

The Most Beautiful Bridge in Paris

Paris, France – the “city of lights” is also a city of bridges. Straddling the Seine River, the French capital is connected above ground by 37 bridges (in French – *ponts*), including 5 pedestrian spans (*passerelles*). A bridge across the Seine is documented from Roman times, and bridges today represent construction from the 16th to the 20th centuries.

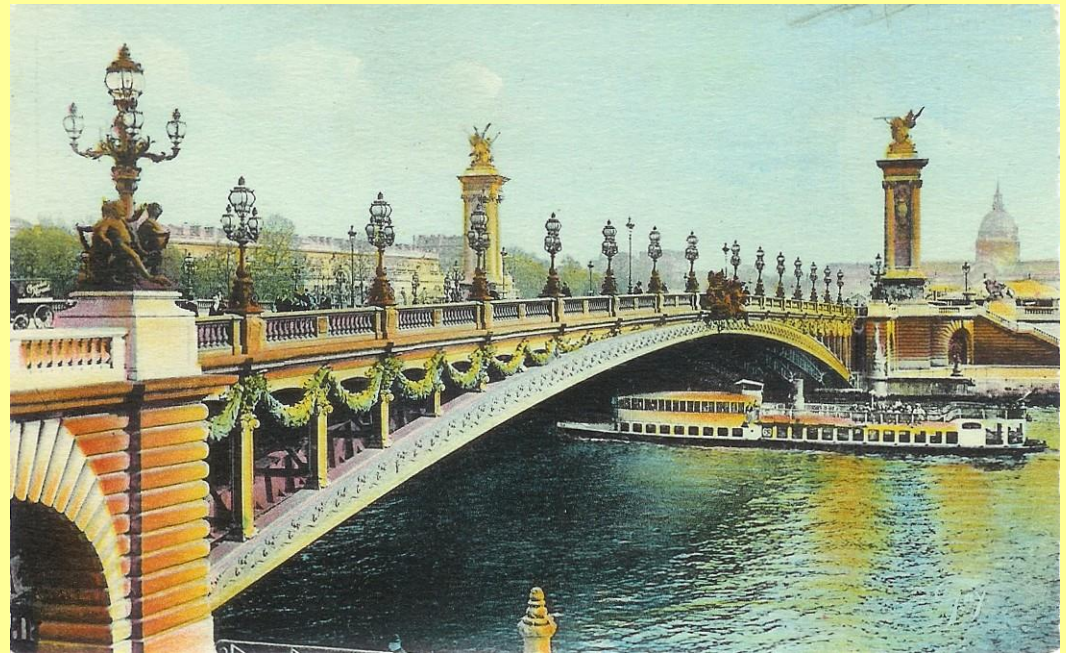
This exhibit shows all French stamp and postal stationery designs that include images of Parisian bridges. It focuses on the late 19th century French and Russian friendship that led to the construction of the most beautiful bridge in Paris – the *Pont Alexandre III*.

Fine designs and printing of French postal issues permit identification of individual Parisian bridges. Only the 100 franc 1949 air mail stamp, highlighted in this exhibit, features a detailed image of the *Pont Alexandre III*, an architectural and artistic masterpiece of the end of the nineteenth century.

This presentation is a PowerPoint slide show, and the right cursor key allows the viewer to progress through the exhibit. The left cursor key allows the viewer to remove overlapping images and text so that each philatelic piece may be viewed individually.

Exhibit Plan

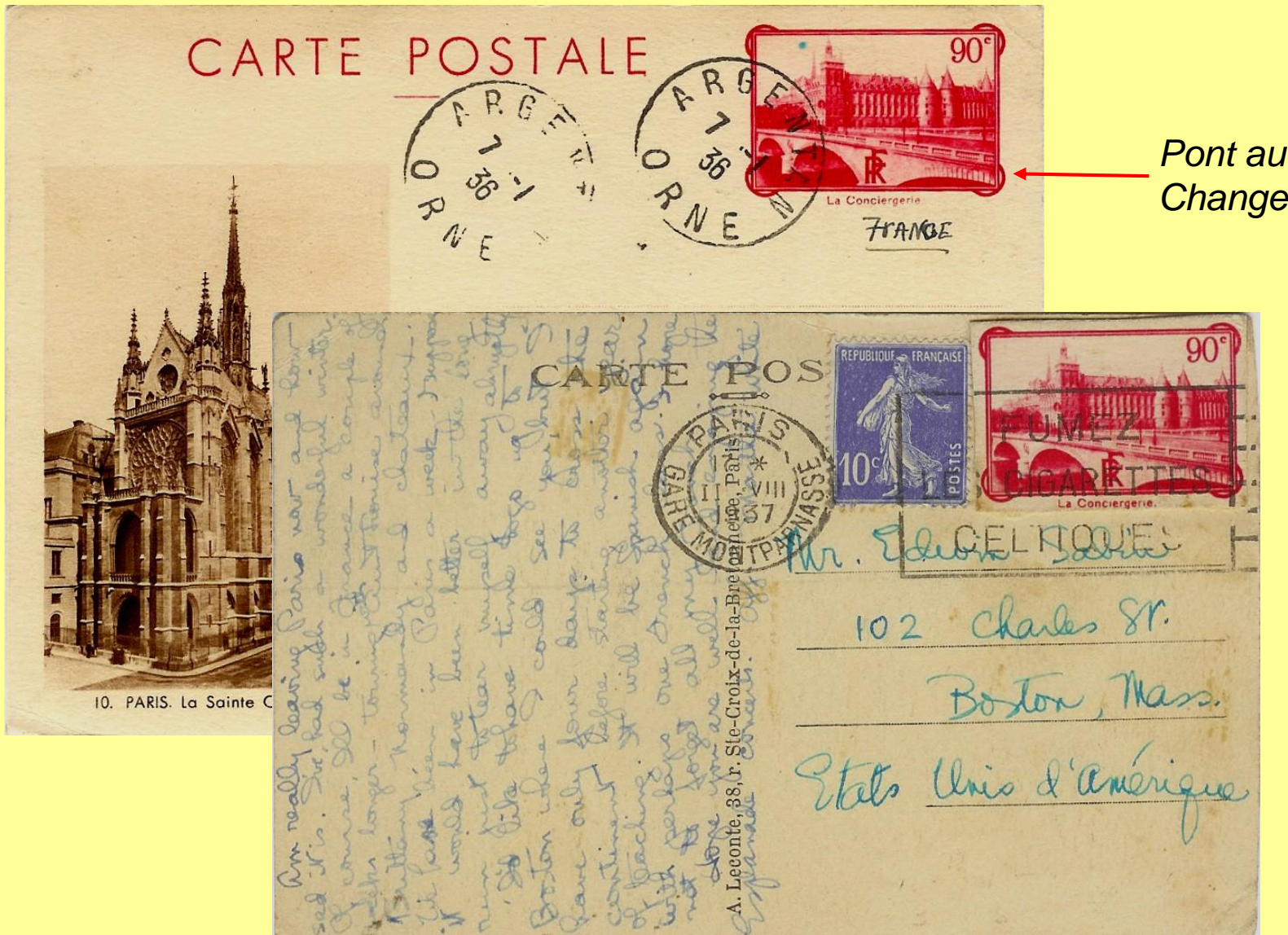
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Pont Alexandre III, postcard ca. 1920

All items shown are the property of the author.

Illustrated Postal Card - 1935



Illegal cut-out used with stamp for the 1 franc postcard rate.

1936 Airmails

The 1936 airmail design, “Airplane over Paris,” shows many identifiable monuments, but only one Seine River bridge. The bridge’s five low arches suggest the *Pont d’Iéna* and a view looking toward the northeast..



Pont d'Iéna



The same design as the airmail series above was repeated at a smaller size as the vignette for the high denomination airmail stamp also issued in 1936.

1947 – the UPU issue

Four regular postage stamps, two showing bridges, and a large format airmail stamp were issued in 1947 to commemorate the 12th Universal Postal Union Congress held in Paris.



Pont au Change



Pont Neuf

*Pont
Louis-
Philippe*

*Pont
Notre
Dame*

Pont au Change

Pont Neuf

Pont Saint Michel



1947 – UPU Panorama Design



The design of the 500 UPU airmail, attributed to Henri Gandon, is nearly identical to the design by René Cottet of the postcard and cinderella issued in 1943 for the Paris Philatelic Exposition. The cloud pattern is different, as are the plane and bird.

French City Views – 1949-1950

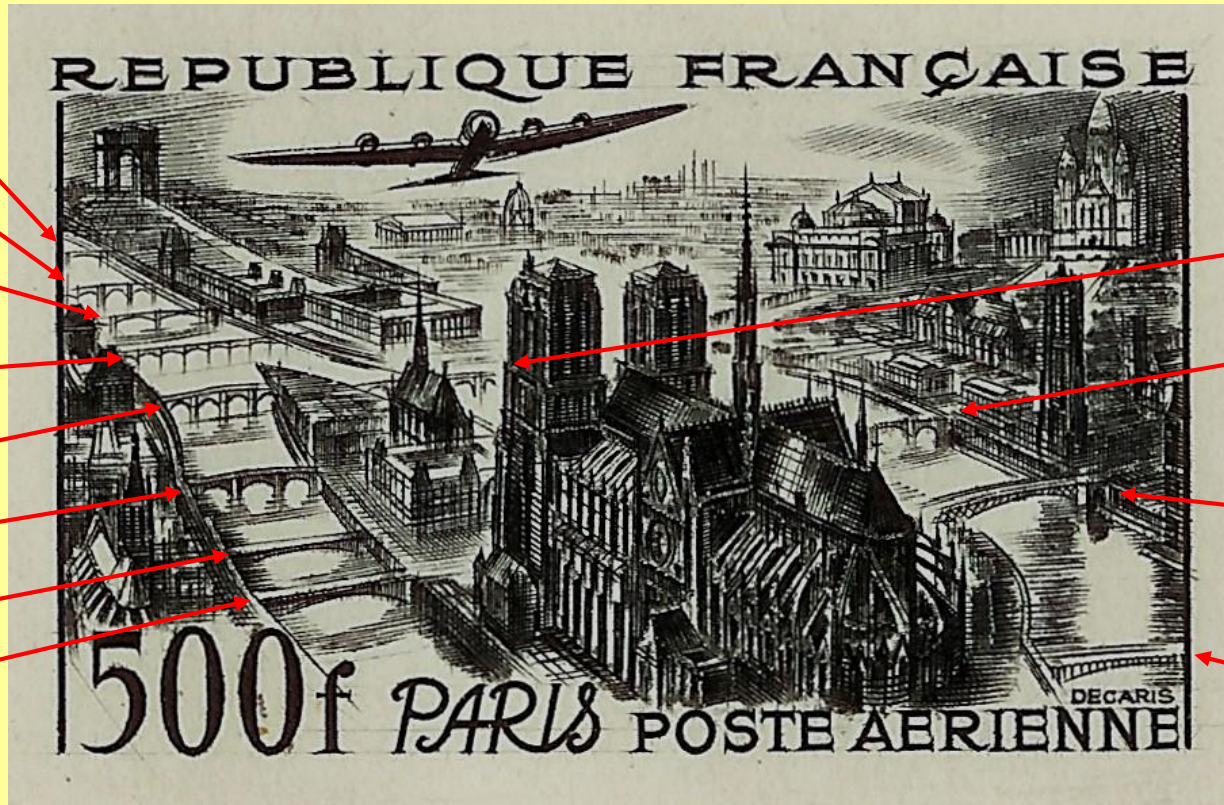
High denomination definitive air mail stamps were issued in 1949-1950 showing aerial views of major French cities.



Engraved proof of the essay of an unadopted design by Albert Decaris with hand notation “non emis” (not issued) and signed by the artist.

French City Views – 1949-1950

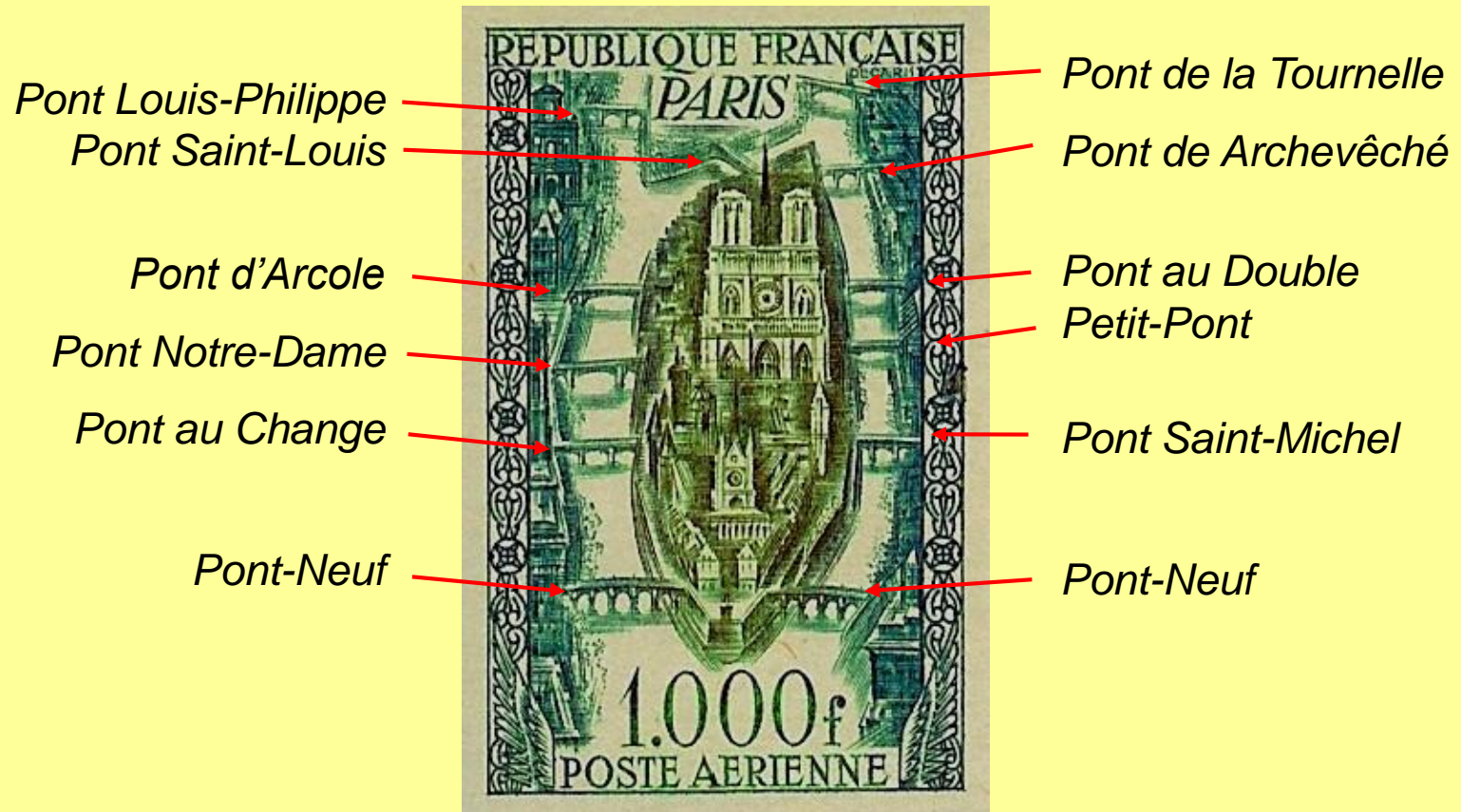
*Pont de la
Concorde
Pont Royal
Pont du
Carrousel
Passerelle
des Art
Pont Neuf
Pont Saint-
Michel
Petit Pont
Pont au
Double*



*Pont Neuf
Pont au
Change
Pont
Notre-
Dame
Pont
d'Arcole*

Enlarged image of the essay shown on page 7, the unadopted design by Decaris featuring 12 identifiable Paris bridges.

French City Views – 1949-1950



Essay of another unadopted design by Albert Decaris depicting a nearly overhead view of the Île de la Cité with 12 identifiable bridges.

French City Views – 1949-1950

The adopted design by Albert Decaris shows ten identifiable Paris bridges. The distinctive single span of the *Pont Alexandre III* is at the top. An unidentified bridge with three piers appears near the top. The three-arched *Pont au Change* is missing.

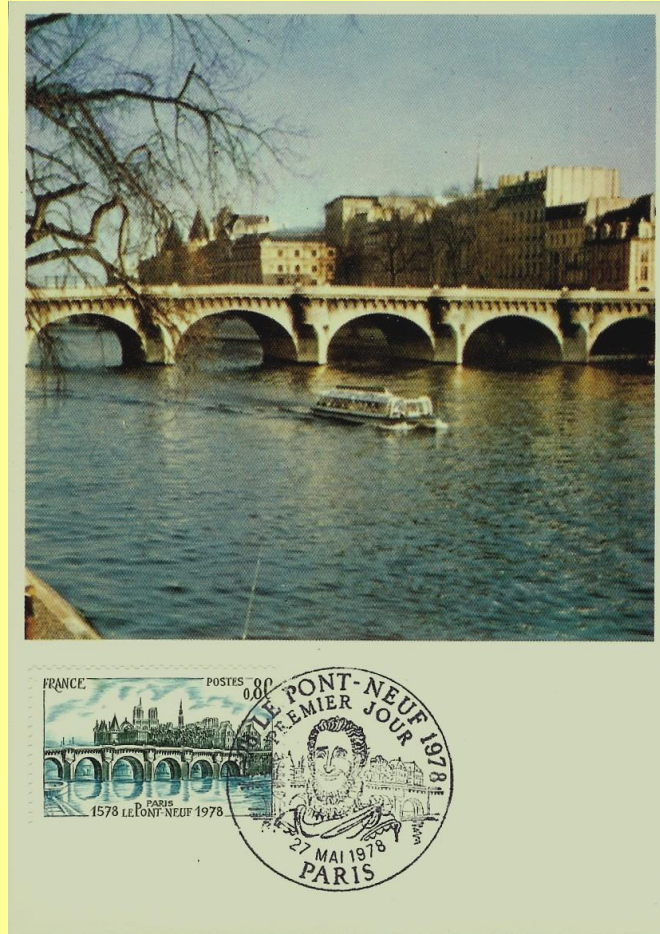


- Pont Alexandre III
- Pont de la Concorde
- ?
- Pont Royal
- Pont du Carousel
- Passerelle des Arts
- Pont-Neuf
- (Pont au Change)
- Pont Notre-Dame
- Pont d'Arcole
- Pont Louis-Philippe
- Pont Marie

View looking west

Recent Bridge Stamps

Only three more recent stamps have featured Paris bridges.



Pont Neuf (1978), built in 1578, is the oldest bridge in Paris. Maximum card, first day cancel.



Passerelle des Arts (1978), built in 1804, rebuilt in 1984



Passerelle des Arts (2005) with *Pont Neuf* in the background

French-Russian Friendship

The *Pont Alexandre III* is tangible evidence of French-Russian friendship in the late 19th century.

Diplomatic relations between France and Russia were especially good in the 1890's.

A formal military alliance was signed in 1892. Navy squadrons visited each other's ports in 1891 and 1893.

France issued a postal card featuring Czar Alexander III to commemorate the visit to Toulon by the Russian naval squadron in 1893.



Death of Alexander III

The unexpected death of Czar Alexander III, 1 November 1894 was commemorated in France by a mourning postal envelope that showed the date and place of his death.



Privately produced mourning post card with pictures and the death dates of Czar Alexander III and the assassinated French President Sadi Carnot.

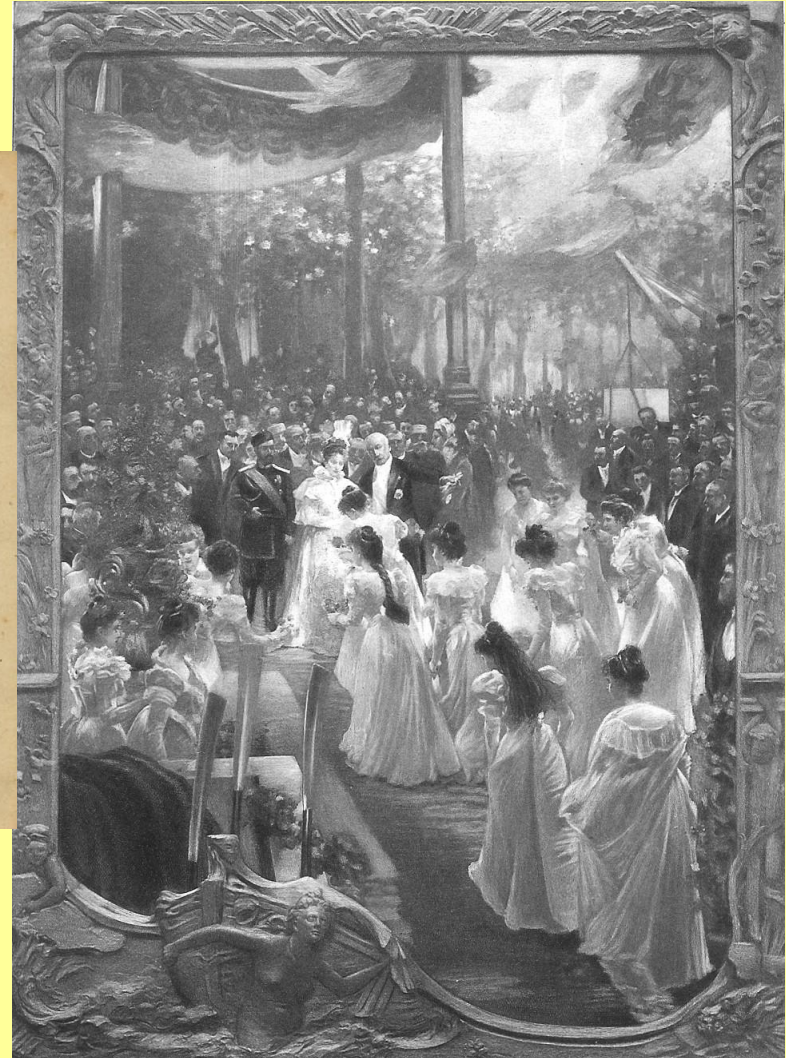
Czar's visit to Paris - 1896

Czar Nicholas and Czarina Alexandra paid a state visit to Paris on 6-8 October 1896, reaffirming friendly relations and to honor the czar's late father.



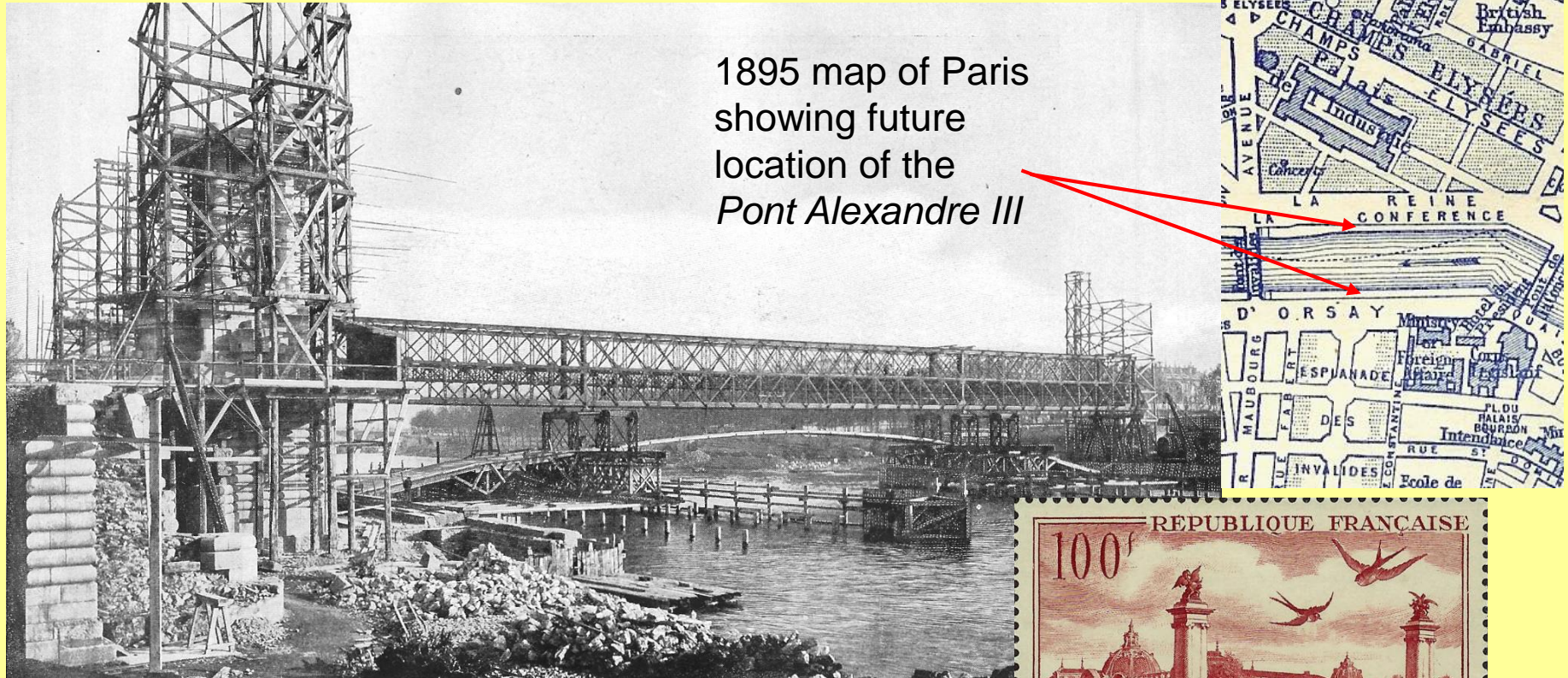
Printed to private order commemorative postal card

Laying the cornerstone for the *Pont Alexandre III*,
7 October 1896



Construction of the *Pont Alexandre III*

Construction lasted three years, and the distinctive 109 meter single span was designed by four architects and decorated by the works of 13 sculptors.



This engineering and artistic marvel, completed in 1900, was not recognized in a stamp image until 1949.



Inauguration - 1900

The *Pont Alexandre III* was inaugurated at the Exposition Universelle in 1900 and has been a major Paris landmark for more than a century.



Commemorative post card from the exposition showing the *Pont Alexandre III*, with the imprinted image of the Russian pavilion and Czar Nicholas II

Stereo photo of the inauguration of the *Pont Alexandre III* at the Paris exposition



Pont Alexandre III stamp

Almost 50 years after its completion, the *Pont Alexandre III* appeared on an airmail stamp issued in 1949 to commemorate the International Telecommunications Conference (C.I.T.T.).

Designed and engraved by Pierre Gandon, the stamp shows a view of the north end of the bridge with the Petite Palais in the background.



No plating varieties or errors are reported for this stamp, which exists perforated and imperforate. Pre- and post-production proofs are shown on pages 19-22.

Pont Alexandre III stamp

The 100 franc airmail stamp was issued in panes of 25 stamps.

Panes contained printing press numbers in the selvage, but did not have the printing dates (*coin dates*), which were used only with definitive issues.

The total printing was 1,625,000 stamps.



Artist's Proof



The artist's proof in black is a pre-production proof.

Trial Color Proof



The trial color proof in blue is a pre-production proof, signed by the artist, Pierre Gandon

Deluxe Proof



The deluxe proof, printed in the issued color and signed by the artist, Pierre Gandon, is a post-production proof prepared for dignitaries and collectors.

Collective Proof



The “large format” collective proof is a post-production proof prepared for dignitaries and collectors. It also features the 4 regular stamps issued for the C.I.T.T.

Maximum card



Maximum Card – first day cancel, 13 June 1949

The perspective view of the card is to the right of the view shown on the stamp.

Postal History

The 100 fr value did not fulfill a specific postal rate.

Single use on registered airmail envelope to the United States, 26 August 1949.



Foreign Letter	25 fr for up to 20 g
Registration	35 fr
Airmail Supplement	18 fr for each 5 gm to North America (x 2)
Total	96 fr for 10 gm letter – overpaid by 4 fr

Postal History

Combination use on registered envelope to Germany, 27 February 1950.



Foreign Letter	25 fr for up to 20 g + 15fr (x 3) for each additional 20 g
Registration	35 fr
Insurance	45 fr for up to 25,000 fr declared value
Total	150 fr for 80 gm letter – overpaid by 4 fr

Postal History

Multiple use on registered airmail envelope to the United States, 3 October 1950.



reverse

Foreign Letter	25 fr for up to 20 gm + 15 fr for each additional 20 gm (x 3)
Registration	35 fr
Insurance	45 fr for up to 25,000 fr (declared value 3,255 fr)
Airmail Supplement	18 fr for each 5 gm to North America (x 16)
Total	448 fr for 76 gm letter – overpaid by 2 fr

Postal History

Combination use on first flight airmail envelope to New Zealand, 1 February 1957.



Foreign Letter	30 fr for up to 20 gm
Registration	45 fr
Airmail Supplement	65 fr for each 5 gm to New Zealand
Total	140 fr for 5 gm letter

21st Century – Prepaid Envelope



A prepaid illustrated envelope (prêt à poster) featured the *Pont Alexandre III* in a cachet of 2007 – its most recent image in philately – more than a century since its construction and nearly 60 years after its last philatelic appearance.