franking was lost during the watersoaking



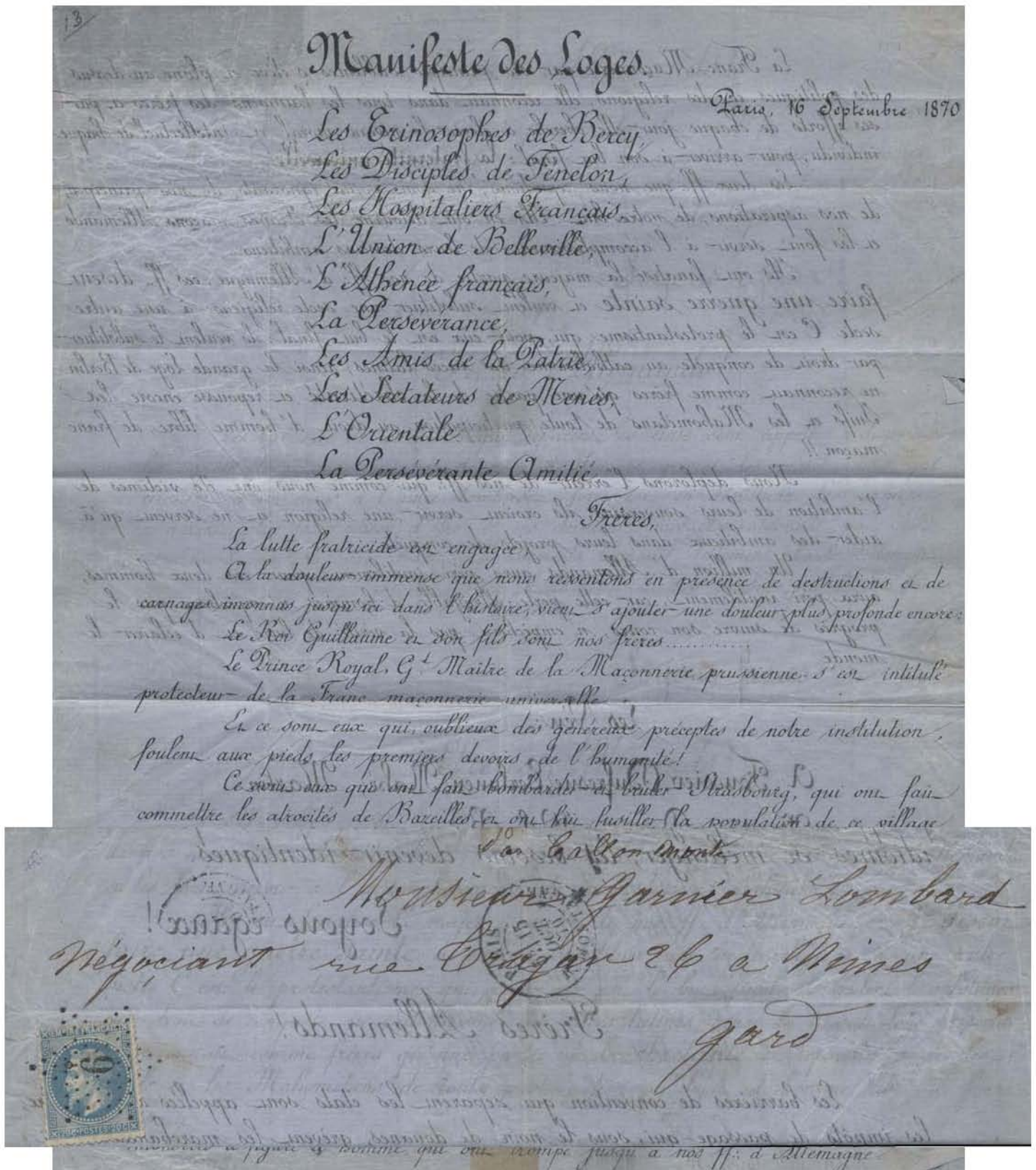
Dateline *Fontenay le 17 Xbre* - posted December 17 at 2nd Corps Headquarters bureau F – black ‘AFF’ cancel

Balloon “Davy” - arrived December 28 in St Malo

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon Mail Private Circulars

Manifeste des Loges



Posted October 15 – arrived Nîmes October 21 - balloon "Jules Favre #1" – this is the rarest of the private circulars

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon Mail Private Circulars

Tambours de la Compagnie



Posted January 2 - arrived Courtrai, Belgium January 13 - balloon "Newton"

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon Mail Newspaper-Letters

December 31 Chronique Illustrée



La Chronique Illustrée No. 108 - only issue produced for balloon mail - **only flown example known**

Posted January 14 at Paris (SC) bureau - arrived January 24 - balloon "Vaucanson" - ex-Levett

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon Mail Destinations

Occupied France



Gazette des Absents No. 4 posted November 3 – rare German occupation provisional transit mark **POSTES 1871 EPINAL**

No arrival or German tax markings – balloon “*Ferdinand Flocon*”



Posted October 15 in Paris – **North German Confederation censor mark** of Foreign Affairs Department at Versailles

30c German occupation postage due – docketed November 20 arrival – balloon “*Jules Favre #1*”

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon Mail Destinations

Iberian Peninsula



Gazette des Absents No. 6 posted November 9 in Paris – arrived December 5 in **Spain** – balloon “Daguerre”

Misdirected to England November 30 – rated ‘**PAID-ONLY TO ENGLAND**’ – 4 reales due in Barcelona



Gazette des Absents No. 2 posted October 28 in Paris – balloon “Colonel Charras” – 40c rate to **Portugal**

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon Mail Destinations

German States



Posted October 30 and franked 40c - rare November 6 **Munich, Bavaria** arrival mark - balloon "Fulton"



Posted December 10 and franked 20c domestic postage – accepted per red **'F.S.P.'** (France Service Public)

2½ groschen due from POW in **Coblentz, Prussia** - balloon "Général Renault"

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon Mail Destinations

Scandinavia



Posted January 20 and franked 50c for **Copenhagen, Denmark** - no arrival mark as usual - balloon "Général Daumesnil"



Posted January 18, 1871 and franked 60c - arrived February 1 in **Stockholm, Sweden** - balloon "Général Bourbaki"

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon Mail Destinations

Luxembourg



Gazette des Absents #5 posted November 8 – arrived in **Luxembourg** December 2 - balloon “*Daguerre*” saved mail



November 29 *La Cloche Lettre-Journal* posted December 6 – arrived in Luxembourg Dec. 14 - balloon “*Denis Papin*”

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon Mail Destinations

Eastern Europe



Posted January 2 – franked 80c to **Krakow, Poland** – rare **January 18 arrival mark** – balloon “Newton”



Gazette No. 22 posted Jan. 6 – franked 80c to **Bucharest, Romania** – **January 25 arrival mark** – balloon “Duquesne”

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon Mail Destinations

Far East



Franked 80c to Japan – one of two known Yokohama *Bureau Francais* arrival marks - balloon “*Vauban*”



Gazette No. 8 franked 80c to Shanghai, China – one of two known - arrived January 13 - balloon “*Général Uhrich*”

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon Mail Destinations

Far East



Franked 20c military rate to New Caledonia – arrived March 26, then forwarded to Saigon - “Général Faidherbe”



Gazette des Absents No. 19 franked 80c to **Calcutta, India** – January 14 Sea Post Office transit - balloon “Tourville”

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon Mail Destinations

Russia



Posted December 30 – franked 20c to frontier: rare **P.F. marking** – no arrival – balloon “Armée de la Loire”



80c rate underpaid – rare **F.42 accountancy due mark** – arrived Oct. 22 (Julian) – balloon “Louis Blanc” – ex-Courtois

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon Mail Destinations

Eastern Mediterranean



Franked 40c to **Island of Rhodes** via Alexandria and Beyrouth – rare **Austrian cursive arrival mark** – balloon “*Fulton*”



Gazette des Absents No. 12 franked **80c overland rate to Constantinople**, Turkey – balloon “*Jules Favre #2*”

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon Mail Destinations

North Africa



Franked **40c to Tunis** – arrived November 18 – fewer than 5 covers known to Tunisia - balloon “*Fulton*”



Gazette des Absents No. 28 franked **40c to Egypt** – arrived Alexandria February 10 - balloon “*Général Bourbaki*”

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon Mail Destinations

North America



Posted January 27 – arrived in Canada February 18 - balloon “Général Cambronne” – fewer than 5 known to Canada



Posted September 30 – taxed on arrival in Mexico - balloon “Armand Barbès” – rare October 8 London transit

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon Mail Newspaper-Letters

Gazette des Absents Map Supplement

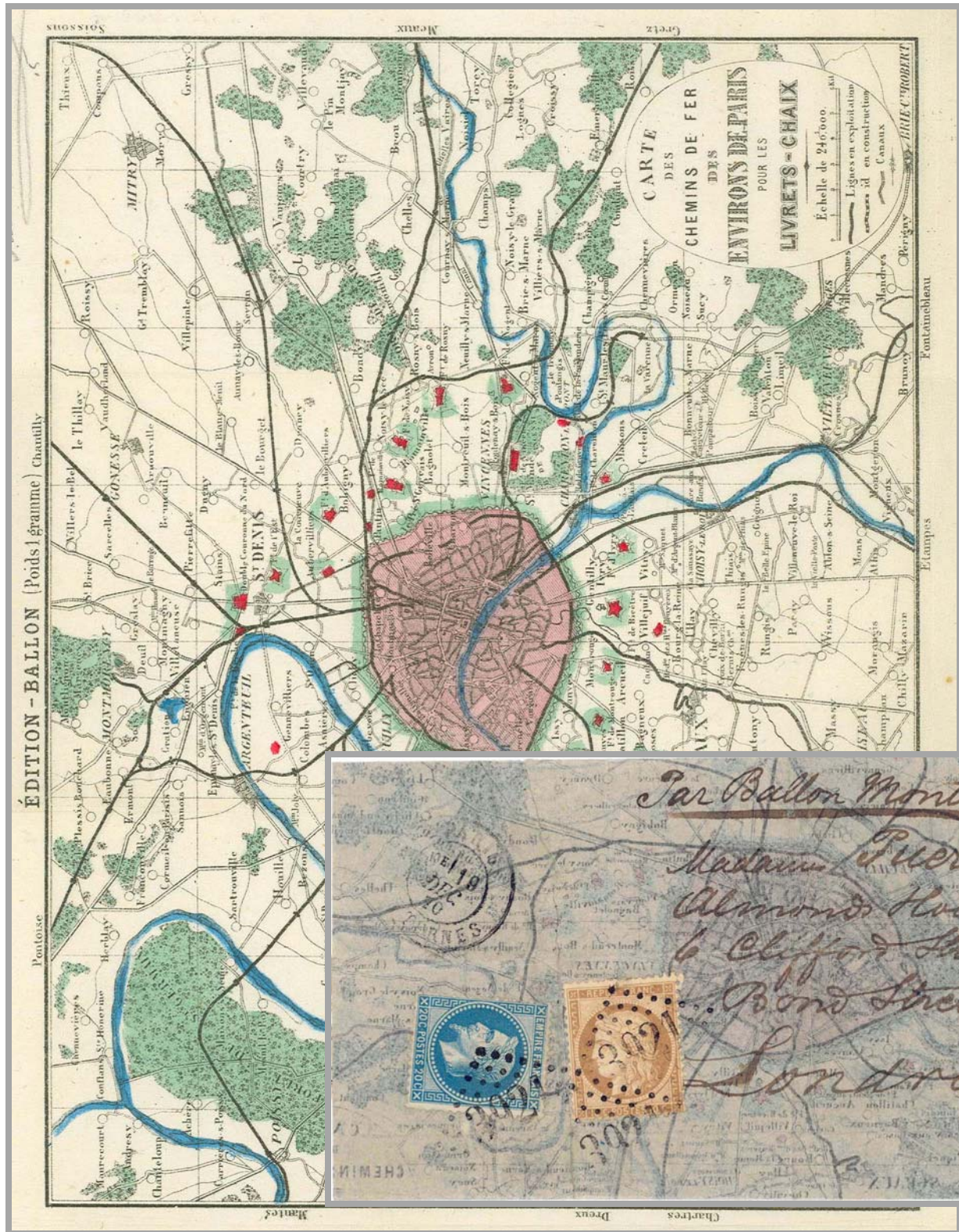


Grand Plan de Paris posted December 12 - one of two flown examples known - captured balloon "Ville de Paris"

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon Mail Newspaper-Letters

Gazette des Absents Map Supplement



Petit Plan de Paris posted December 19 – fewer than five flown examples known - balloon “Lavoisier”

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon Mail Newspaper-Letters

News Reports



Le Soir Lettre-Journal, Édition de Province posted December 2 – arrived London Dec. 10 - balloon “Franklin”



Havas Newsletter (German edition) posted November 12 – rare **December 2 arrival in Germany**

Franked 30c for Germany - balloon “Général Uhrich”

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Balloon Mail Newspaper-Letters

Rare Editions



Extrait du Journal officiel du 11 Novembre posted November 12 by **bankers Vernes & Cie.**

Arrived in Switzerland on November 30 - balloon “*Général Uhrich*”



Paris-Journal No. 314 posted November 11 at Paris (SC) bureau – no arrival marks - “*Daguerre*” captured mail

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Outgoing Linecrosser Mail

Successful Private Couriers



Dated Paris September 29 and confided to “a brave man from Herblay” who crossed enemy lines
Posted October 3 in Rouen – arrived in Le Mans October 4 – **fewer than five such letters known**

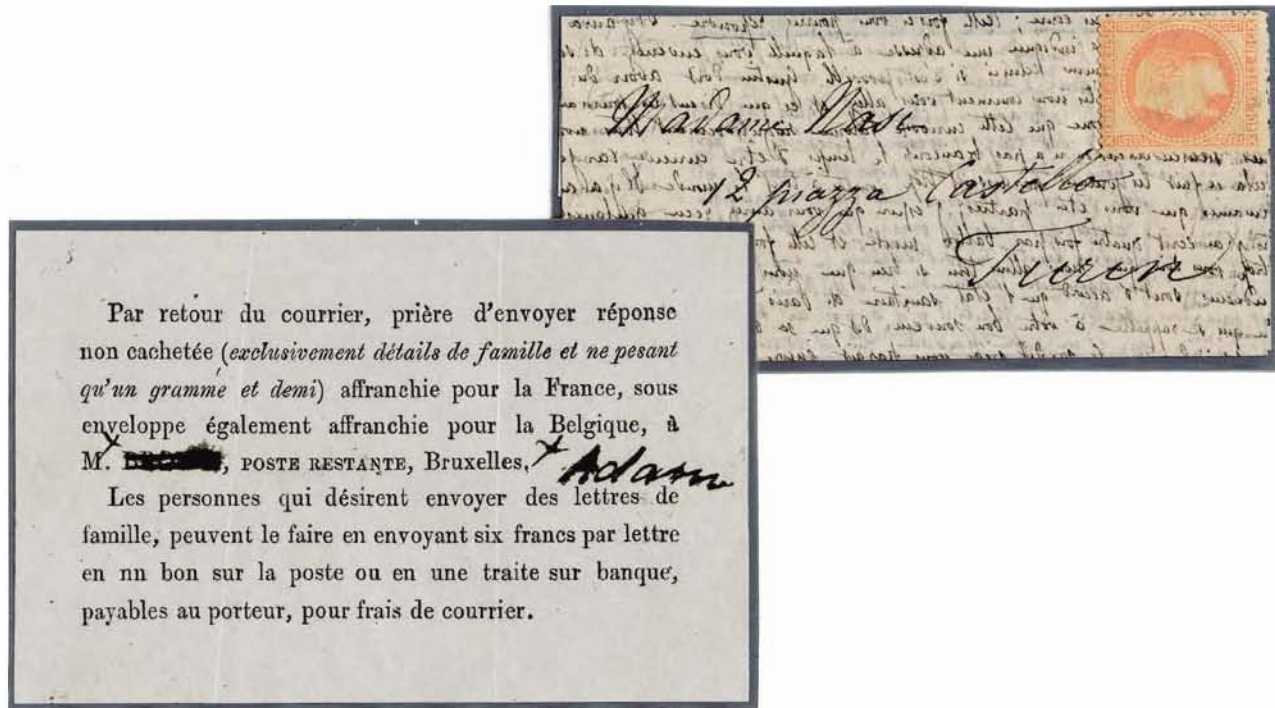


Dated Paris November 6 and confided to **M. Grimbart of Amiens**, who left Paris on November 10
Posted November 14 in Amiens after passage of the German siege lines – arrived in England November 15

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Outgoing Linecrosser Mail

Adam Agency via Brussels



Agence Adam linecrosser succeeded in reaching Brussels in October – enclosed *papillon* gave return mail instructions

Letter datelined Paris October 8, and franked with postage for Italy – French postage not valid in Belgium



Enveloppe de re-expédition for above letter and *papillon* – posted unpaid in Brussels on October 25

60 centesimi postage due charged upon October 27 arrival in Torino, Italy

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Outgoing Linecrosser Mail

Successful Couriers Late in Siege



Dated *Paris Mercredi 7 Decem 70* – confided to unrecorded successful linecrosser – **posted December 21 in Lyon**
Successful linecrossers after October are very rare, since the Prussian siege became very tight – no arrival marks

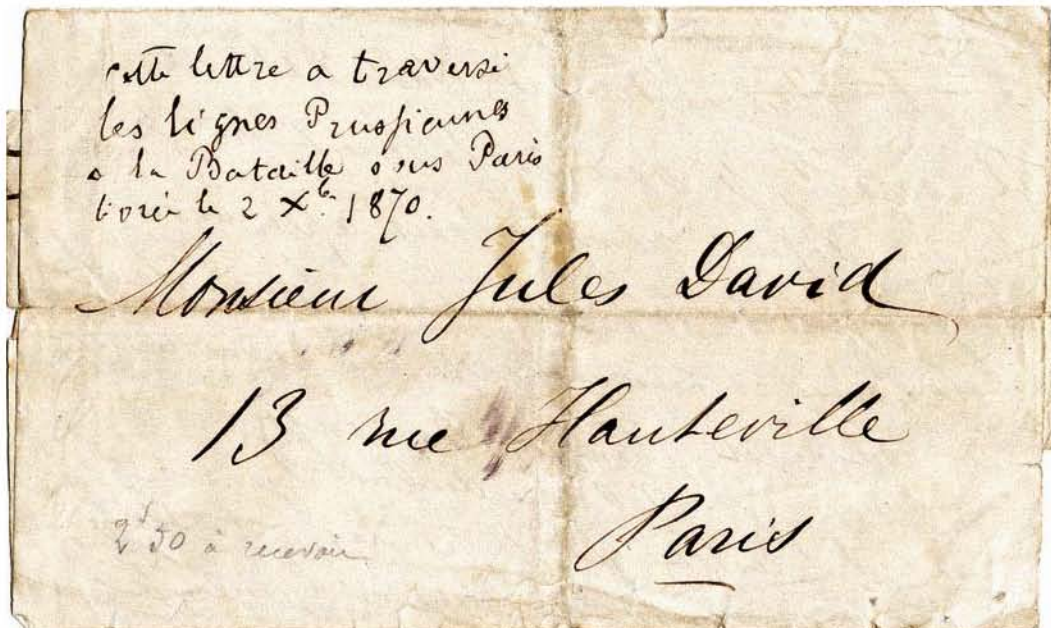


Dated *Paris le 17 Xbre 1870* and confided to **M. Barthé, government messenger**, who left Paris on January 14, 1871
Posted January 19 in Nevers after passage of the German siege lines – return mail instructions on back of letter

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Incoming Linecrosser Mail

Successful Private Courier



During the confusion of the November 30-December 2 Marne battles, a private courier slipped into Paris

Dated The Hague (Holland) October 23 from Rachel David – 2fr 50c fee due on delivery

Folded letter carried on balloon “*Denis Papin*” acknowledged receipt of above letter on December 6

Fewer than five known successful incoming letters by private courier

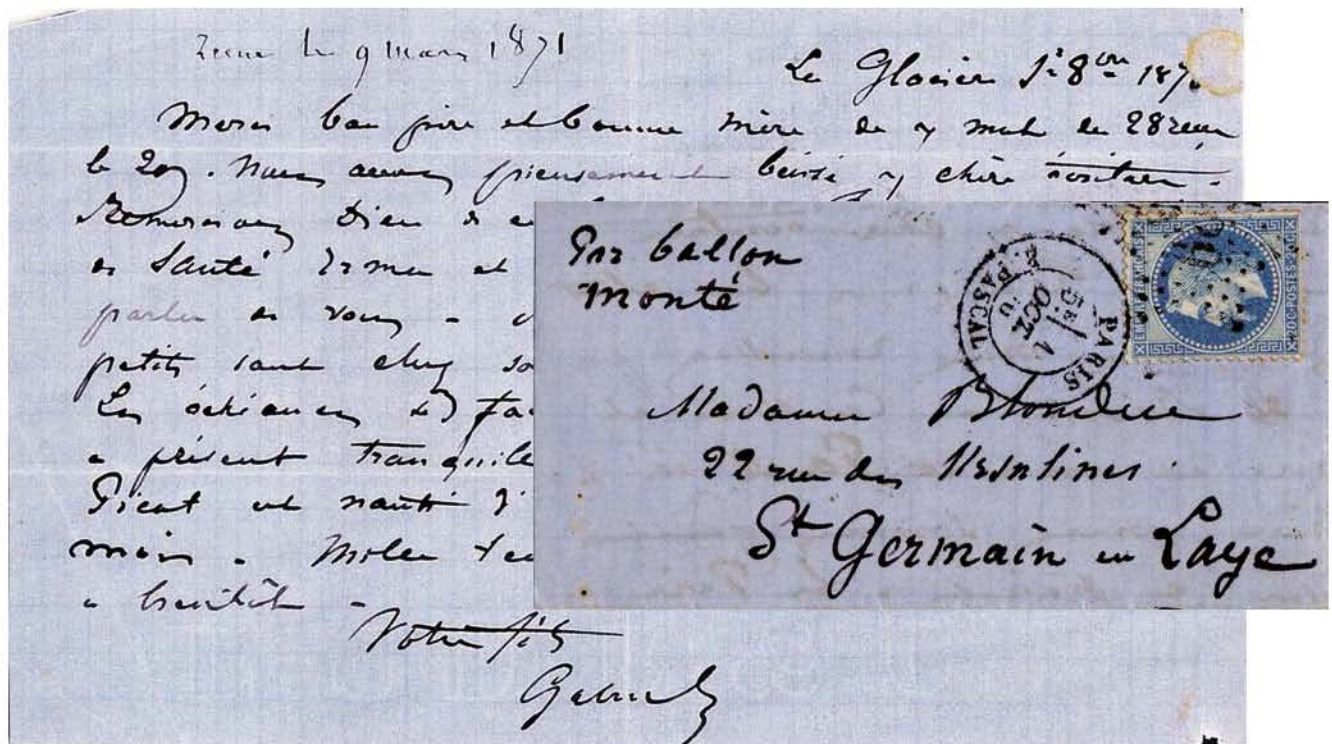
1870-71 Siege of Paris

Incoming Linecrosser Mail

Parisian Postmen Brare and Gême



On September 28, Brare & Gême left Triel to return to Paris via St. Germain en Laye – arrived in Paris on September 29
Letter datelined St Germain September 28 – posted next day at Paris central post office with 15c local postage due



October 1 letter carried on balloon “Armand Barbès” - “votre mot du 28 reçu le 29” indicating receipt of above letter

Only known incoming linecrosser letter handled by the Paris post office

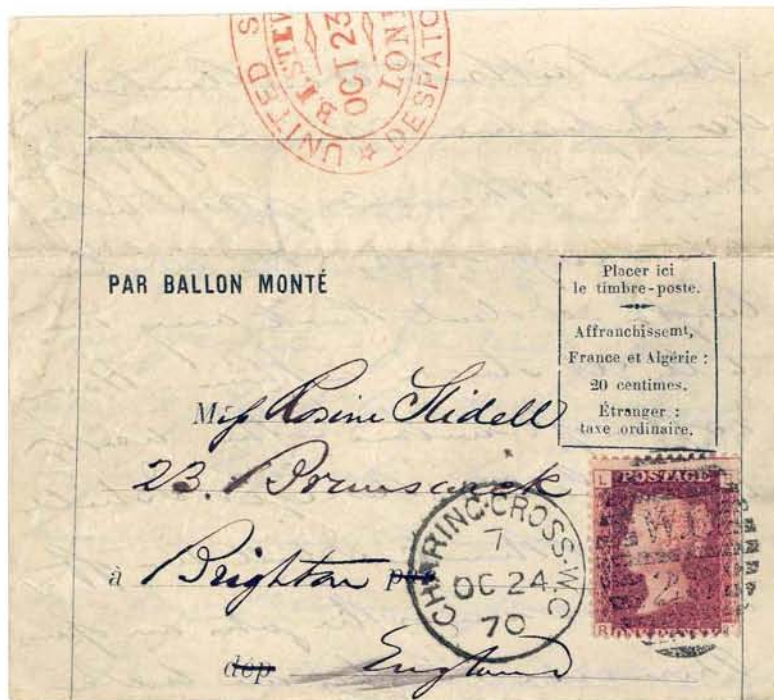
1870-71 Siege of Paris

Outgoing U.S. Diplomatic Pouch Mail

Early Pouches



Dated Paris October 3 and confided to General Burnside, who left Paris for London with pouch on October 3
On Oct. 6, U.S. Dispatch Agent in London franked letter 6 pence for postage back to France - arrived October 7

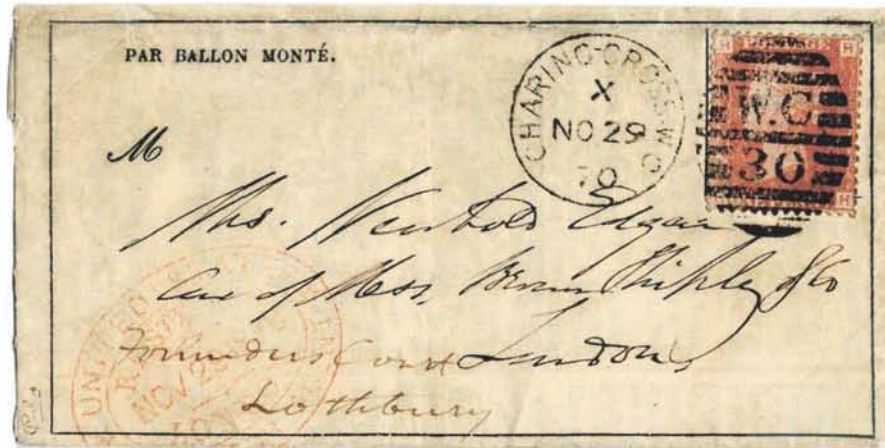


Dated Paris October 10 and carried on General Burnside's second trip - left Paris on October 10
Pouch arrived London October 23 - U.S. Dispatch Agent B.F. Stevens franked and posted letter

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Outgoing U.S. Diplomatic Pouch Mail

Fifth and Sixth Pouches



Gazette des Absents #9 carried in 6th U.S. diplomatic pouch, which left Paris for London on November 22, 1870
Upon November 29 arrival, U.S. Dispatch Agent added 1penny city postage and mailed letter at nearby Charing Cross



Datelined *Paris 14 Nov 1870* by ambassador's secretary - carried in 5th U.S. diplomatic pouch - left Paris November 15
Upon November 23 arrival in London, letter was posted unpaid at nearby Charing Cross post office – 2 pence postage due

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Outgoing U.S. Diplomatic Pouch Mail

11th and 13th Pouches



Docketed Paris January 1 – carried in 11th pouch, which left Paris January 3, and arrived in London on January 20

Posted unpaid near U.S. Consulate at Charing Cross on January 20 – **only letter known from this pouch**



Dated Paris January 16 – carried in 13th pouch, which left Paris January 17, and arrived in London on January 30

Posted unpaid in London on January 30 – 120 centesimi due in Rome on February 3 per **Italian postage due stamps**

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Outgoing Diplomatic Courier Mail

French Couriers



Dateline *Paris – 5 Octobre* – contents indicate it was to be carried by the **Papal Nuncio** upon his departure from Paris
October 22, 1870 Rouen transit indicates that Nuncio **confided letter to Pelvilain** instead – arrived October 24 in Sablé



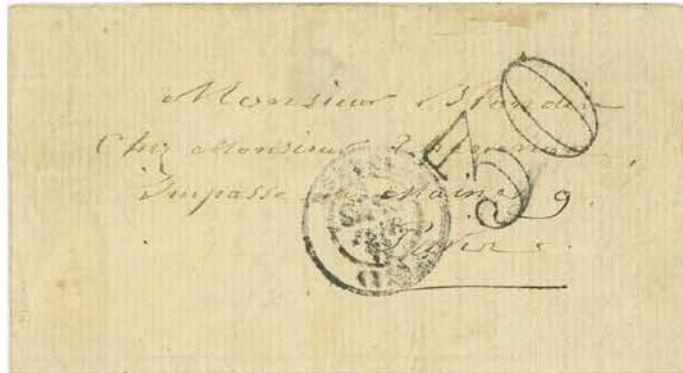
Dateline *Paris lundi 30 8bre 1870* – confided to **servant of M. Thiers**, who left Paris then on a diplomatic mission
Letter posted November 23 in Tours at *Bureau Ambulants Sud-Ouest* railroad office – arrived November 27

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Return Balloon Flights to Paris

Unsuccessful October & November Attempts

Photocopy of cover front



Dateline Chateauroux September 29, 1870 and **confided to G. Mangin**, pilot of the balloon “*Ville de Florence*”
October 20 aborted attempt by “*George Sand*” from Chartres – letter held until end of war - posted Bordeaux February 10



Dateline Tours October 24, 1870 and **confided to J. Duruof**, pilot of the balloon “*Neptune*”
November 7 failed attempt by “*Jean Bart*” from Rouen – held by post office until end of war – delivered March 2

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Boules de Moulins Mail to Paris

Delivered During Armistice



Posted January 2, 1871 in Vatan with **four-color one franc franking** - February 18, 1871 Paris arrival mark
Some unsent *boules* letters were held at Cosnes until forwarded after February 14 opening of mail service to Paris



Dateline Brussels December 28 and franked with **Belgian and French stamps** - posted Bordeaux January 6
On February 6, 14,600 unsent *boules* letters smuggled into Paris in rice sacks - **February 12 arrival postmark**

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Boules de Moulins Mail to Paris

June 1871 Recoveries



Posted January 4, 1871 at Montbrison with one franc postage - **delivered in Paris June 2, 1871**, just after Commune
Recovery point is unknown, but probably on May 15, 1871 - **fewer than 10 letters known** postmarked January 2-5, 1871



Posted December 30, 1870 at Espalion with rare **Bordeaux Issue 20c type I strip of five** for one franc postage
Delivered June 23, 1871 in Paris - **fewer than 5 letters known** postmarked December 30 to January 3

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Boules de Moulins Mail to Paris

1871 Recoveries



Posted January 8 at Lessay with **imperforate 1859 80c** and 20c Bordeaux type II - recovered at **Ponthierry June 8, 1871**
 No arrival mark in Paris due to disruption from Commune – **less than five covers from Ponthierry recovery are known**



Posted January 3, 1871 at St Gervais-les-Bains - January 6 Moulins-s-Allier transit mark
Undocumented July 13, 1871 recovery - fewer than ten letters known from this boule

1870-71 Siege of Paris

Boules de Moulins Mail to Paris

August 1968 St-Wandrille Recovery



Reverse of envelope with special red cachet prepared for letters from **boule recovered August 6, 1968 at St-Wandrille**

Recovered over 97 years after submersion - legal problems took two more years before this letter was delivered

Only 20 of the 540 letters in the boule reached descendants or "ayants droit" - remainder in Postal Museum



Photocopy of envelope front - posted January 7, 1871 at Rennes with one franc franking in Bordeaux Issue stamps

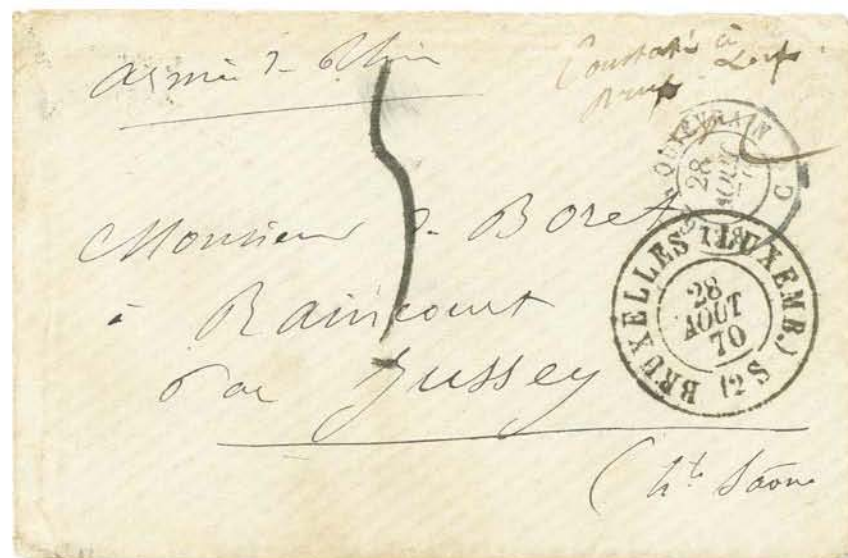
1870 Siege of Metz

Outgoing Linecrosser Mail

Successful Attempts



Dateline Longville sous Metz le 26 Septembre 1870 by Lt. Colonel de Narp - arrived October 3 in Douai
Given under **flag-of-truce** to Prussian 2nd Army commander - posted September 30 at 2. Armee HQ bureau



Dateline sous Metz 20 août by Colonel of 67th Regiment - confided to **linecrosser going to Belgium**
Posted unpaid on August 28 in Brussels - arrived August 31 in Jussey with 50 centimes postage due

1870 Siege of Metz

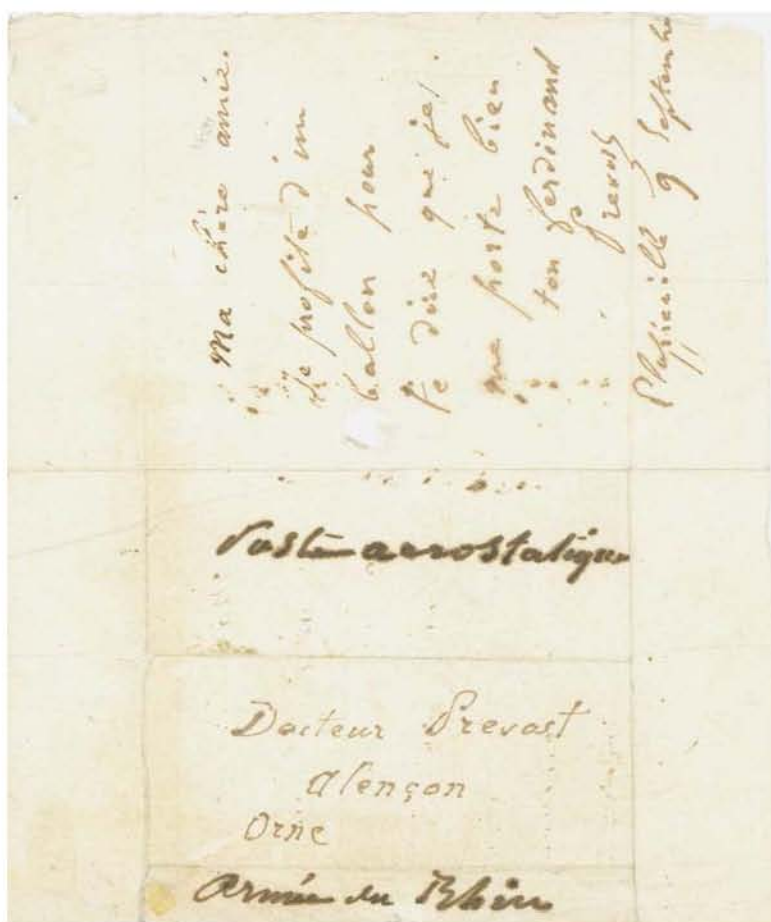
Pharmacists' Balloon Service September 5-15, 1870

First "Papillons de Metz" Balloon Service



Dated *Sous Metz le 7 7bre 1870* - carried by 5th Pharmacists' balloon - left September 10 with 40 letters

Balloon landed near Lille - mail was recovered and processed on September 19 - **only letter known from this balloon**



Dated *Plappeville* September 9 - 8th Pharmacists' balloon left September 11 with 90 letters

Balloon landed near Elmstein, Germany - mail found and captured November 28 - no arrival marks

1870 Siege of Metz

6th Pharmacists' Balloon – September 11, 1870

Forwarded Out of Besieged Paris



Dated *Sous Metz* 8 7bre 1870 - **6th Pharmacists' balloon** which carried about 50 *papillons*
September 14 Forbach cachet d'atterrissage defaced to conceal French origin



Carried across the frontier and posted unpaid in the above envelope on September 15 in Saarbrücken, Prussia
Trapped in Paris by September 18 start of siege - **forwarded by linecrosser or first balloon "Neptune" to Saumur**
September 25 Saumur arrival was before landing of the next balloon - **one of two letters known from this Metz balloon**

1870 Siege of Metz

7th Pharmacists' Balloon – September 11, 1870

By Diplomatic Courier Into Besieged Paris



Dated Metz le 7 Septembre 1870 - 7th **Pharmacists' balloon** which carried 63 papillons

Captured on landing in Germany and forwarded to Bismarck's headquarters at Versailles

Carried from Versailles under flag-of-truce into besieged Paris on October 14 by U.S. diplomatic courier



Papillon given to 14th Corps officer - posted with above note on October 15 in the above envelope for delivery in Paris

1870 Siege of Metz

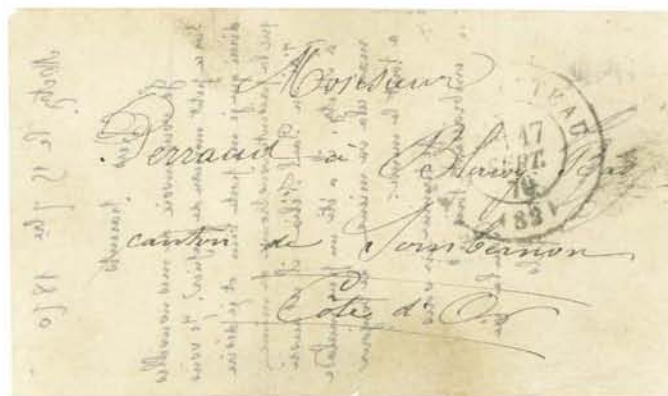
1st Metz Engineers' Balloon – September 16, 1870

Neufchâteau Landing Postmark



1st Engineers' balloon recovered safely near Neufchâteau – *cachets d'atterrissage* from 2nd and 4th collection periods

Dated *Metz le 16 7bre* - **September 17 (2^e) Neufchâteau transit postmark** – no arrival in besieged Paris



Dated *Metz le 15 7bre* - **September 17 (4^e) Neufchâteau transit postmark**

'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
Désastre Général des Fin.*

Madame Robinson Adelaide

31 Southport

Lancashire

Angleterre

1870 Siege of Metz

4th Engineers' Balloon – September 21, 1870

Forwarding Envelope

A Monsieur Mac, huissier, à Galan (Hautes-Pyrénées.)
Metz, le 20 Septembre 1870.
Mon cher parent, je me porte et je me suis toujours
très bien porté. Adieu.
Bonne nuit. Votre très dévoué.
J. Duprat
Maj. au 23^e de ligne

Dated Metz le 20 Septembre 1870 - left September 21 and landed near Fresnes-en-Voevre



Placed in above *enveloppe de réexpédition* at Tours (Paris-Bordeaux railroad bureau) on September 30 for forwarding
Photocopy of note on reverse from Tours postal agent saying that he pulled this out of a group of about 100

1870 Siege of Metz

Engineers' Balloon Service September 16 – October 3

Landing Postmarks



Datelined Metz Sep 21 1870 by George Robinson, self-proclaimed inventor of the Engineers' balloon service

4th Engineers' balloon left September 21 with about 30,000 *papillons* - recovered near Fresnes-en-Voevre

Only two *papillons* known with September 22 Fresnes landing postmark



Datelined Metz 26 September 1870 by George Robinson - **8th Engineers' balloon** left September 27

Landed near Bayonville with 16,000 *papillons* - **only known October 4 Lille transit postmark**

Marked **F.S.P. for free frank** in France, but rated 6 pence due in England on October 5

1870 Siege of Metz

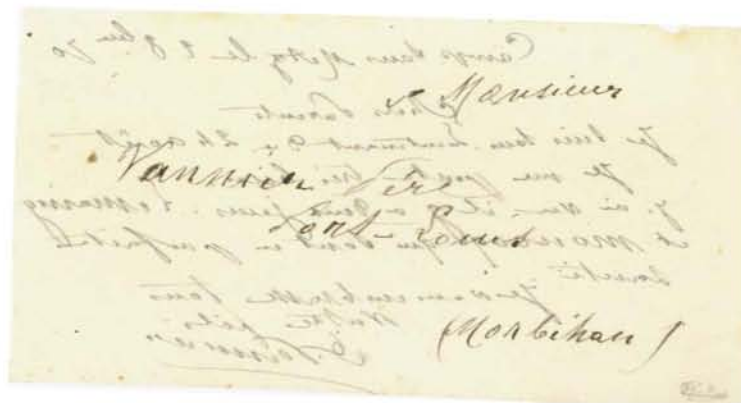
Engineers' Balloon Service September 16 – October 3

Captured Balloons



Handwritten note on yellowed paper, likely a captured balloon message. The text is written in French and includes the name "Monsieur" and "Lapart" (likely Laporte). The handwriting is cursive and somewhat faded.

Dated Metz le 30 septembre 1870 - **10th Engineers' balloon** left September 30 and was captured
From sergeant in 15th Regiment of 4th Corps at Camp de Lorey - no arrival markings



Handwritten note on yellowed paper, likely a captured balloon message. The text is written in French and includes the name "Monsieur" and "Vannier". The handwriting is cursive and somewhat faded.

Dated Camp sous Metz le 2 8bre 70 - **11th and last Engineers' balloon** left October 3
Balloon and 12,000 papillons were captured after landing - mail confiscated by Prussians
The Engineers' service was stopped by Marshal Bazaine on October 4 for security reasons

1870 Siege of Schlestadt

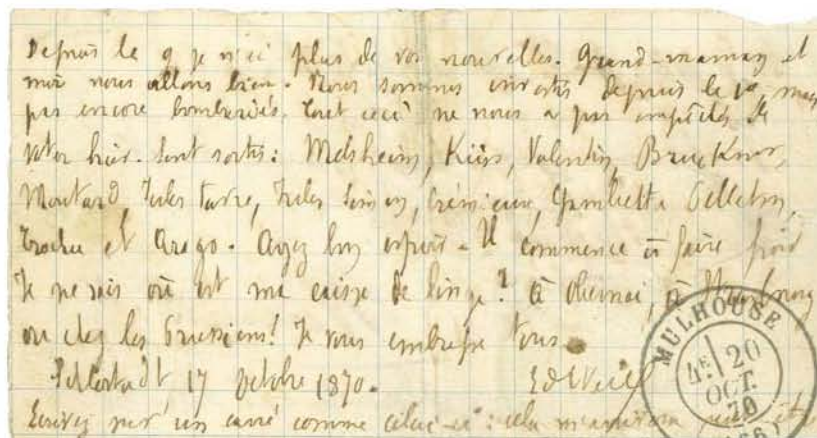
Outgoing Line-Crosser Mail October 10 - October 24

Only Successful Attempt



Papillon datelined Schlestadt 17 Octobre 1870 and posted on October 17 in Schlestadt

Prepaid 20 centimes - October 20 Mulhouse transit - no Marseille arrival mark



Photocopy of reverse

One of two known examples of Schlestadt line-crosser mail

1870-71 Siege of Belfort

Unmanned Balloon December 30, 1870

Successful Attempt



Two unmanned balloons released December 30 - one captured and one recovered near Saignelegier, Switzerland
Datelined *Belfort le 25 Dec 1870* - "*Je profite de l'essai d'un Ballon...*" - P.P. for free frank - arrived January 8



Posted December 25, 1870 in besieged Belfort - arrived January 10 with 30c postage due
Carried by Belfort balloon which was safely recovered at Saignelegier on January 6

Only seven letters are known from the Belfort balloon mail; three have Belfort postmarks

1870-71 Siege of Belfort

Outgoing Line-Crosser November 4 – February 16

Mailed at French Post Offices



Dateline Belfort 25 nov. 1870 - line-crosser left mail at **Bourogne** on November 25 - arrived December 3
After the siege perimeter widened in mid-December, most linecrosser mail passed through nearby Switzerland



Dateline Belfort le 22 9bre - line-crosser left mail at **Hérimoncourt** on November 28 - arrived December 3
From Dr. Martel, surgeon at the *Fort de la Miotte* - **only known franked line-crosser cover**

1870-71 Siege of Belfort

Outgoing Linecrosser Mail November 4 – February 16

Mailed in Switzerland



Dateline Belfort 22 9bre 70 - **line-crosser left mail at Porrentruy, Switzerland** on November 24
Arrived November 27 - Swiss treated letter as unpaid - 50c due in France, even with military endorsement



Dateline Belfort 18 janv. 1871 - **line-crosser left mail at Porrentruy** on February 10 - arrived February 13
On February 3, Swiss granted free frank to mail from besieged Belfort - no tax due on this letter

1870-71 Siege of Belfort

Outgoing Line-Crosser November 4 – February 16

Red Cross



Dated Belfort le 30 janvier 1871 – taken out by Swiss Red Cross and given to French committee at St Louis

St Louis Red Cross Committee marked the letter *ARMÉE DU RHIN* and posted it – arrived February 27 in Lyon



Dated Belfort le 15 Fev. 1871 - taken out of the siege by the Lyon Red Cross Committee

Marked Armée de l'Est in manuscript - arrived February 23 in Lyon

After January 30, Red Cross delegations were allowed into Belfort to aid the inhabitants

1870-71 Siege of Belfort

Incoming Line-Crosser Mail November 4 – February 16

Successful Attempts



Dated *Mulhouse le 1 D cembre 1870* - red P.P. for postal free frank – no arrival marks

Addressed to Colonel Denfert, commander at Belfort - letter contains military intelligence



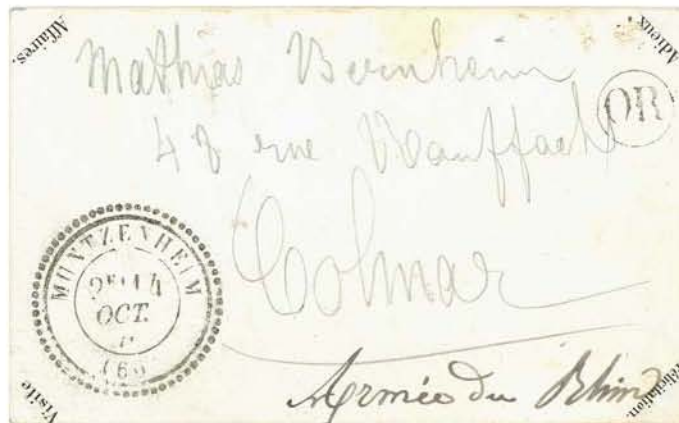
Posted at Chalon-s-Sa ne and **addressed to Belfort via Porrentruy** - January 17, 1871 Geneva transit

Franked 30c rate to Switzerland - confided to line-crosser at Porrentruy - **docketed January 28 arrival**

1870 Siege of Neuf-Brisach

Unmanned Balloon Service October 9 – November 10

Successful Attempts



Two officers in *Mobiles du Rhone* organized unmanned balloon service - **fewer than 15 unfranked cards known**
Carte de visite datelined Neuf-Brisach October 12 - endorsed *Armée du Rhin* - posted at Muntzenheim on October 14



Datelined *Neuf-Brisach ce 21 Octobre 1870* - processed through Mulhouse on October 21
Written on a piece of music card by **Captain Robert, one of the inventors of the balloon service**

1870 Siege of Neuf-Brisach

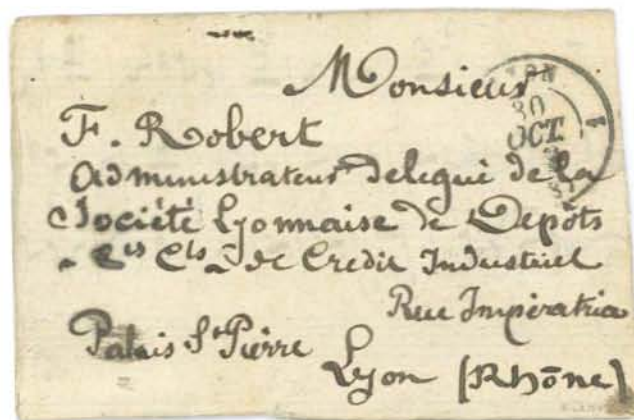
Unmanned Balloon Service October 9 – November 10

Later Successful Attempts



Although these cards were designed for the balloon service, they may have been carried by linecrossers

Dateline *Mercredi* (October 19) – **Mulhouse October 19 transit** – no arrival mark



Dateline *Neuf-Brisach le 27 8bre 1870* - arrived October 30 in Lyon

Written on a thick piece of music card

1870 Siege of Strasbourg

Outgoing Linecrosser Mail August 11 – September 27

Successful Efforts



Dateline Strasbourg September 11, 1870 by naval officer - **confided to visiting Swiss delegation**

Posted September 17 in Berne, Switzerland - arrived in Vendôme on September 25 with 50c due



Dateline Strasbourg August 20, 1870 and **confided to Red Cross** - Prussians agreed to let some special cards out

Posted August 26 in **Rastatt, Baden** and marked B(aden) S(ervice) P(ublic) - rare with arrival marks