

THE FRANCO-PRUSSIAN WAR OF 1870-1871 (PHILATELIC ASPECTS AS SEEN FROM THE PRUSSIAN SIDE)

When collectors think of the philately of the Franco-Prussian War, the immediate image is of the famous *Ballons Montés* covers sent out during the siege of Paris. However, this exhibit will be shown from the Prussian side rather than the French. Thus, what is shown are covers with examples of various types of military and civil postmarks. In addition, the different franking that was used is shown, including stamps of the North German Postal District, the special issue for the occupation of French territory and, eventually, those of the German Reichspost. Moreover, stamps of Imperial and Republican France are shown used as dual franking in order to avoid postage due on mail delivered to unoccupied France. Examples of the three forms of censorship (all highly elusive) are shown, as well as POW mail.

On 19 July 1870 France, under the leadership of Napoleon III, declared war on Prussia. The Emperor ordered his Army of the Rhine to attack Prussian forces in the belief that the southern German states would remain neutral in the contest, thus providing an easy victory. However, the latter allied themselves with Prussia, and major victories at Sedan and Metz resulted in the defeat of two French armies and the capture of the Emperor himself. Back in Paris, the Napoleon was deposed and a republic declared, with the intention of continuing the war. However, the Prussian forces continued to advance and surrounded the capital, which surrendered after a 127-day siege. As a result of the defeat, the French were forced to cede Alsace-Lorraine and pay a large indemnity.

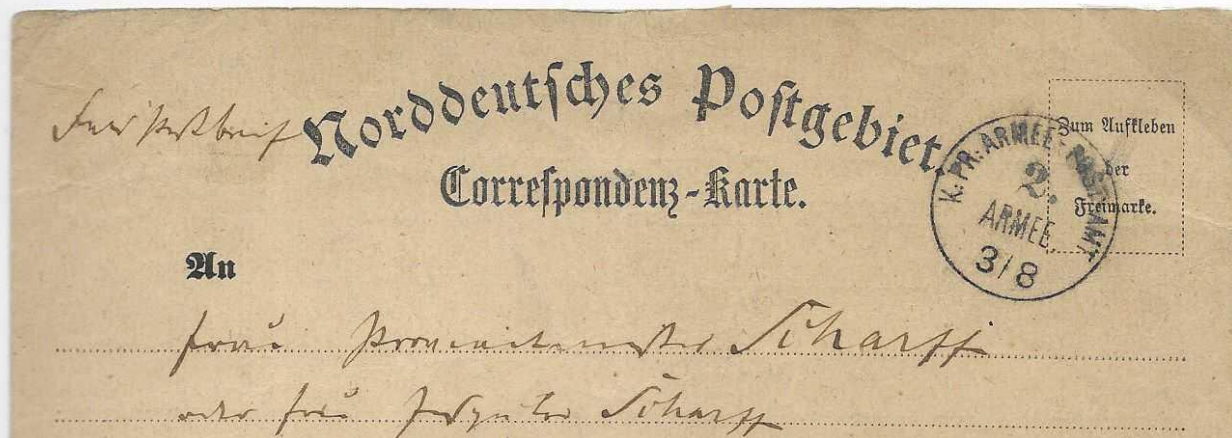
Initially, the military post offices were the only facilities in operation in the occupied territory. Cards and letters from the troops could be sent postage free, with civil mail requiring stamps -- using those of the NGPD as forerunners until special occupation stamps were distributed (ERD 6 September 1870). Later, civil post offices were reopened, using old French postmarks or provisional ones provided by the Prussians, with new German markings being issued in Alsace-Lorraine during 1871. When the German Reichspost came into operation on 1 January 1872, its stamps became the only ones valid for postage.



Cover from Feldpost Relais (forwarding office) Nr. 35 at Colommières to Jersey in the Channel Islands, a most unusual destination. It is franked with two of the special stamps issued by the North German Postal District for the occupied French territories. It is postmarked 27 December 1870 and backstamped for receipt in Jersey on 3 January 1871.

PRUSSIAN FIELDPOST **Military Markings on Military Mail**

Correspondence cards and letters from the troops were allowed to be sent postage free. The Prussian forces were organized into three Armies, which were divided into Army Corps, Divisions and other units. As a result, a variety of postmarks were used by the fieldpost offices during the war and occupation period, reflecting the pattern of military organization. In each case, the postmarks were inscribed "K. Pr." to designate "Royal Prussian," per the examples shown below.



K. Pr. Armee
 Postamt/2. Armee
 3 August 1870

K. Pr. Feld-
 Ober-Post-Amt
 20 October 1870

K. Pr. Feld-Post-
 Exped./1. Inf. Div.
 13 December 1870



- Zur gefä**
- 1) Formulare, welche mit der Freimarke Postaufgabestellen, Briefträgern und das Formular selbst wird nichts berei
 - 2) Der obige Vordruck für die Adresse i
 - 3) Die Rückseite des Formulars kann lichen Mitteilungen jeder Art benu mit Tinte, Bleifeder oder farbigem

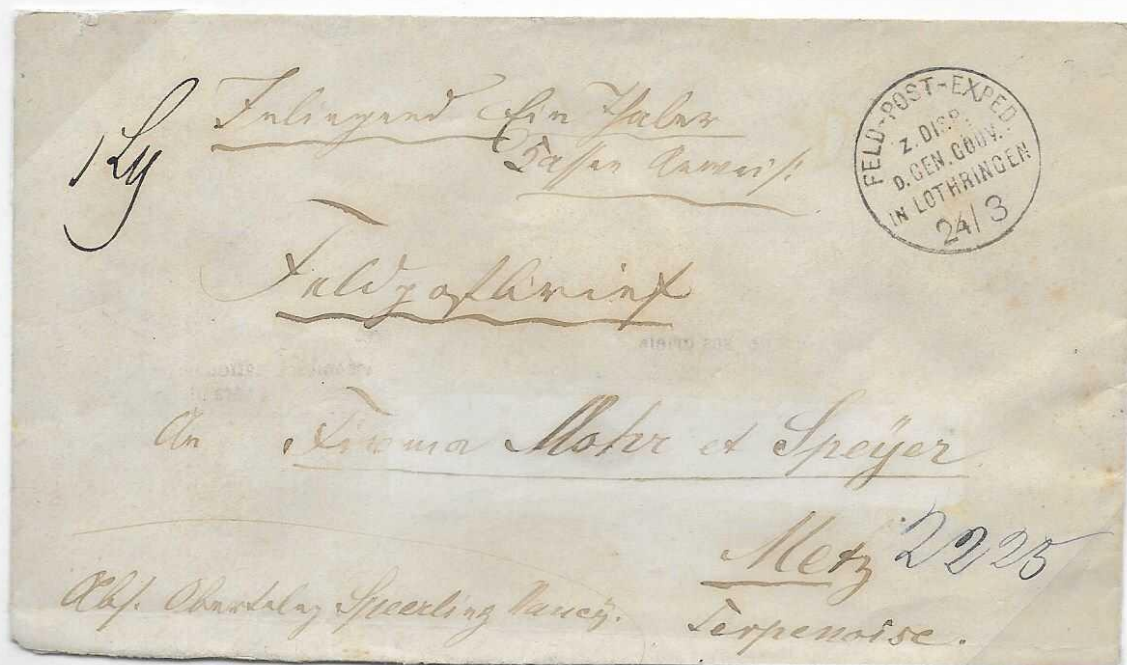
aus Berlin
 Gef. Aufg. von
 Berlin
 Post. Geb. von

st werden, muß deutlich angegeben sein: zu
 ps, welcher Division, welchem Regi-
 agnie (oder sonstigem Truppentheile)
 , welchen Grad und Character ober
 e Militärverwaltung derselbe be-

The military mail shown above has the postmarks of the 2nd Army, the Head FPO located at Army HQ in Versailles, and the 1st Infantry Division, respectively. The upper example is very early, written on the day before the Prussian Army crossed the frontier into Alsace. Middle example addressed to Heinrich von Stephan, who became the first postmaster general of Germany and was founder of the Universal Postal Union.

PRUSSIAN FIELDPOST
Military Markings on Military Mail

A large number of other fieldpost markings were used by the Prussian troops in this campaign. Shown below are unusual ones inscribed "at the disposition of the General Government in Alsace" and the same for "Lorraine."



K. Pr. Feld-Post-
 Exped. zur disp.
 d. Gen. Gouv.
 in Lothringen
 24 March 1871

K. Pr. Feld-Post-
 Exped. zur disp.
 d. Gen. Gouv.
 im Elsass
 10 March 1871



The lower cover was sent registered as indicated by the red marking "Recomandee" and "Charge." Postage of 75 centimes was paid in cash as indicated by the manuscript marking in blue. Registered mail sent during the campaign is very elusive.

NORTH GERMAN POSTAGE
Military Markings on Civil Mail

In the early days of the occupation, mail not endorsed "Feldpostbrief" was deemed to be civil mail subject to payment of proper postage with stamps of the North German Postal District. Most of such mail bore stamps denominated in Groschen, but a few examples are recorded with franking in Kreuzer denominations.

Norddeutsches Postgebiet.
Correspondenz-Karte.



An Gen. Gebrüder Beck
Kennstraße

Bestimmungsort: Offenbach a/M.

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

Zur gefälligen Beachtung beim Gebrauch der Correspondenz-Karte.

K. Pr. Feld-
Post-Exped./
20/Inf. Div.
22 August 1870

Feld-Post-
Relais No. 90
27 Nov. 1870

Norddeutsches Postgebiet.
Correspondenz-Karte.



3801

An Gen. Sanitätsrat Stein, von Kleinrück

Bestimmungsort: Berlin

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

Zur gefälligen Beachtung beim Gebrauch der Correspondenz-Karte.

1) Formulare, welche mit der Frei- Postaufgabestellen, Briefträgern das Formular selbst wird nichts 2) Der obige Bordruck für die Adr- 3) Die Rückseite des Formulare lichen Mittheilungen jeder Art mit Tinte, Bleifeder oder farbige	4) Die Entnahme von Postvorschuß ist bei Correspondenz-Karten nicht zulässig, dagegen ist das Verfahren der Recommandation, sowie der Expressbestellung gestattet. 5) Die Correspondenz-Karte kann zu schriftlichen Mittheilungen sowohl inner- halb des Norddeutschen Postgebiets, als auch für den Verkehr nach den Süddeutschen Staaten, nach Oesterreich und Luxemburg benutzt werden. 6) Der Absender ist nicht verpflichtet, sich namhaft zu machen.
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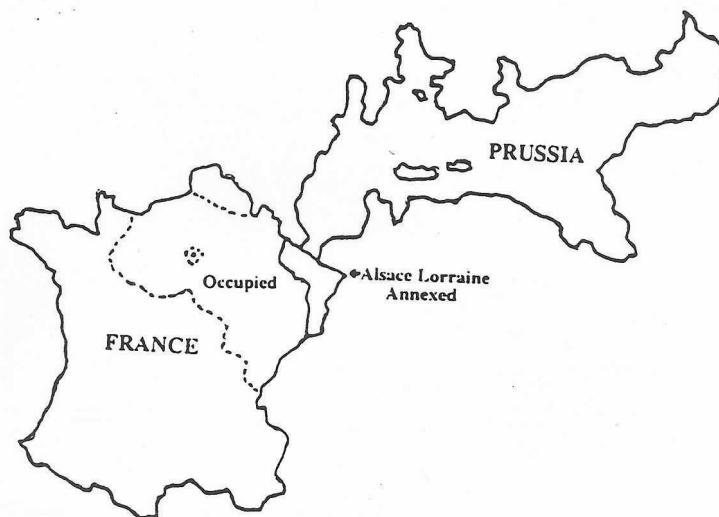
North German formula postcards used from the occupied territory. Upper example datelined "two hours beyond Metz." Lower card mailed from FPO 90 at Nancy. The rate for such cards was 1 Groschen or 3 Kreuzer.

OCCUPATION POSTAGE

French Markings on Military Mail

In a number of towns in the occupied territories, the old French postmarks found in the post offices when the German forces arrived were retained in use. Some of the Prussian troops penetrated all the way to the English Channel; card mailed from Dieppe during brief period of occupation from 20 February to 23 March 1871.

Dieppe
3 March 1871



The military franchise for this card was apparently not recognized by the Prussian post office because there were no German markings. Thus, postage due of 5 silbergroschen was assessed. However, it is unclear whether this charge was actually collected on arrival in Hannover.

OCCUPATION POSTAGE

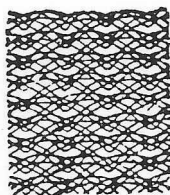
Types of Underprint

In September 1870, the first stamps for occupied France were issued by the postal authorities of the North German Confederation. The earliest recorded date is 6 September. These stamps were used until 24 March 1871 in those areas turned back to the French postal authorities but through 31 December 1871 in the annexed provinces of Alsace-Lorraine, where they were replaced the following day by the first issue of the German Empire. Thus, the overall period of use was one year and four months.

For security reasons, the stamps received an underprinting consisting of a an intricate network of lines. However, during the printing process, little attention was paid to the direction of the points in the network. Thus, two distinct types were produced -- with points going upward and with points downward. With the exception of the 10 centime value, the latter are the scarcer variety and sell at a premium. Examples of both types are shown here: a 4 cent. value with upward points paying the printed matter rate to Lucy and the 5 and 10 cent. values with downward points paying the ordinary letter rate to Kaiserslautern.

Chateau-Salins
31 March 1871

Niederroedern
15 October 1871



Because French money was in circulation in the occupied territories, the new stamps had to be denominated in centimes. Seven different stamps were issued, from 1 centime to 25 centimes. However, there was no specific rate for the two lowest denominations, which are thus normally seen in combination with other values.

OCCUPATION POSTAGE
Military Markings on Civil Mail

As indicated, the 1 and 2 cent. stamps did not pay any specific rate, but were generally used in combination with other values. As a result, covers with these denominations are especially sought after by collectors.



Upper cover sent from Versailles to Dresden is properly franked at 15 centimes for a letter to Germany. Lower cover sent entirely within occupied France (from St. Quentin to Verdun) is franked with 10 centimes, including one 2 centime stamp and two 4 cent. values. However, the proper rate was 20 centimes, so 10 centimes was collected from the addressee. (The Dreyfus certificate states that this combination of franking is unique.)

Alain DREYFUS

26, Birsigstrasse
CH - 4011 BALE

Je soussigné Alain DREYFUS, certifie avoir examiné
le timbre de: France Alsace n° 2b - 3
du catalogue Yvert et photographié ci-dessous.
2 cts. burelage renversé et 4 cts. (2x) sur lettre
Mon opinion est que la pièce est authentique.
Bâle, le 14 avril 1992



OCCUPIED TERRITORY
Military Markings on Civil Mail

During the occupation period, commercial mail could be deposited at the Prussian fieldpost offices for onward transmission. The following examples are examples of such items sent to domestic and foreign addressees.

K. Pr. Feld-Post-Relais No. 25
 9 December 1870

K. Pr. Feld-Post-Relais No. 27
 2 March 1871



Double-weight international folded letter with postage of 40 centimes sent from a textile company via FPO 25 at Reims to Florence, Italy. The receiving mark dated 15 December.

K.P.R. FELD-POST-
 RELAIS N° 25.
 9/12

Folded domestic business letter sent registered (Chargee) via FPO 27 at Sedan to addressee in Verdun. A rare franking of the proper postage of 35 centimes, including 10 cent. for letters up to 15 grams plus 25 cent. registration fee.

K.P.R. FELD-POST-
 RELAIS N° 27.
 2 3



ATTEST

JAMES VAN DER LINDEN

Verbandsprüfer

des Bundes der philatelistischen Prüfer e.V. im BDPh und APHV
D-52009 Aachen, Postfach 8 49, Tel. (02 41) 3 24 76

Nr. 00/788

Datum 20.05.00

Faltbrief (Rechnung mit vorgedrucktem Briefkopf) aus Sedan vom 1.3.1871 nach Verdun, mit handschriftlichem Vermerk „Chargée“, frankiert mit 10 + 25 = 35 Centimes, entwertet mit blauem preußischen Feldpoststempel im Rahmen „K:PR:FELD-POST/ RELAIS N° 27/ 2 3“ und als Aufgabestempel benutzt. Für die Zugehörigkeit der Marke auf dem Brief siehe Attest von der Weid 39584 von Mai 2000.

Der Tarif für Briefpost innerhalb des besetzten Gebietes betrug 10 Centimes für den einfachen Brief bis 15 Gramm, die Einschreibgebühr (Chargé) 25 Centimes. Der Brief war korrekt frankiert, die 10 Centimes Nachgebühr-Taxatur in Blaustift ist typisch für Verdun-Briefe (auch für einfache Briefe). Entweder hat der französische Postbeamte den Brief bestellt und dafür (zugunsten der franz. Post) das französische Ortsporto kassiert oder die Zustellgebühr floß der jeweiligen Gemeindeverwaltung zu, die damit das Zustellungspersonal entlohnte.



Prüfgebiet: Transatlantik-, Nord-Ost-West-Transite

Die Prüfung erfolgte auf Grund der Prüfordnung des Bundes der Philatelistischen Prüfer e.V.

OCCUPATION POSTAGE

Provisional Postmarks on Civil Mail

In a few cases, the German authorities introduced temporary postmarks that were used to cancel the occupation stamps. However, because the occupied zone was turned back to the French authorities in March 1871, only three towns received such markings. All are scarce and sought after by collectors.



Amiens
1871

Epinal
1871

Rouen
1871

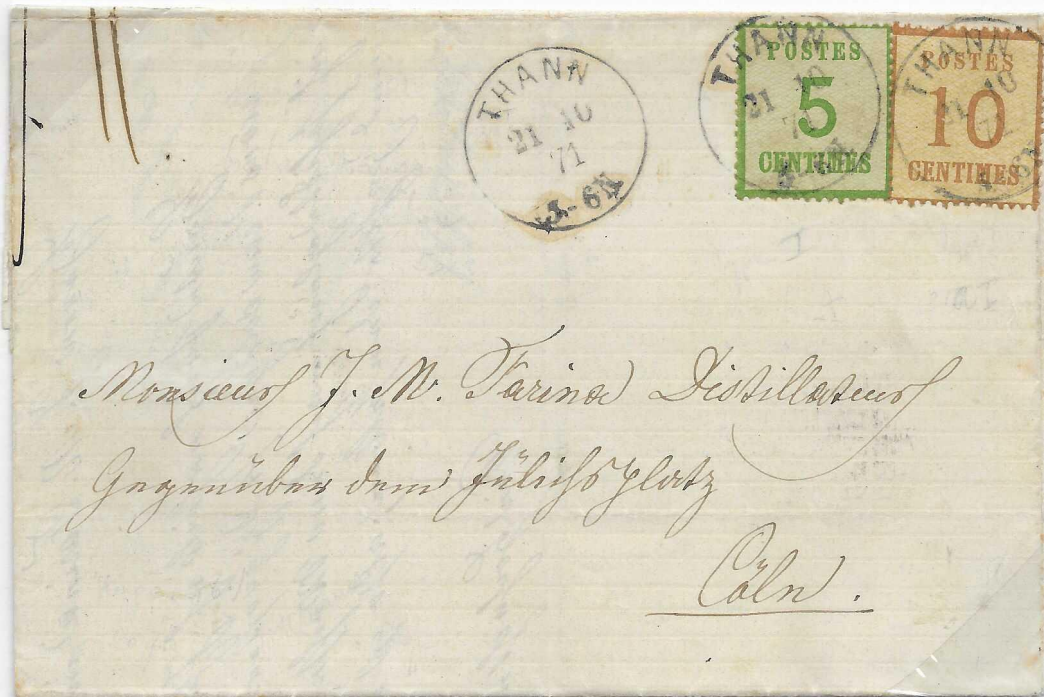


Note that these markings are all inscribed "1871" but otherwise give no indication of the date the letters were sent.

OCCUPATION POSTAGE **German Markings on Civil Mail**

The most widely-used of the seven stamps were the 5, 10 and 20 centime values. The 5 centime paid the local letter rate within the territory; the 10 centime denomination paid the initial rate (until 13 January 1871) for letters to Germany; and the 20 cent. stamps paid for letters to unoccupied France.

During 1871, new single-circle German civil postmarks were provided for many towns in Alsace-Lorraine as shown below for Thann and Rappoltsweiler.



Thann
 21 October 1871

Rappoltsweiler
 16 May 1871



The postal rate for ordinary letters to Germany, Austria-Hungary and Luxembourg was increased to 15 centimes on 13 January 1871. The upper cover was franked at this rate from Thann to Cologne, where it was received the following day. Lower cover sent to Perpignan in unoccupied France, where it was received three days later.

OCCUPATION POSTAGE German Markings on Civil Mail

The highest denominated occupation stamp was a 25 centime value. It paid the postage on heavy letters (15 to 250 grams) as well as the registration fee to Germany, Austria-Hungary and Luxembourg.

This example shows the Prussian-type "Hufeisenstempel (horseshoe postmark)" which was used on the occupation stamps in only four cities, including Colmar. The usage shown here is five days before the ERD for this postmark reported by the Arge Elsass-Lothringen und Feldpost 1870/71 im Bund Deutscher Philatelisten.

Colmar
14 August 1871



The above letter was sent registered to Ellwangen with a declared value of 1,125 francs, which resulted in an extraordinary franking of 1.70 francs. This total consisted of 25 centimes postage, 25 centimes for registration and 1.20 francs for insurance (at 10 centimes per 100 francs). The Mehlmann certificate states that such high value franking in this form is extremely scarce.

ATTEST

VOLKER MEHLMANN
Verbandsprüfer

des Bundes der philatelistischen Prüfer e.V. im BDPH und APHV
D-51065 Köln, Montanusstr. 83, Tel. (02 21) 62 33 85

Nr. 0302/01

Datum 23. 02. 2001

**Elsaß-Lothringen: Frankierter Wertbrief
(Michel Nr. 6I, 7Ib (6) Mif)**

Der zur Prüfung vorgelegte Brief ist echt, die Marken original zum Brief gehörend.

Der Aufgabestempel „Colmar 14. Aug 71“ (Spalink 5-1) ist ebenfalls echt, die Stempelabschläge sind sauber und klar.

Die aufgeklebten Marken befinden sich insgesamt in guter Erhaltung, sie weisen lediglich kleinere, braune Fleckchen auf. Der Brief wurde links etwas beschnitten, er ist an einer Stelle etwas hinterlegt.

Der vorliegende Brief wurde als Wertbrief (Wert: 1125 Francs) von Colmar nach Ellwangen gesendet. Er ist mit 170 Centimes tarifgerecht frankiert:

Porto (25g)	25 Centimes
Reco-Gebühr	25 Centimes
Versicherungsgebühr	

(10 Centimes je 100 ffr.)	120 Centimes
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Summe	170 Centimes
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In der vorliegende Form eine selten vorkommende Frankatur.

Prüfgebiet: Norddeutscher Postbezirk, Elsaß-Lothringen, Feldpost 1870/71

Die Prüfung erfolgte auf Grund der Prüfordnung des Bundes der Philatelistischen Prüfer e.V.

COMBINATION POSTAGE
German Markings on Civil Mail

Because of the French reluctance to recognize the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine to Germany, there were problems with the acceptance of German occupation or German Empire stamps on mail addressed to France in late 1871 and early 1872. As a result, in order to assure delivery, senders prepared combination covers paying the proper postage of both countries.



Strassburg in Els.
 23 December 1871

Metz
 25 January 1872



Upper cover to Besançon franked with occupation stamp and a 25 centimes French Republic stamp depicting Ceres. (Note that the rectangular postmarks were used for a short period in only four cities in Alsace-Lorraine, including Strassburg.) Lower cover to Montmédy franked with a German Imperial stamp (in its first month of circulation) and 25 centimes in still-valid French Imperial stamps depicting Emperor Napoleon III.

CENSORSHIP MARKINGS

Mail entering or leaving the occupied territory was subject to German censorship. Letters that were examined received censor cachets and/or labels before being forwarded to their destinations. Examples of such markings on French civil mail are very scarce.

Metz
12 January 1871

Versailles
13 February 1871



Mourning cover sent from Geneva, Switzerland to Metz in occupied France in January 1871. It was censored and resealed with a cyclostyled label inscribed "Opened on military order. Chief Postal Authority - Metz," to which was applied a cachet reading "Chief Postal Authority for German Lorraine." This is an extremely elusive marking, believed to be one of only three examples recorded.

Cover mailed from Paris to London; franked with a 20 centimes "Republic" stamp, it was cancelled at the Place de la Bourse branch on 13 February 1871. The German army did not enter Paris until 26 February but had control of the surrounding countryside, so mail leaving the city that was of interest to the censors was examined. This cover received the rectangular boxed marking inscribed "Versailles Exchange Office" which was used by the Prussian censor on bundles of mail with foreign destinations. This is a very elusive marking, recorded only from 10 to 15 February. The censor marking was not intended as a postmark but was used to cancel stamps on occasion as shown.



CENSORSHIP MARKING

Mail Sent out of Paris by Balloon

Mail originating in France and delivered to occupied Alsace-Lorraine was subject to Prussian censorship. Such treatment was particularly rigid in the period from December 1870 to February 1871, when a small (19 x 5 mm.) two-line cachet applied in blue ink was used. It was inscribed "Auf militairischen Befehl geoeffnet (Opened by Military Order)." The Robineau certificate accompanying this cover states that fifteen examples of this marking have been recorded.

Hagenau im Elsass
21 December 1870



The above letter was mailed at the St. Mande branch in Paris on 25 October 1870 franked with a 20 centime Imperial stamp (sufficient to send a letter up to 4 grams by balloon). It left the city via *Le Vauban* on the 27th and was then routed via Switzerland. It eventually reached Hagenau nearly two months later where it was marked for 30 centimes postage due to be collected from the addressee as it was deemed by the Prussians to be an unpaid international letter. (Balloon mail from Paris addressed to Alsace-Lorraine is very scarce, with only eleven examples listed in the compilation by Raymond Pittier.)

J. ROBINEAU

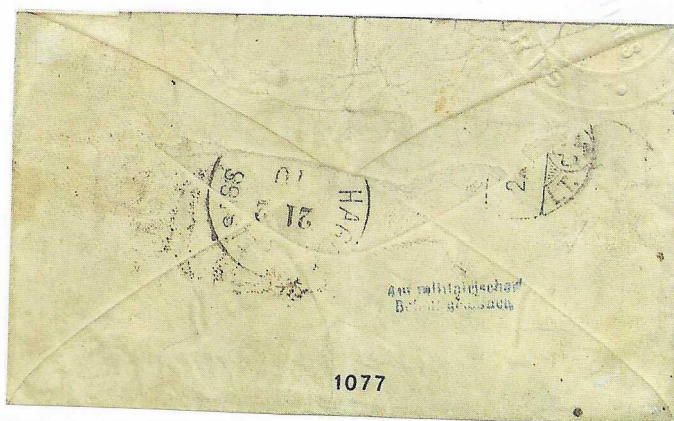
PHILATELISTE

ERT PRES LA COUR D'APPEL DE PARIS
L'ADMINISTRATION DES DOMAINES

5, RUE DROUOT
75009 PARIS

Tel. 01 47 70 16 90
Fax. 01 47 70 43 96

1077



Je soussigné J.ROBINEAU certifie avoir examiné la pièce reproduite sur ce certificat.

Enveloppe sans mention adressée à Haguenau, affranchie N°29 (déf) oblitéré GC 3739, frappée du cachet de départ Paris St Mandé 25 Oct 70, d'arrivée 21 Dec, de la taxe tampon 30 et taxe 2 au crayon bleu. Au verso griffe de censure bleue Auf Militarischen Befehl Geoffnet (une des quinze pièces connues).

Pli rare ayant voyage par le Vauban.

Mon opinion est que cette pièce est authentique.

Paris, le 14 Septembre 2001

N°

17404

PRISONER OF WAR MAIL
Postage Free Mail Back to France

Letters from French POWs held in camps in Germany were allowed to be sent postage free under a decree dated 7 August 1870. To qualify for such treatment, the envelopes were endorsed with a handstamp reading "Postage Free" and giving the date of authorization. They were also marked with "P.P." or "PD" in order that such mail not be subjected to postage due by the French authorities.

Dresden
 30 December 1870

Mainz
 12 February 1871



The above letters were sent by French prisoners held in Dresden (Saxony) and Mainz (Rhenish Prussia). In each case an official cachet of the government in the particular city (Dresden is on the reverse) was applied in order to provide authorization for the transmission of the letters to the enemy country.

IMPERIAL GERMAN POSTAGE New Markings on Civil Mail

On 1 January 1872, the German Reichspost took over the duties of the former North German Postal District, including providing the appropriate services in Alsace-Lorraine. On that date, the first Imperial stamps were issued with the famous embossed eagle configuration. Thus, from that point on, the annexed territories were treated the same postally as the other parts of the empire.

Falkenberg/i. Deutsch-Lothringen
23 March 1872

Mulhausen i. Els.
20 February 1872



These covers were sent from the annexed territories in the early months of the Imperial postal service, thus bringing to an end the story of the Franco-Prussian War. Note that the postmarks at this time indicated their origin as being "in German Lorraine" and "in Alsace" on the basis that postal clerks elsewhere might not be aware that these towns were now in Germany.



BRUSTSCHILDE - PHILATELIE



Martin-Wolfgang Sommer
Verbandsprüfer des Bundes der philate-
listischen Prüfer e.V. im BDPH und APHV

Tortonastraße 3
6290 Weilburg/Lahn
Tel.: 06471/26 17

Prüfungsbefund

Zur Prüfung vorgelegte Marke, Briefstück, Brief des Deutschen
Reiches Michel Nr. 3 III ist echt/falsch.

1/2 für Michel - rot, bel. Seidel

Erhaltung:
postfrisch, ungebraucht mit Originalgummi, Falzrest
farbfrisch, sehr gut geprägt - sehr gut zentriert - sehr gut gezähnt -
vorzüglich - sehr gut erhalten.

Die Entwertung der Marke ist echt/falsch.

Seidel, geprägtes Druckpaar (unter Michel
Schraubung) auf postgekauften Brief
mit selbigen holländischen - Kimpel.

R3 Stempel:



17.5.1990

Prüfgebiet: Deutsches Reich Michel 1-30 (Brustschilde)

[Signature]