

## ***La Débâcle: Postal History of the 1870-71 Franco-Prussian War***

**Background:** This exhibit traces the evolving conflict through letters mailed at French and German fieldposts, military-related mail, and siege mail. On July 19, 1870, France's Second Empire declared war on King Wilhelm's Prussia. By August 7, German armies had pushed the French into disorderly retreat toward Metz and Paris. By late September, four French army corps had surrendered along with Emperor Napoléon III at Sedan, five were encircled in Metz (which fell on October 27), and the remaining two were besieged in Paris. After the Sedan debacle, the Third Republic replaced the Second Empire, but no French armies remained in the field to protect it from the advancing Germans. In the face of this crisis, the new republic, based in Tours, successfully constituted new armies for national defense.

Accordingly, the war can be divided into two parts. The initial imperial phase consisted of two campaigns: the **Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine** and the **Campaign in the Ardennes**. During the second phase of the war, new French republican armies fought the Germans in four campaigns: the **Campaign for Paris**, the **Campaign on the Loire**, the **Campaign in the North**, and the **Campaign in the East**. Hostilities ended shortly after the January 28, 1871 capitulation of Paris. Both phases of the war incorporated sieges of fortified cities such as Metz and Belfort.

**Postal Background:** The French and German military mail-handling facilities (fieldposts) were centralized at the divisional level. However, the French imperial fieldpost organization gave way to local organizations for the four campaigns of the second phase. It was not until the January 28 to March 7, 1871 armistice period that an attempt was made to again integrate the French fieldpost service across all sectors. By contrast, the German service remained intact, even as their armies spread out in the final phase of the war. Both sides extended free-frank privileges to military personnel, so the vast majority of fieldpost mail is stampless and franked mail is rare.



January 19, 1871 "Armée Française H" postmark. Left besieged Paris aboard the "Général Bourbaki."

**Scope, Study and Presentation:** Mail from every major French and German military unit is included, and every stage of the war is represented. Particularly notable are strong sections of balloon mail and line-crosser mail from the various sieges. Considerable original research is reflected in locations and divisional affiliations of the fieldpost bureaus.

The exhibit is organized by campaign, which is identified in the heading of each page. Historical events or sieges are identified in the sub-headings. Text boxes provide historical or postal background, and greater detail is provided in the body of the page. French and German names are used wherever appropriate, and notable items are highlighted in bold type.

## Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

### Historical Summary: July 14 – October 27



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



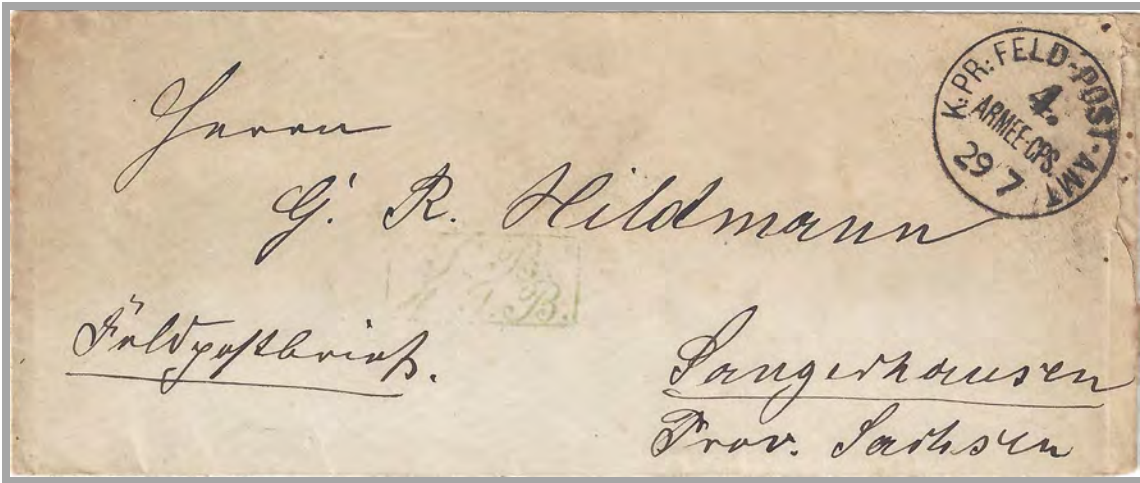
Political cartoon sent as printed matter – received military free frank per July 24 Law  
Postmarked in red on August 2 at the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps' 1<sup>st</sup> Division Bureau A at Strasbourg

## Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

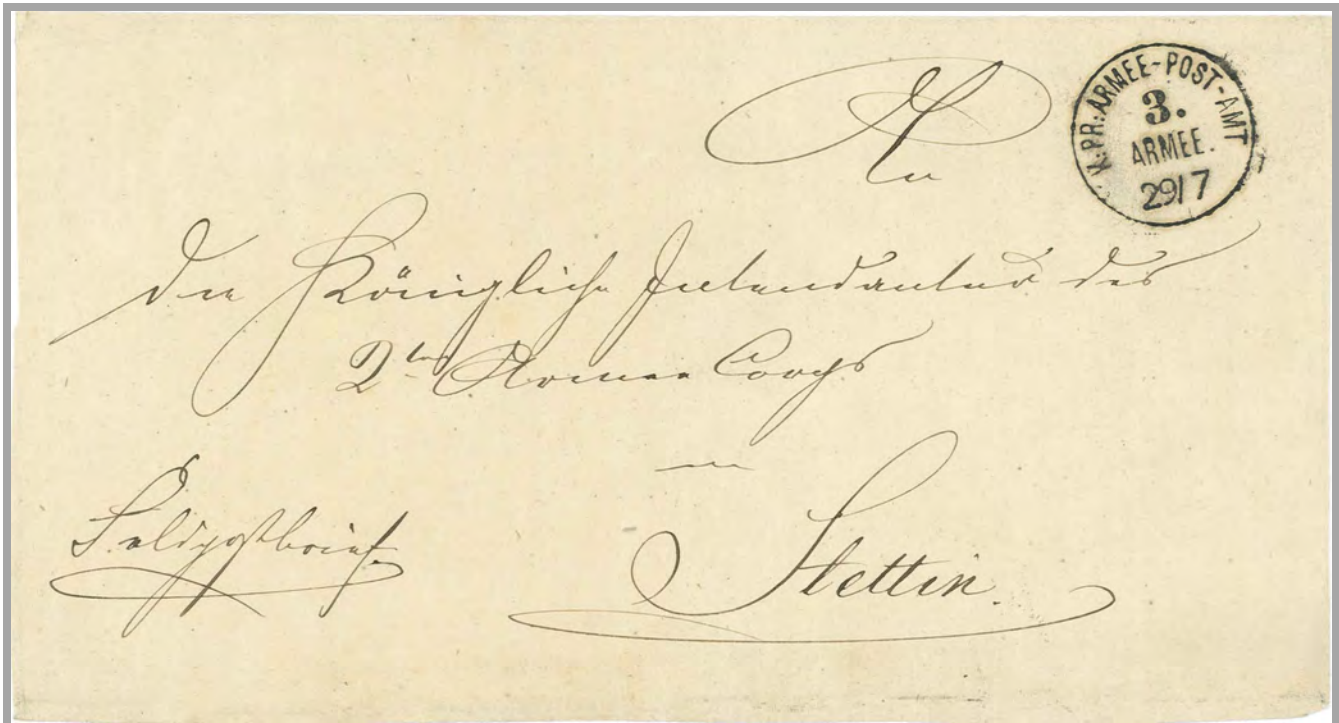
### German Mobilization: July 15 – August 5



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



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



Posted July 29 at the III Army bureau in Germany – addressed to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps at Stettin



## Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

### French Occupation of Saarbrücken: August 2-5



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



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



Print of the August 2 Combat at Saarbrücken



## Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

### August 6 Frontier Battle at Wörth



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



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

**Fewer than five Bâle Response Stickers are known on cover**

# Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

## August 6 Frontier Battle at Forbach



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



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

**Feldpost-Correspondenzkarte.**

An Gen. Hauptmann Wilhelm Schmidt

15/8  
77-047

Bestimmungsort: Berlin

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

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, Bleistift oder farbigem Stifte geschrieben sein können.  
3) In den Correspondenzkarten, welche an die mobilen Truppen und Militärbeamten abgefasst werden, muss deutlich angegeben sein: zu welchem Armeecorps, welcher Division, welchem Regimente, welcher Compagnie (oder sonstigem Truppenteile) der Adressat gehört, welchen Grad und Character oder welches Amt bei der Militärverwaltung derselbe bekleidet.

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



# Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

## Siege of Strasbourg: August 11 – September 27



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



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



Strasbourg in ruins after the bombardment

## Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

### Siege of Strasbourg: August 11 – September 27



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



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



(Scan of the reverse at 90%)

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



# Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

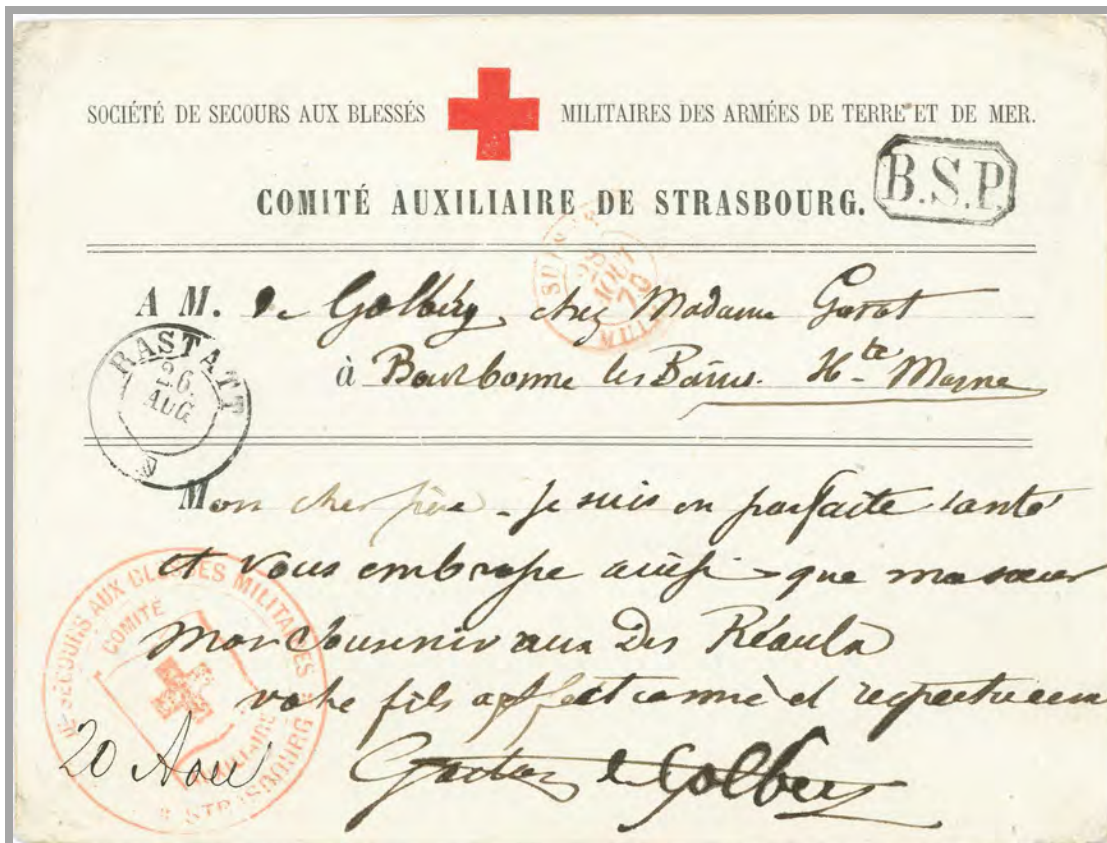
## Siege of Strasbourg: August 11 – September 27



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



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



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

## Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

### French Retreat to Metz: August 7-13



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



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



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



## Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

### August 14 Battle of Borny



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



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



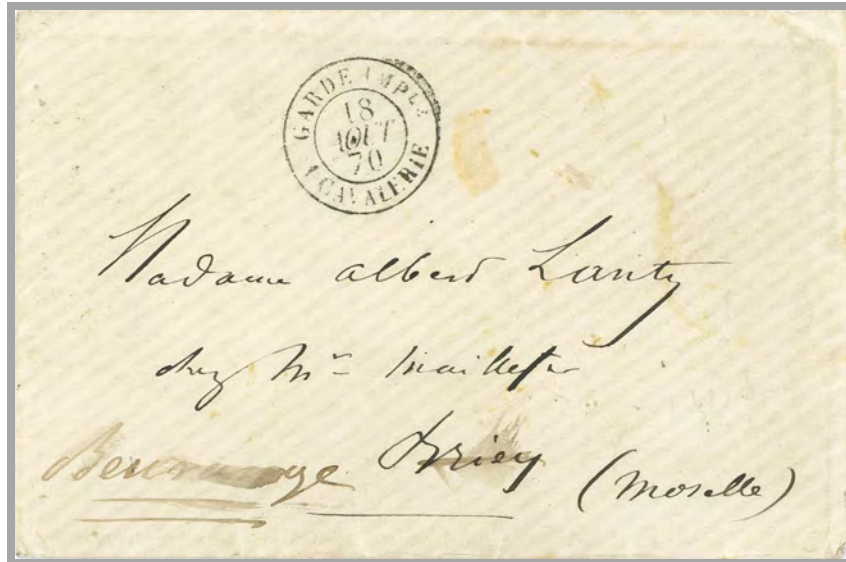
Dated October 18 at Montoy – reported the **death of a 73<sup>rd</sup> Regiment soldier on August 14**  
Postmarked on October 19 at the 13<sup>th</sup> Division (7<sup>th</sup> Corps) bureau – **addressed to the USA**  
Routed via Prussia and England to New York on November 8 – 22 cents due in Boston

# Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

## August 16 Battle of Vionville



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



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

**Feldpost - Correspondenzkarte.**

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

An

*Emma Lantzy Schlink*  
*Poppenheim*

**Bestimmungsort:** *Abbeville*  
*Regly Coblentz*

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

1) Der obige Vordruck für die Adresse ist deutlich und vollständig auszufüllen.  
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Dated August 16 and postmarked at the Garde-Corps Cavalry bureau



## Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

### August 16 Battle of Vionville



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



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



Metz battle scene by Alphonse de Neuville (1881)



# Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

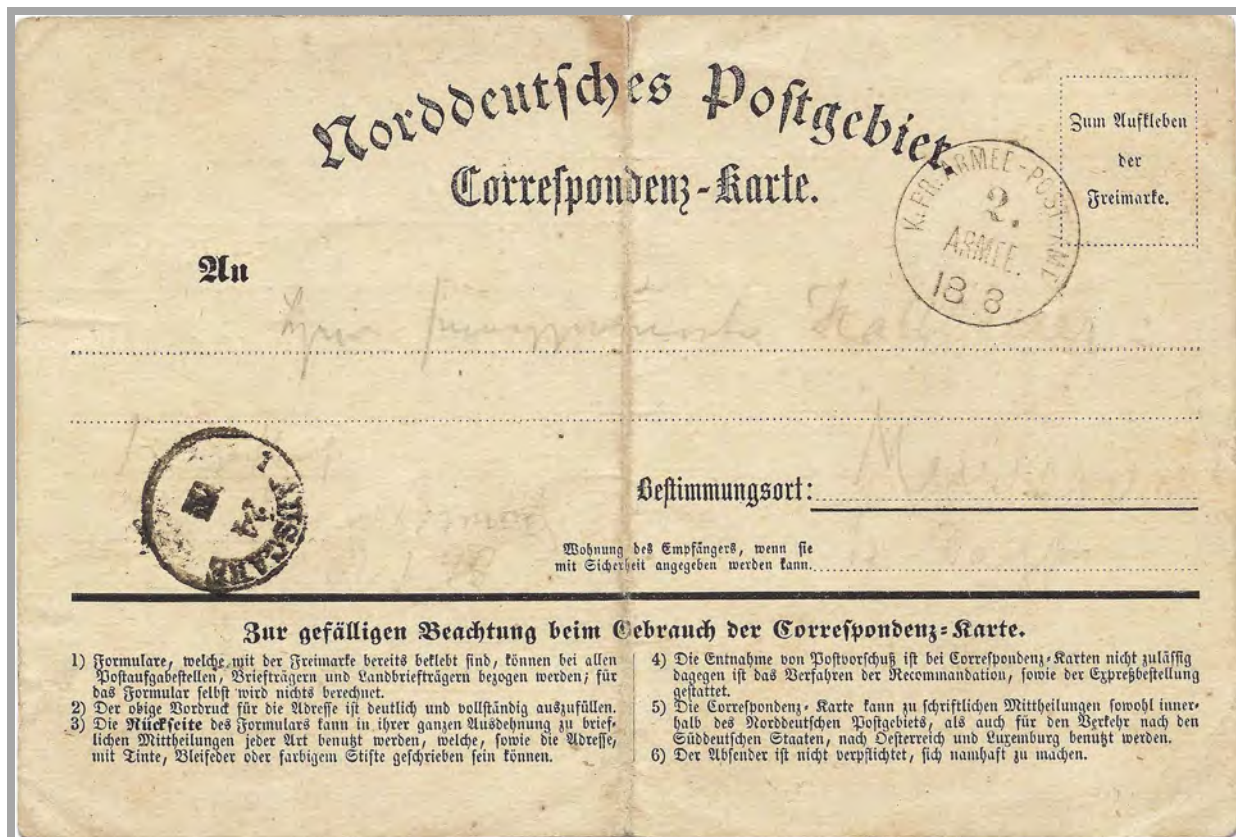
## August 18 Battle of St. Privat



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



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



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

# Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

## German Siege of Metz: August 19 – October 27



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



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



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



## Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

### French Defense of Metz: August 19 – October 27



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



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



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



## Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

### August 31 – September 1 Battle of Noisseville



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



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



“Surprise Attack in Metz” by Alphonse de Neuville

## Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

### Siege of Metz Balloon Service: September 5-15



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



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



**Print of a Papillon de Metz**

## Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

### Siege of Metz Balloon Service: September 5-15



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



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



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

**Escaped from two different sieges**



# Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

## Siege of Metz Balloon Service: September 5-15



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



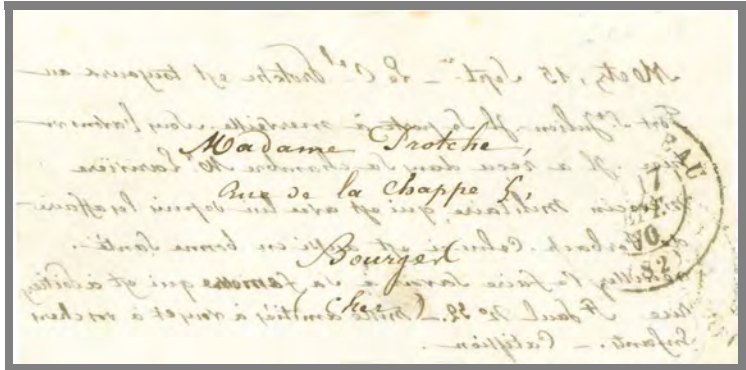
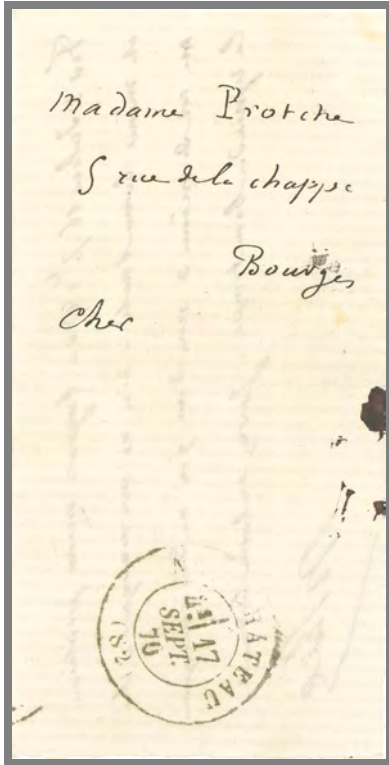
Given to 14<sup>th</sup> Corps officer - posted October 15 in Paris with a note in the above envelope

# Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

## Siege of Metz Balloon Service: September 16 - October 3



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



Dated September 16 from Lt-Colonel Protche (left)  
Dated September 15 at Metz from Protche aide (above)  
**Received September 17 Neufchâteau transit marks**  
**Both papillons enclosed in envelope (below) at Bourges**



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

## Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

### Siege of Metz Balloon Service: September 16 - October 3



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



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



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



'MUSLIN' UNDERLAY  
OF A THICKNESS OF  
180 MICRONS

### SIEGE OF METZ

#### A ROBINSON ENGINEERS BALLOON

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

This balloon was launched on 20th. September.



PAPER GLUED  
ON 'MUSLIN'  
110 MICRONS



*Ministère des Finances  
 Directeur Général des Fin.*

*Madame Robinson Adelaide*

*31 Southport*

*Lancashire*

*Angleterre*

*P.D.*

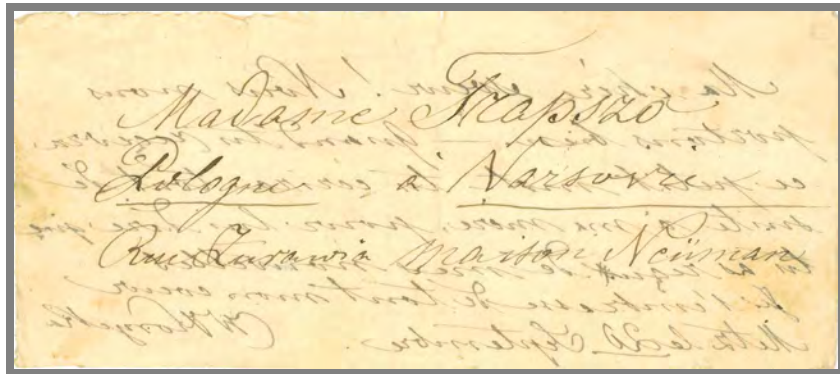
*1891*  
*SEP 20*  
*LANCASHIRE*

## Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

### Siege of Metz Balloon Service: September 16 – October 3



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



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



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



## Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

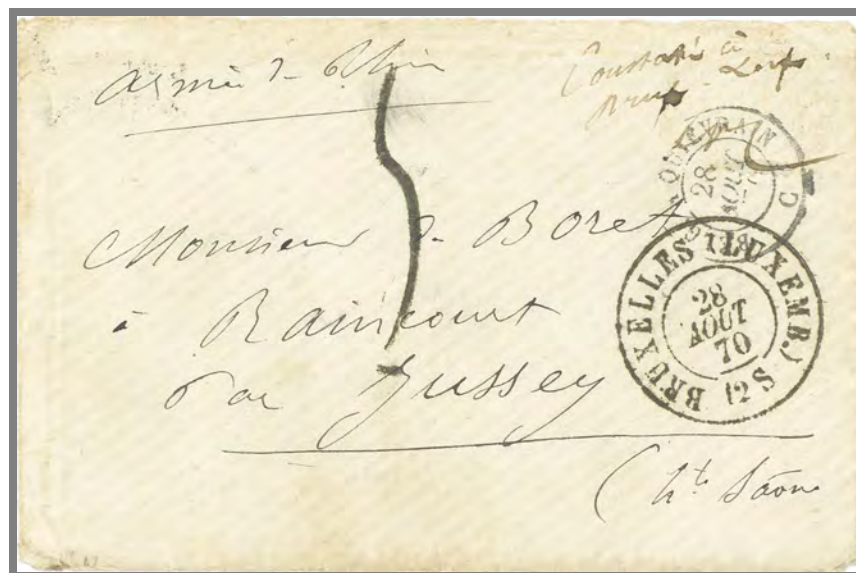
### Siege of Metz Line-Crossers: August 19 - October 27



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



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



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

## Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

### Siege of Neuf-Brisach: October 7 - November 10



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



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



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



## Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

### Siege of Neuf-Brisach: October 7 - November 10



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



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



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

# Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

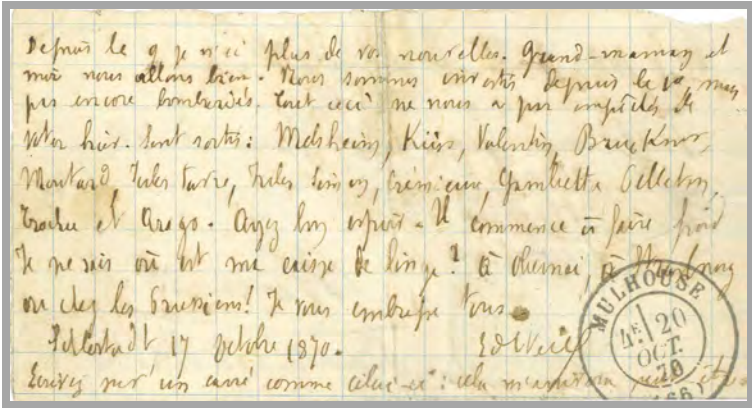
## Siege of Schlestadt: October 10-24



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



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



Scan of reverse (90%)



German Siege Artillery



## Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

### Siege of Belfort: November 4 – February 16



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



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



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

## Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

### Siege of Belfort: November 4 – February 16



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



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



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

**Seven letters are known from the Belfort balloon service; three have Belfort postmarks**

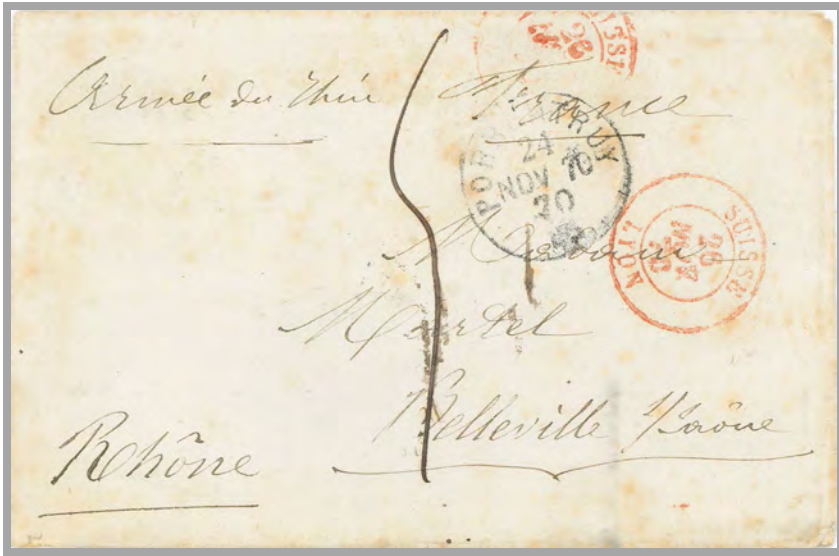


# Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

## Siege of Belfort: November 4 – February 16



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



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



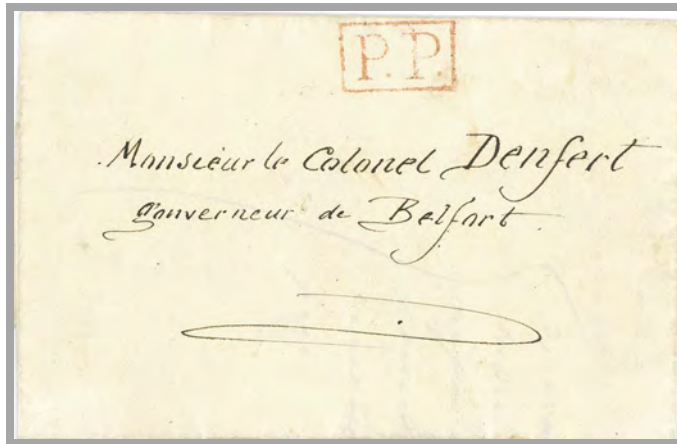
Dated November 22 in Belfort – line-crosser left mail at Hérimoncourt on November 28  
From Dr. Martel, surgeon at the Fort de la Miotte – **only known franked line-crosser letter**

## Campaign in Alsace-Lorraine

### Siege of Belfort: November 4 – February 16



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



Colonel Denfert

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



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

# Campaign in the Ardennes

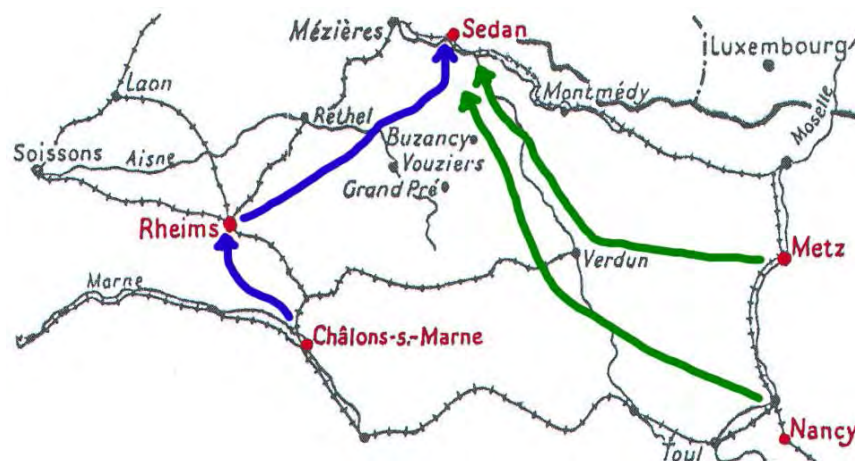
## Historical Summary: August 7 – September 1



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



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



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



## Campaign in the Ardennes

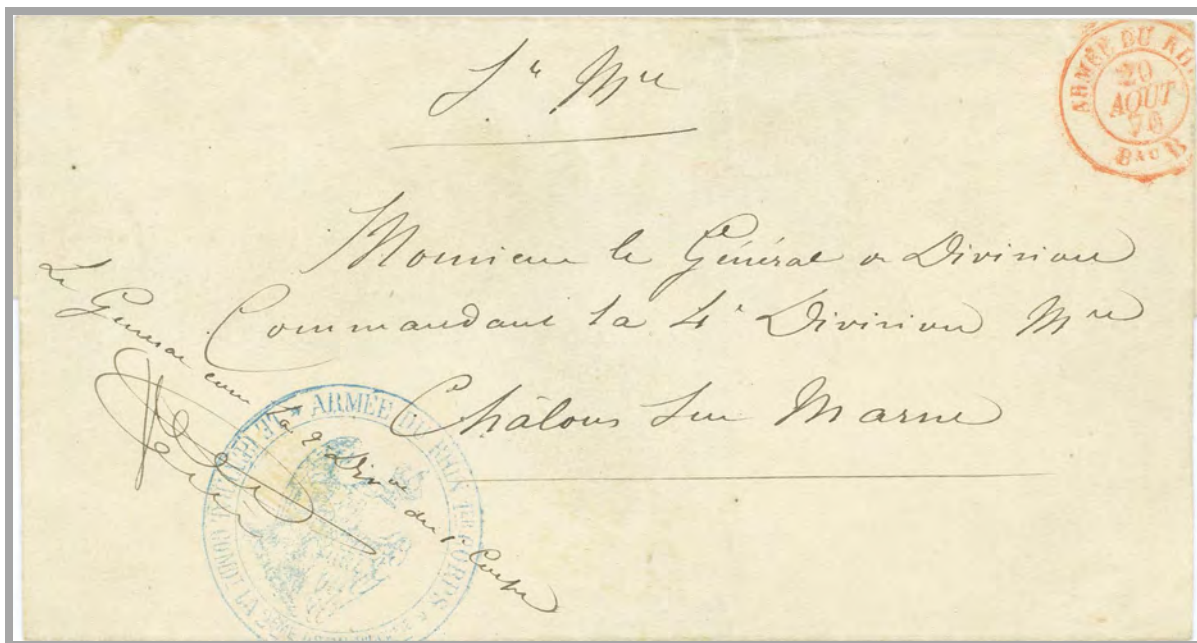
### French Concentration at Châlons: August 7-21



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



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



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

## Campaign in the Ardennes

### French Concentration at Châlons: August 7-21



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



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



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



# Campaign in the Ardennes

## German Advance to Sedan: August 23 – September 1



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



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



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



## Campaign in the Ardennes

### Siege of Verdun: September 23 – November 8



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



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



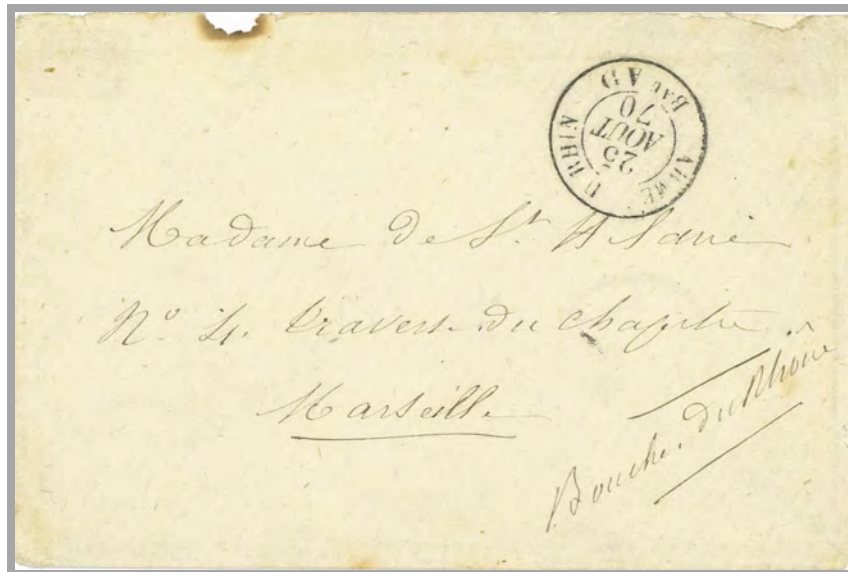
**Print of the German occupation of Verdun**

## Campaign in the Ardennes

### French Advance to Sedan: August 23 – September 1



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



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



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

# Campaign in the Ardennes

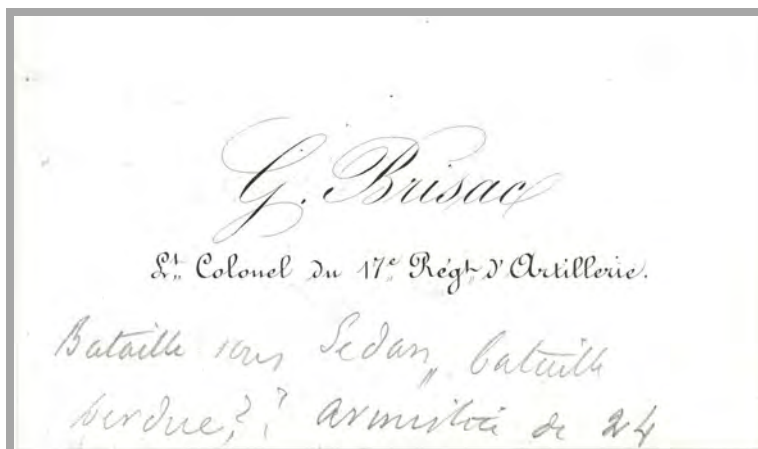
## September 1 Battle of Sedan



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



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



Carte de visite with scribbled note written on September 1



## Campaign in the Ardennes

### September 1 Battle of Sedan



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



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



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

## Campaign in the Ardennes

### Aftermath of the Battle of Sedan

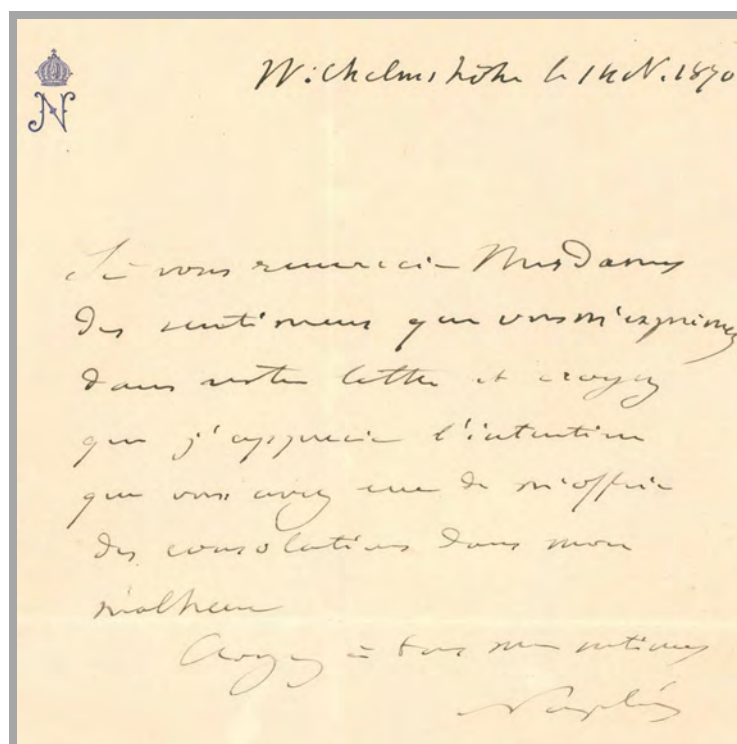


The most notable prisoner from Sedan was Emperor Napoléon III. He was taken to captivity at Wilhelmshöhe castle (near Cassel) until March 19, 1871. He never returned to his throne.



Napoléon III

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



Scan of the letter at 85%

## Campaign in the Ardennes

### Aftermath of the Battle of Sedan



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



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



“Bataille de Sedan” by Hubert Cloutier (1901)



## Campaign in the Ardennes

### Aftermath of the Battle of Sedan



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



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



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

# Campaign in the Ardennes

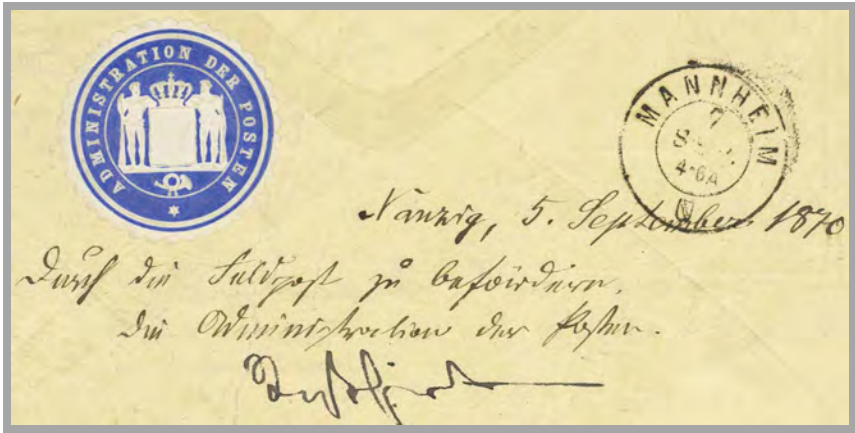
## German Reserve Army: August 23 – March 7



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



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

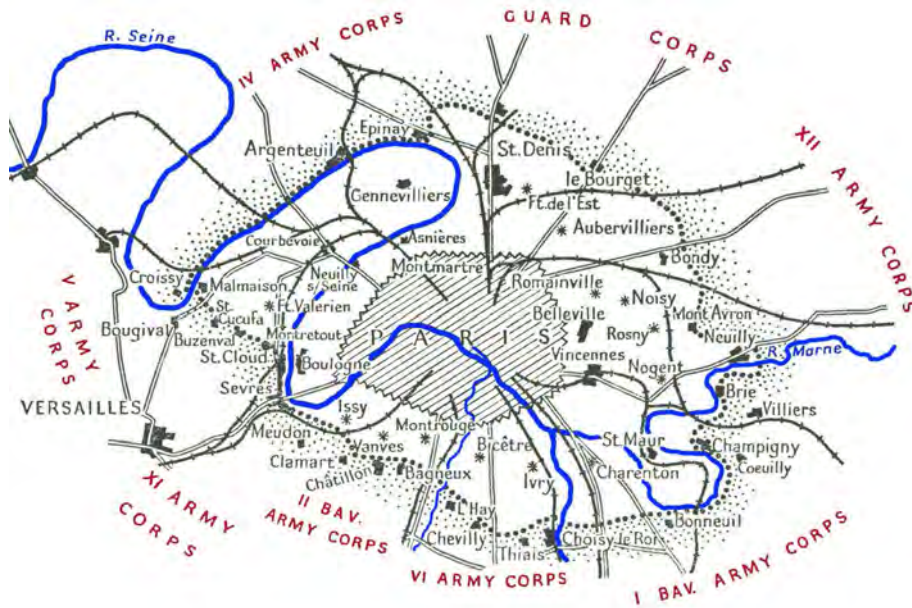


Scan of reverse at 85%.

## Campaign for Paris

### Historical Summary: September 3 - January 27

On September 3, 1870, the German III and IV Armies advanced from Sedan and cut postal communications with Paris fifteen days later. Paris was protected by external forts and a 500,000-man garrison consisting of 80,000 regular army soldiers, 110,000 reservists in the Garde Mobile and 300,000 national guards. After many small engagements around Paris and two failed major breakout attempts, the Parisian army surrendered on January 28, 1871.



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

The French and Germans provided fieldpost services for their regular army units. Other French military units used civilian post offices to send their mail. Mail sent outside of Paris was carried by manned balloons over the German siege line. The German armies continued to use the fieldpost materials supplied at the start of the war.



October 10, 1870 postcard endorsed "Armée de Paris" by a Garde Mobile de la Vienne



# Campaign for Paris

## German Advance on Paris: September 3-18



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



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



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

## Campaign for Paris

### Start of the Paris Siege: September 18-19



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



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



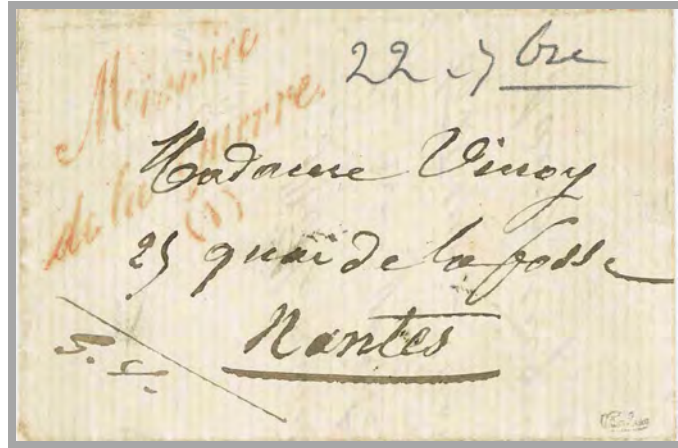
Posted September 20 at the central Paris post office with a free frank per the “P.P.”  
Endorsed from a soldier in the 10<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the Garde Mobile de la Côte d'Or  
**Carried out by postal line-crosser on September 27** – arrived October 1 near Dijon



## Campaign for Paris

### French 13<sup>th</sup> Corps: September 17 – November 7

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



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



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



## Campaign for Paris

### French 13<sup>th</sup> Corps: September 17 – November 7



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



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



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

## Campaign for Paris

French 13<sup>th</sup> Corps: September 17 – November 7



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



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

## Campaign for Paris

### French 14<sup>th</sup> Corps: September 17 – November 7



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



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



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



## Campaign for Paris

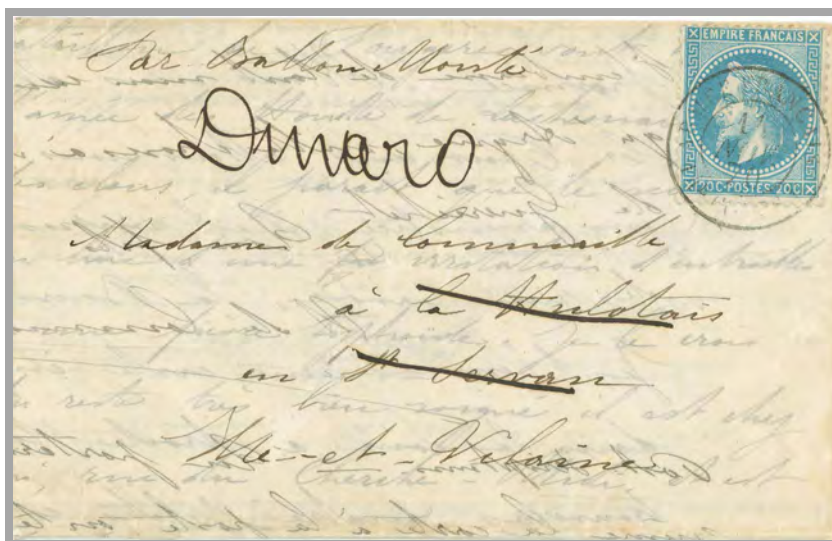
### French 14<sup>th</sup> Corps: September 17 – November 7



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



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



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

## Campaign for Paris

### Garde Mobile: September 17 – January 27



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



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



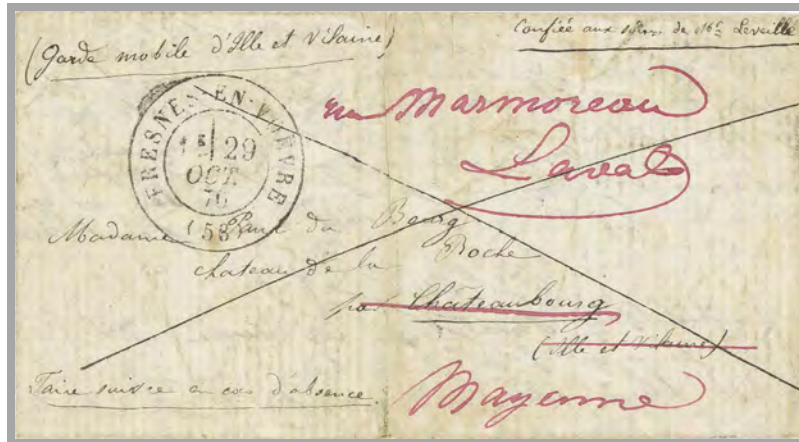
Dated January 8 at Vincennes by a lieutenant in the Garde Mobile de la Vienne  
Posted at the Paris (RC) bureau on January 9 - 20c franking cancelled by red star  
Left January 11 on the “Kepler” – **one of two known Paris (RC) postmarks**

## Campaign for Paris

### Garde Mobile: September 17 - January 27



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



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



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

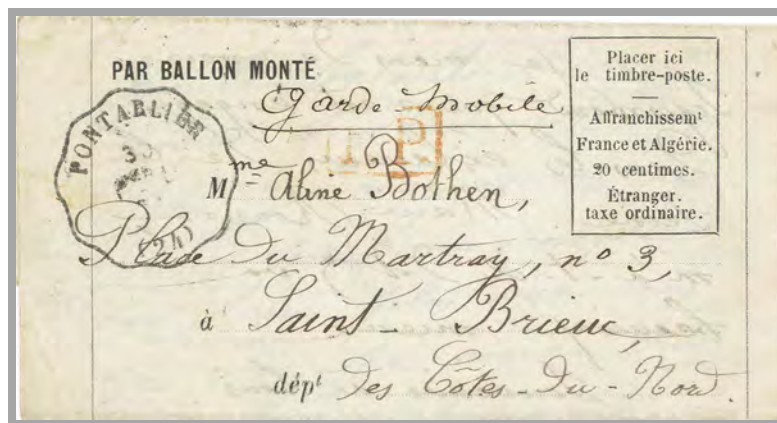


## Campaign for Paris

Garde Mobile: September 17 – January 27



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



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



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

## Campaign for Paris

### Garde Nationale: September 18 – January 27



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



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

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

## Campaign for Paris

### Corps de St. Denis: October 28 – January 27



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



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



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



## Campaign for Paris

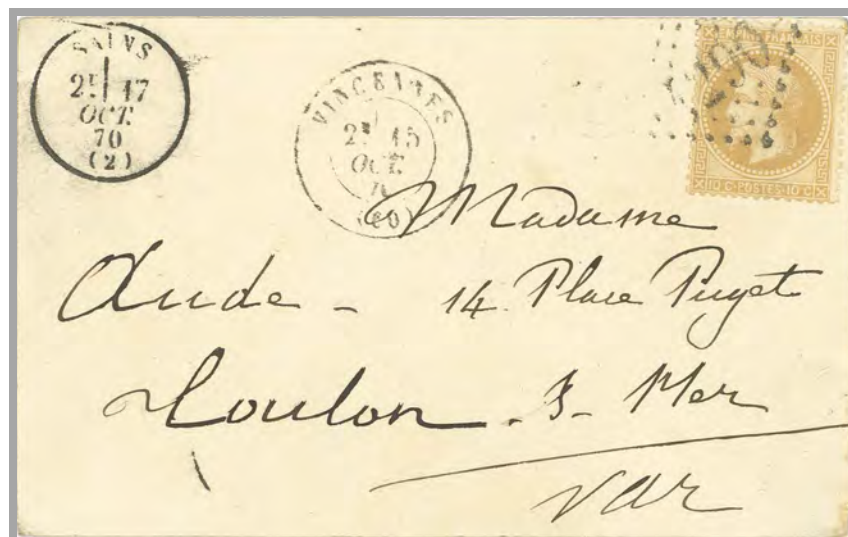
### Naval Forces: September 18 – January 27



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



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



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

## Campaign for Paris

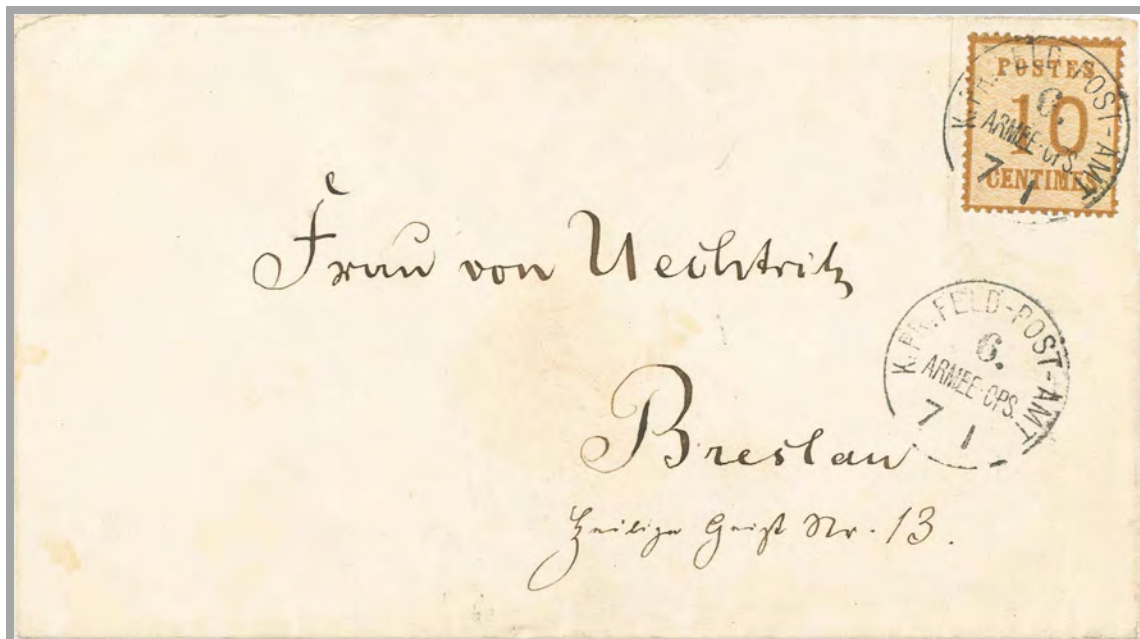
### German III Army: September 16 – January 27



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



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



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

# Campaign for Paris

## German IV Army: September 16 – January 27



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



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



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



## Campaign for Paris

### Combat at Montmesly: September 17



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



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



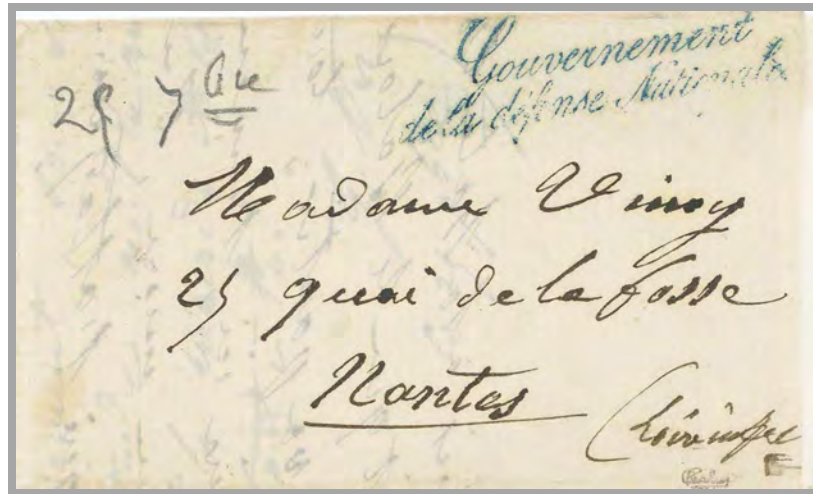
"Combat outside of Paris" by Etienne Berne-Bellcour (1875)

## Campaign for Paris

### Combat at Villejuif: September 22-23



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



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



"Combat de Villejuif" by Edouard Detaille

## Campaign for Paris

### Combat at Chevilly: September 30



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



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



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



# Campaign for Paris

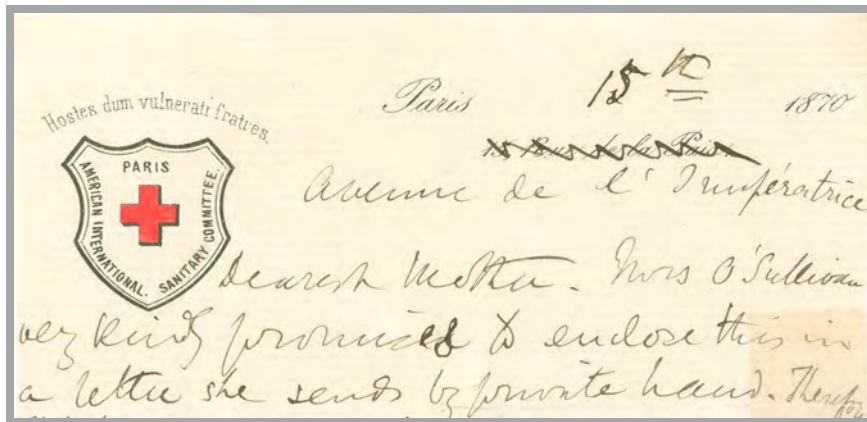
## Combat at Châtillon: October 13-14



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



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



Scan of letterhead (85%)

## Campaign for Paris

### Formation of the 2<sup>e</sup> Armée de Paris: November 8



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



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



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

## Campaign for Paris

### 2<sup>e</sup> Armée Fieldpost: November 28 – December 19



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



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



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



## Campaign for Paris

### Formation of the 1<sup>re</sup> Armée de Paris: November 9



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



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



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

## Campaign for Paris

### Formation of the 3<sup>e</sup> Armée de Paris: November 8



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



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



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

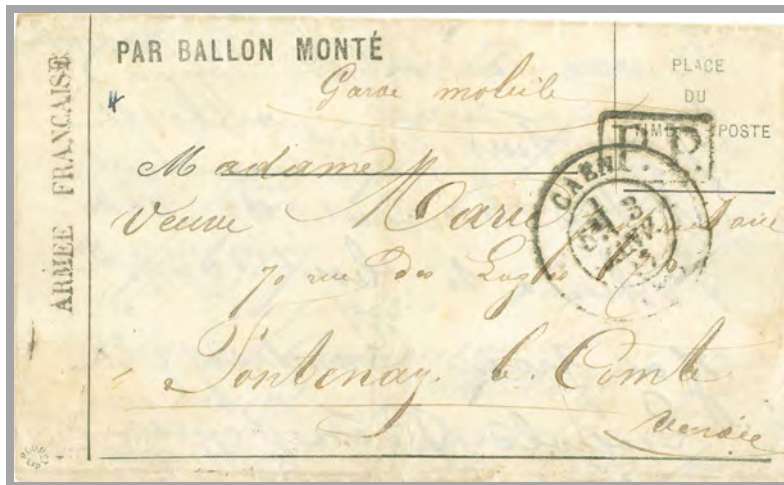


# Campaign for Paris

## Battle of Champigny: November 30 – December 3



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



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



Dated December 5 near Champigny - posted December 6 at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps HQ bureau



## Campaign for Paris

### Reorganization of the 2<sup>e</sup> Armée: December 4



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



Dated December 17 at Levallois by a lieutenant in the 118<sup>th</sup> Regiment  
Red December 19 “Armée Française C” postmark of the new 1<sup>st</sup> Corps’ 1<sup>st</sup> Division  
Left December 22 on the “Lavoisier” – arrived December 24 in La Rochelle



Dated December 18 at Vincennes by a corporal in the 122<sup>nd</sup> Regiment  
Postmarked December 19 at the Reserve Division’s Bureau J – “A.F.” cancel  
Left December 22 on the “Lavoisier” – arrived December 25 in Bordeaux

## Campaign for Paris

### Second 2<sup>e</sup> Armée Fieldpost: December 19 – January 28



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



Dated January 25 at Les Lilas by a soldier in the 108<sup>nd</sup> Regiment of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps  
Postmarked January 26 at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps' headquarters Bureau F – red "A.F.F" cancel  
Left January 27 on the "**Richard Wallace**" which was lost at sea – 20c stamp lost in water



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

# Campaign for Paris

## Battle of Buzenval: January 19



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



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



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



## Campaign for Paris

### Surrender of Paris: January 28



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



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



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

# Campaign for Paris

## German Occupation: January 28 - September 11, 1871



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



Prepaid occupation and French postage - posted April 23 at "K. BAYER FELDPOST VI" bureau  
Transferred to nearby Fontenay-s-Bois on April 24 - arrived in occupied Metz on April 26



Posted January 26 at the Wurttemberg Jaeger Battalion bureau - two days before surrender

## 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 G1\*" 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

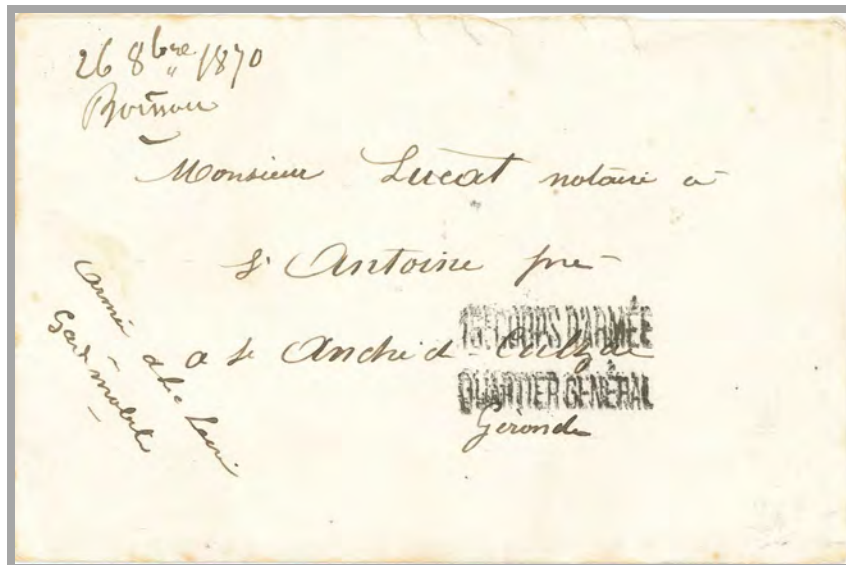


## Campaign on the Loire

### 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 1 7/12 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

## 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

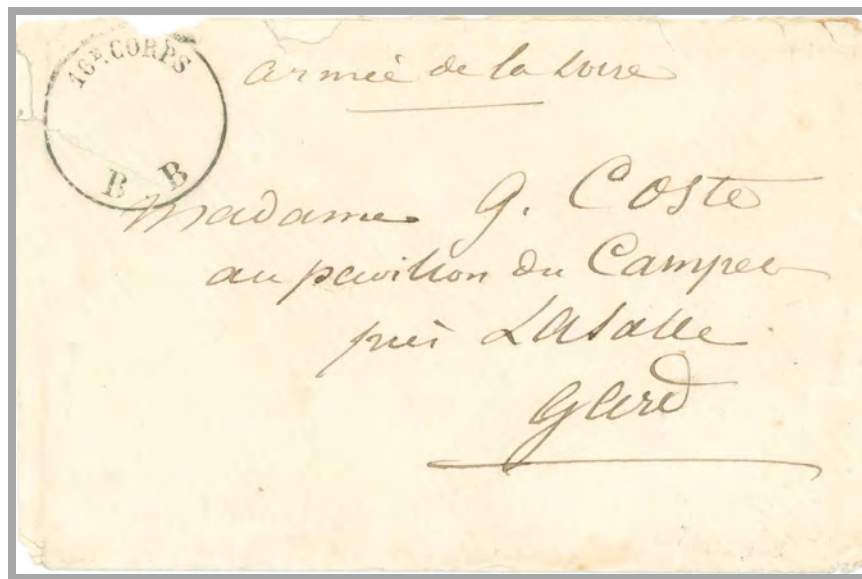
### French Advance on Orléans: October 28 – November 8



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



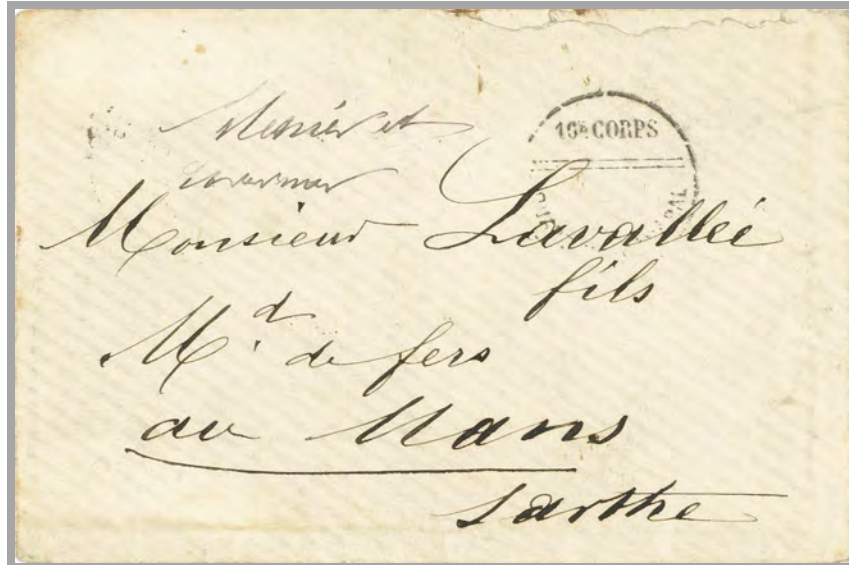
Dated November 4 west of Orléans - postmarked "16<sup>e</sup> Corps B.B."  
From the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division of the 16<sup>th</sup> Corps – arrived near Nîmes on November 5

## Campaign on the Loire

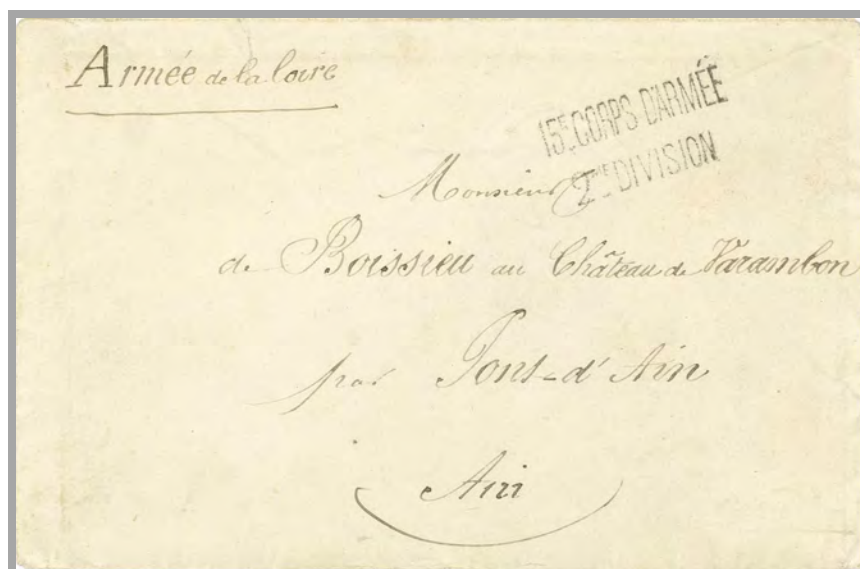
### Second Battle of Orléans: November 9



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

### 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**



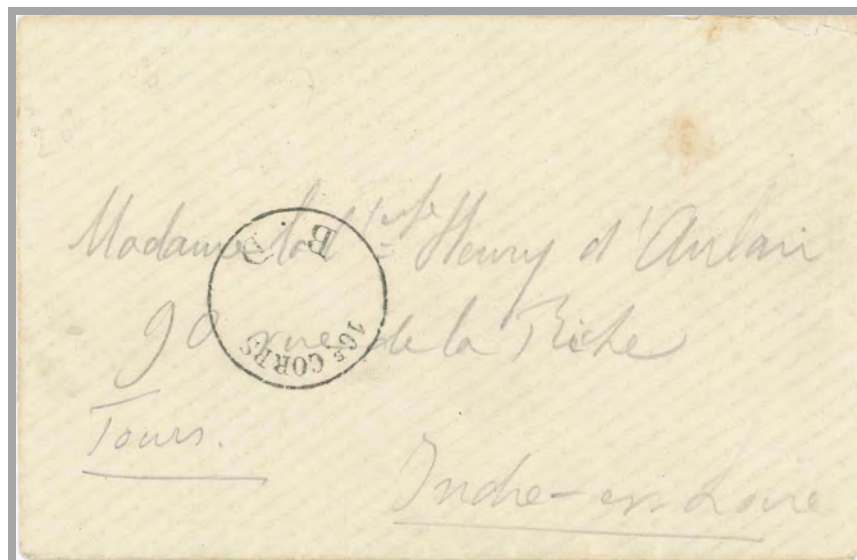
“Battle of Beaune-la-Rolande”

## 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)

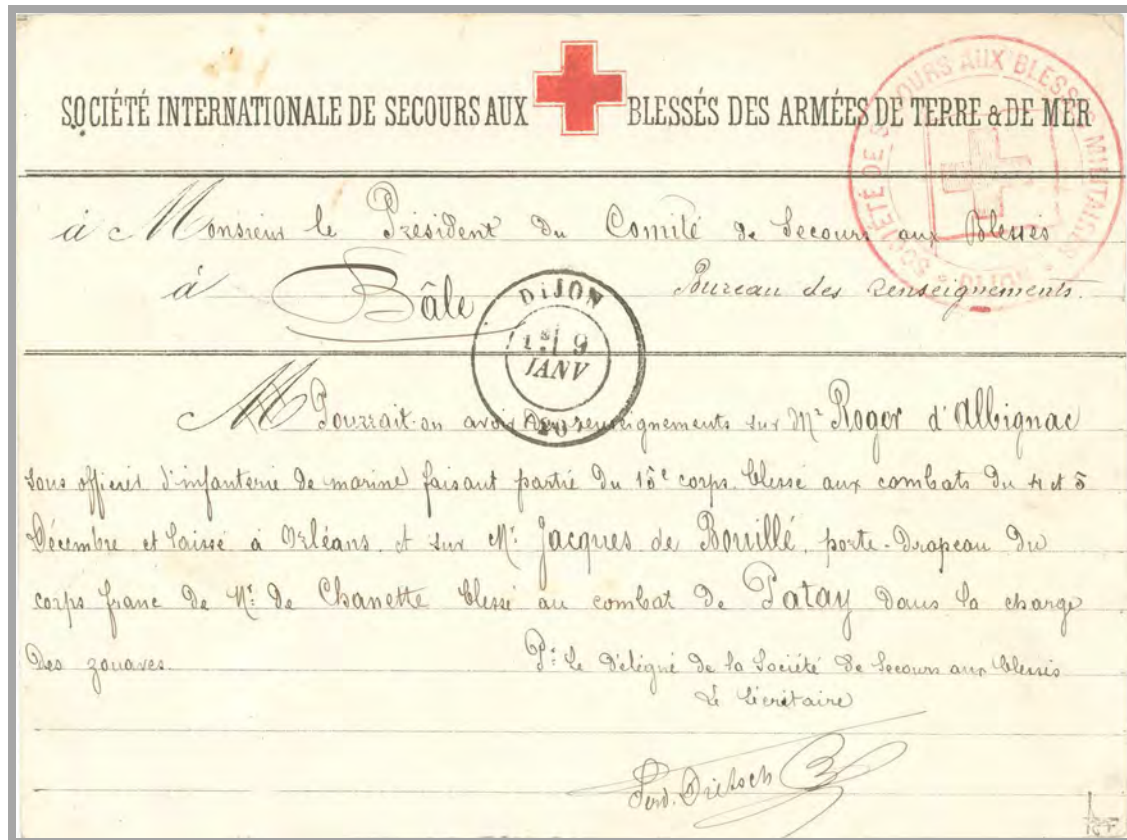


## Campaign on the Loire

### 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

## 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

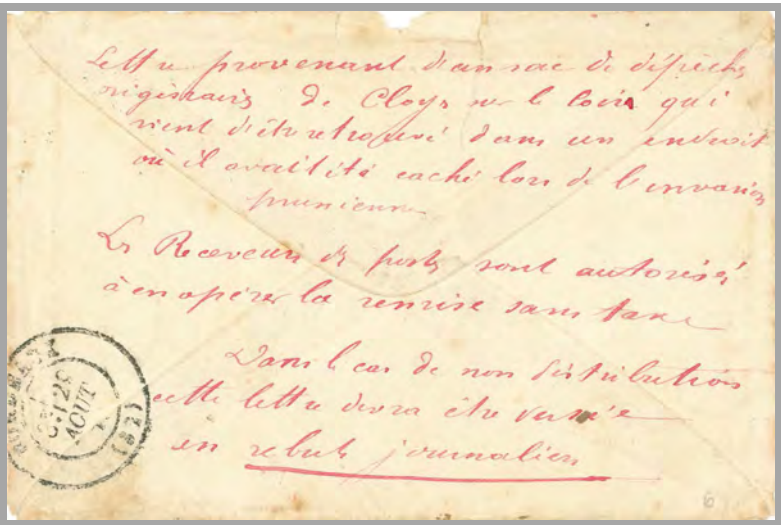
## Battle of Vendôme: December 15



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

### 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. Armeé-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



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 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

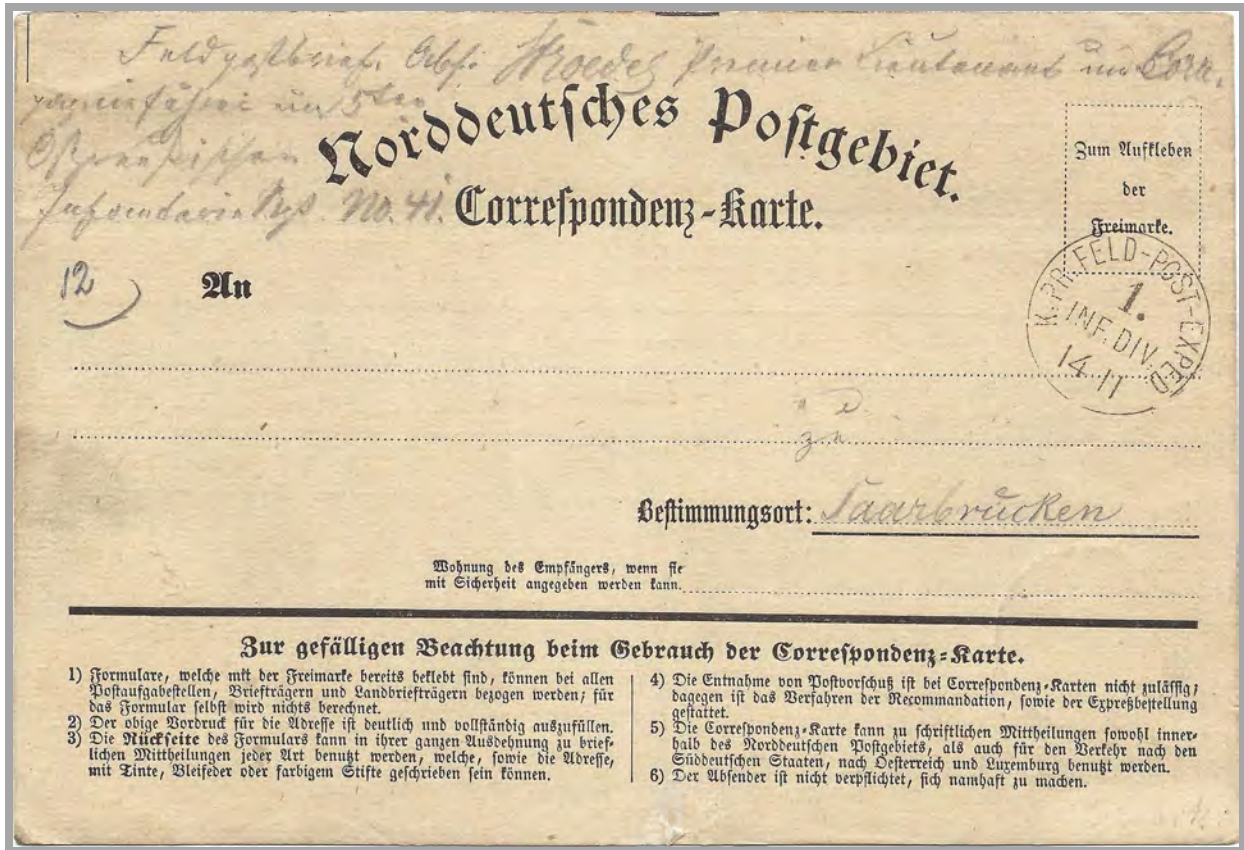


# Campaign in the North

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



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** *From Herrm Wolff*

**Bestimmungsort:** *Elberfeld*

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

1) Der obige Bordruck 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, Bleistift 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 Truppentheile) 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

*Fr. J. Kojak*

Bestimmungsort: *Friedland in Ostpreußen*

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

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Dated 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



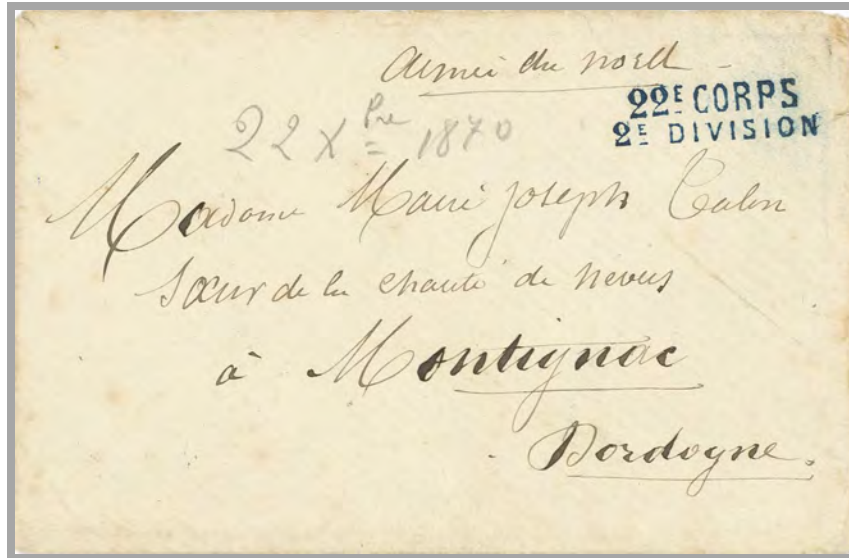
Posted January 9 at the 22<sup>nd</sup> Corps' 2<sup>nd</sup> Division bureau – free frank per "P.P."  
Postmarked January 10 in transit at nearby Arras – arrived January 12

# 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 22nd Corps' 2nd Division bureau  
Arrived in southern France on December 26



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

## Campaign in the North

### Battle of Bapaume: January 3



The Armée du Nord attacked the German 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 Dumaes (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:*  
*W. Anheiser*  
*König. Reg. u. d. Unt. d. d. d.*  
*Regiments. d. d. d. d. d.*  
*N. 33*  
*3. Comp.*

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

**K. PRELIMINÄR-EXP. D. RESERVE**  
**8.**  
**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 Mitteilungen jeder Art benutzt werden, welche, sowie die Adresse, mit Tinte, Meißel oder farbigem Stifte geschrieben sein können.  
4) In **Privat-Angelegenheiten** ist eine Recommendation der Correspondenzarten 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

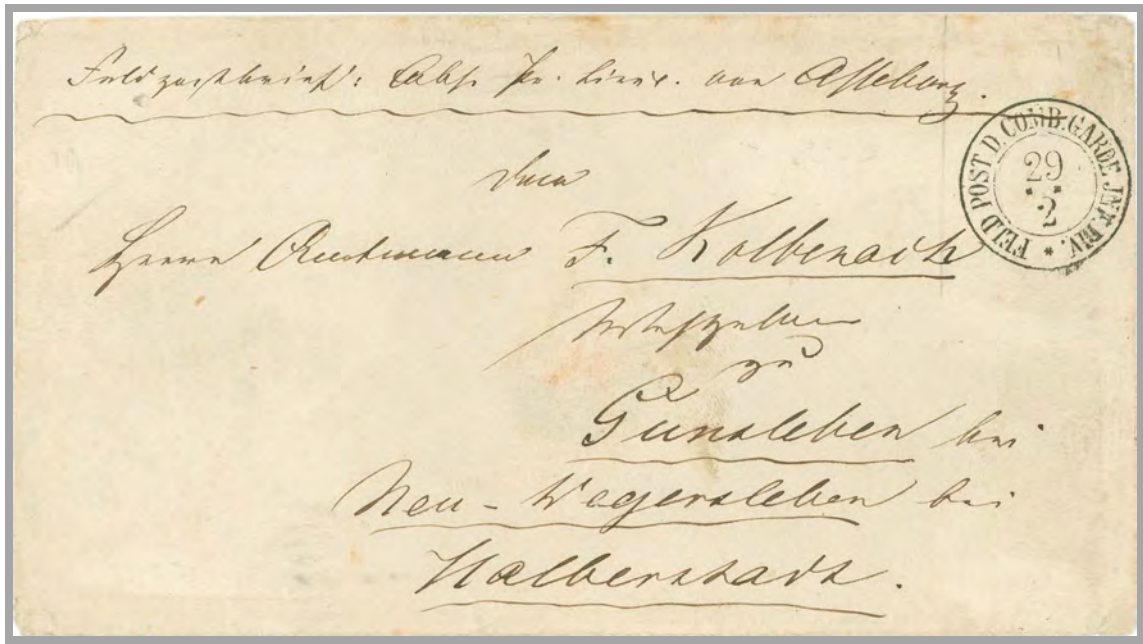
## Armistice: January 31 – March 7



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

### Historical Summary: October 14 – March 10

- The German 14<sup>th</sup> Corps and 4<sup>th</sup> Reserve Division moved into the region in early October. The French Armée de l'Est, formed at Besançon on October 21, repulsed the Germans at the Ognon River on October 22.
- The Armée des Vosges, formed October 14 at Dôle, was mostly inactive.
- The Armée de la Côte d'Or, formed October 19, was routed at Dijon by the 14<sup>th</sup> Corps' Baden Division on October 30 and was disbanded after only 12 days.
- Bourbaki's French 1<sup>re</sup> Armée was transported to Besançon December 30 – January 8, but was defeated at the January 15-17 Héricourt battle.
- Pursued by the German Sud Army, the French 1<sup>re</sup> Armée retreated to internment in Switzerland on February 1.



Posted December 9 at the Baden fieldpost bureau (14<sup>th</sup> Corps) – arrived December 13



Area of military operations for the Campaign in the East

# 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

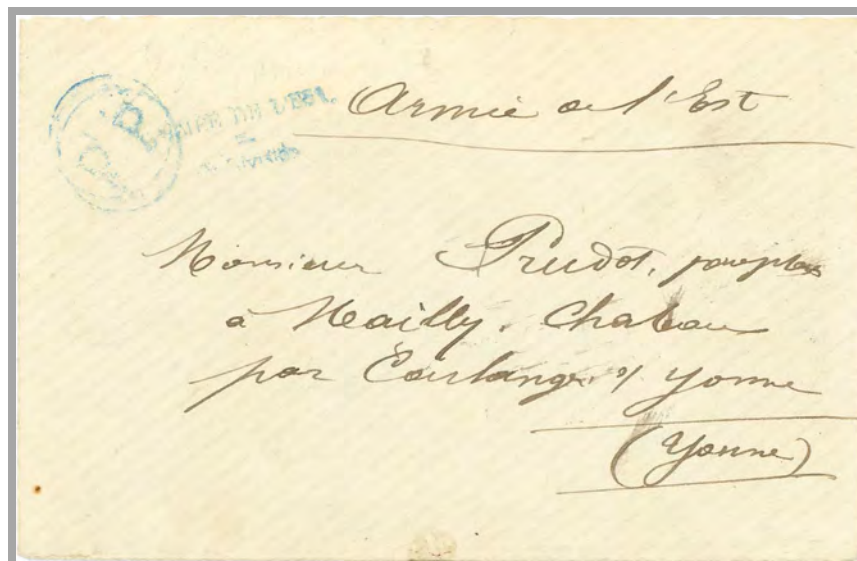




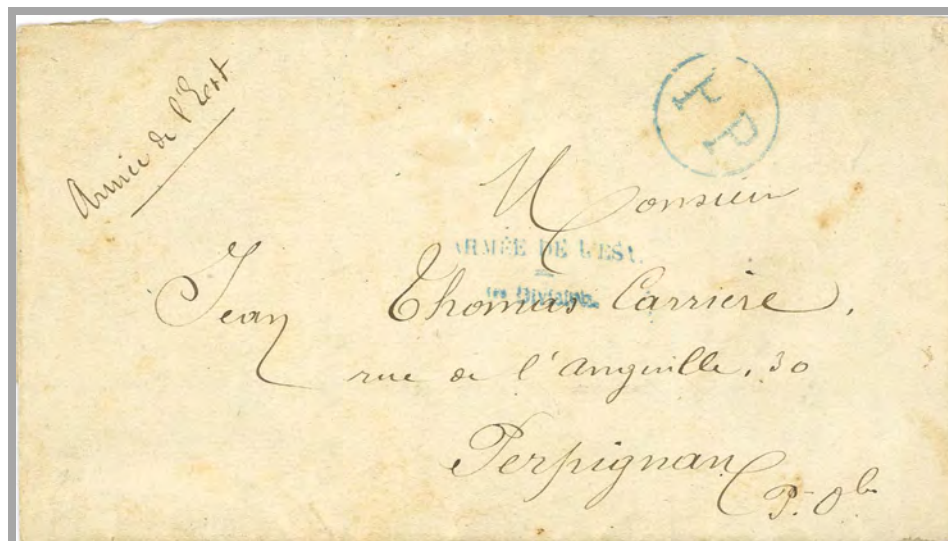
## Campaign in the East

### 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

## 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



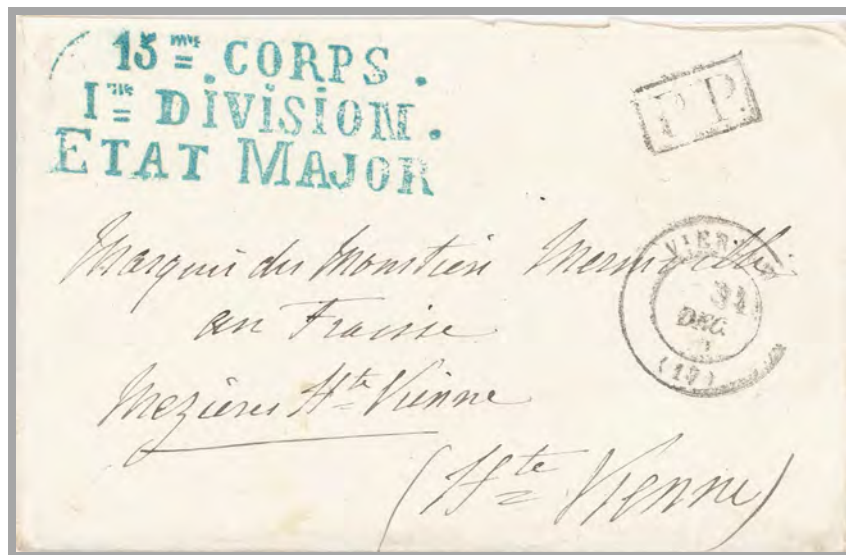
Postmarked December 17 at the Baden Division bureau in Dijon - just before the battle



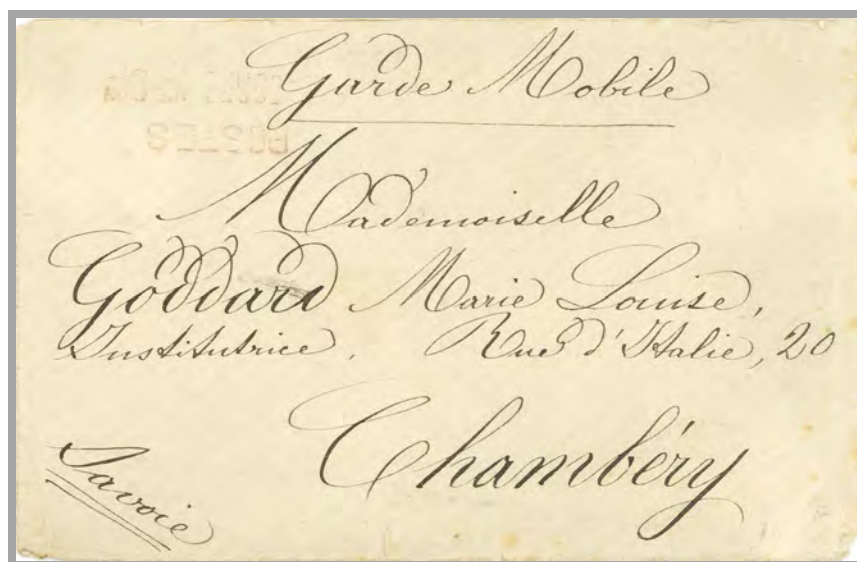
## Campaign in the East

### 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

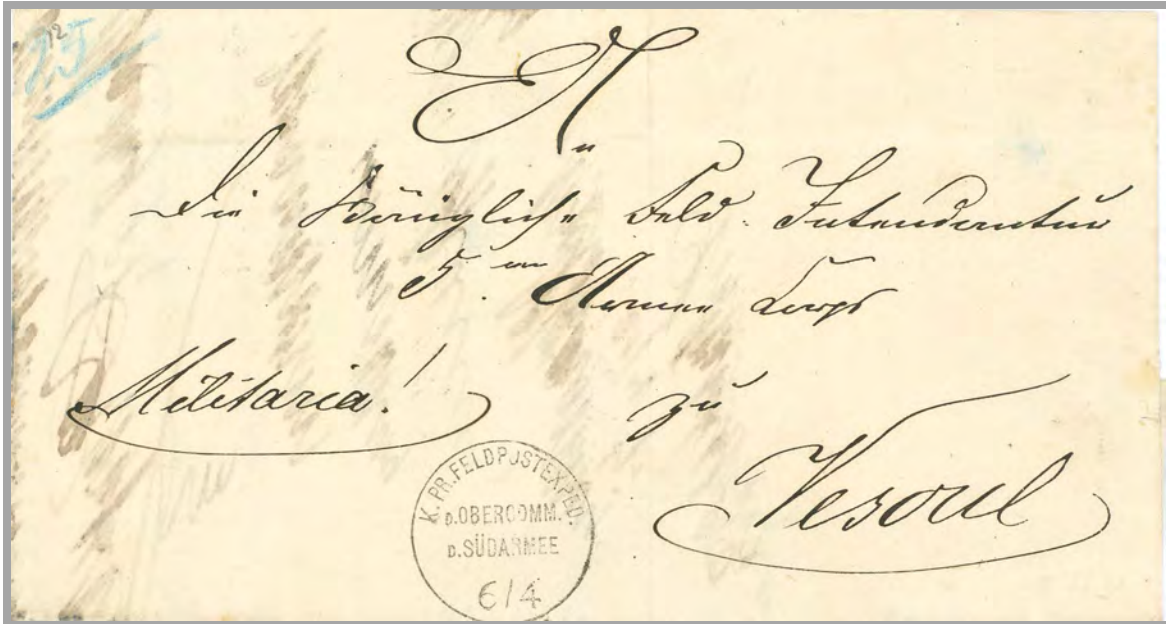


# Campaign in the East

## 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 Gal” postmark**  
Prepaid 30c for routing via Switzerland – January 29 Berne transit  
Blue “Auf militairischen 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



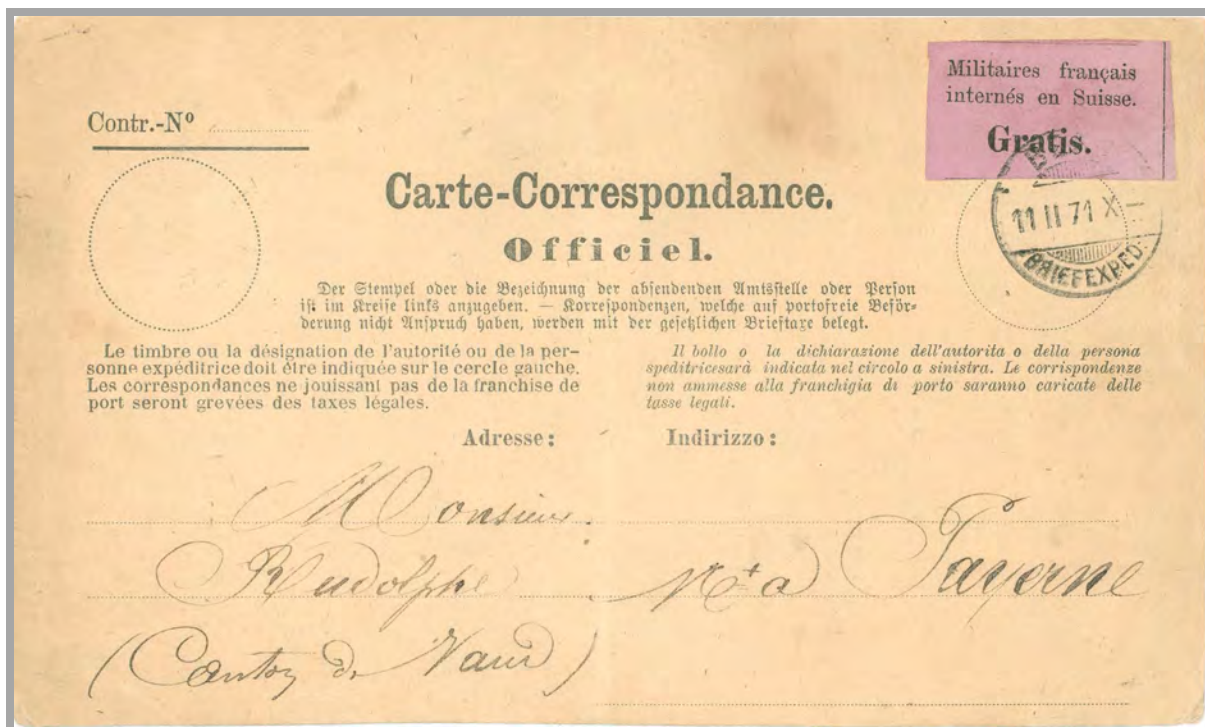
# Campaign in the East

## 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) interneer **"Gratis" label unusually tied by Berne postmark** – they were not intended to be cancelled





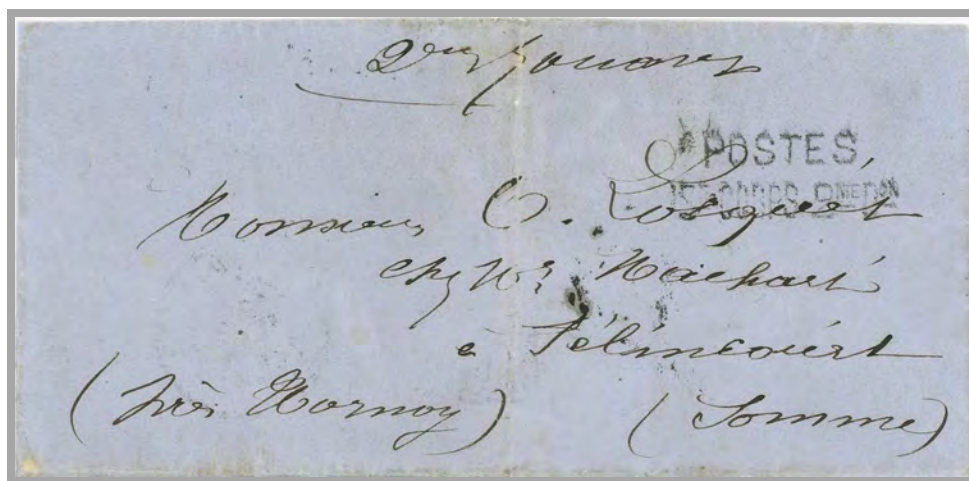
## Campaign in the East

### 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> Don" – 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

### 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



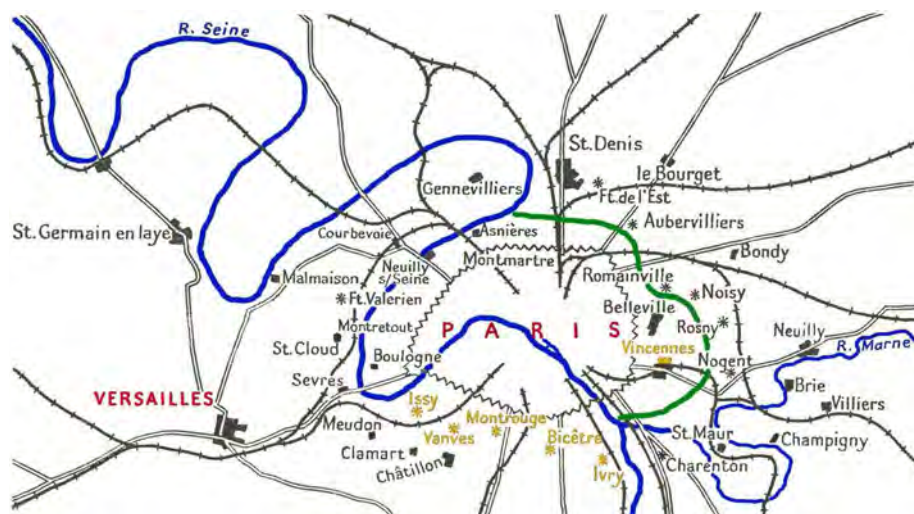
## Campaign to Suppress the Paris Commune

### 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

“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**



## 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