

New Studies Of The Transport Of Mails In Wartime France 1870-71

By

GARDNER L. BROWN, ERNST M. COHN, and STEVEN C. WALSKÉ

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103 Spruce Street, Bloomfield, N. J. 07003

FOREWORD

The events of 1870-71 in France continue to be of surpassing fascination to postal historians. A century of previous studies and legions of collectors of 1870-71 philatelic material have hardly exhausted the subject. Much remains to be discovered, many questions to be more deeply explored though complete explanations may never be found.

Our Society counts among its members, in addition to numerous enthusiastic collectors of 1870-71, a group of students whose researches are internationally recognized as important original contributions in this area. The present booklet reprints from the *France and Colonies Philatelist* a series of six recent articles by this group, for the convenience of and to better reach the widely dispersed collectors and postal historians of France, including airmail and military history specialists who often are not otherwise interested in French philately.

These articles treat aspects of the transport of mail out of, in to, and around Paris during the German siege. They make use of sources of information and techniques of analysis not previously exploited and give revised interpretations of data in the literature. There are many first-hand accounts from obscure newspapers which are more than just interesting sidelights but in toto provide a very vivid picture of the real experiences and conditions for the astronauts arriving in the provinces. This is not a rehash of the literature but new and good stuff.

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THE MILITARY POST DURING THE SIEGE OF PARIS

By Steven Walske

Most France and Colonies collectors are familiar with the unforgettable chapter in French history known as the 1870-71 Franco-Prussian War. From the French perspective, among the War's few highlights were the Parisian military resistance during a four-month siege, and the fearless balloonists who carried mail out of encircled Paris.

This study analyzes balloon mail handled by the military postal services in Paris during the siege. There were five types of military personnel in Paris: regular army, navy, Garde Mobile (active National Guard), Garde Nationale (a "civilian" army which caused great problems both during and after the siege), and the Franc-Tireurs, which were semi-organized "guerilla" bands.

Since only the regular army and, to a lesser degree, the Garde Mobile had dedicated postal facilities, this study will focus on their usages. Those usages grew out of a long-standing French army tradition to establish formal postal facilities for mail from soldiers at the front lines. The mail so collected was processed and postmarked by a military postmaster and transmitted to the regular postal system for forwarding.

This study's conclusions are drawn from a variety of sources. First, the author has examined 33 regular army covers in private hands, and thanks those who anonymously opened their collections for his review. Second, over 5,000 balloon-mail auction listing were reviewed, resulting in data on an additional 69 covers. Finally, the literature on this subject was examined, yielding an additional ten data points. This small sample size of 112 underscores the study's first conclusion: these are very rare covers, which in total represent only about 1.5% of the 5,000 covers. Further, as explained later, some military-bureau usages rank among the rarest of balloon mail letters.

From this data, and a review of the historical literature, this study attempts to describe the development of the regular army postal system, the characteristics of its covers, the location of its bureaus, and the pattern of its usage.

Historical Background

The French Armée du Rhin (so named because it was expected to fight only on German soil) was formed in July-August, 1870 in response to France's declaration of war on Prussia. Seven army corps were formed during the initial mobilization, and seen met with a string of military disasters. By September 2, all seven of these corps plus a recently-formed Twelfth Corps (for some reason, no corps were labelled 8 through 11) had been either captured at Sedan or besieged in Metz.

The 13th Corps was formed in Paris in August around two seasoned regiments back from occupation duty in Rome, and a number of depot battalions (groups left behind in mobilization centers by the First through Seventh Corps). It was only partially constituted at 75% of normal strength (25,000 men) when it was ordered to support the Sedan action. Fortunately, it arrived too late to be captured, and undertook a harrowing retreat back into Paris, where it became the core strength of the military forces there. As a part of the Armée du Rhin mobilization, its postal bureaus were supplied with "Armée du Rhin" cachets and killers, and it was allotted five bureaus: headquarters, Bureau AL, Bureau AM, Bureau AN, and Bureau AO. Bureau AO was never placed into use.

The 14th Corps, also constituted at about 25,000 men, was formed in Paris during September, 1870. It was highly heterogeneous, drawing its strength from companies left behind in depots as the depot battalions were formed into the 12th and 13th Corps. Its heterogeneity slowed its development as an effective fighting force but, since it was made up with trained soldiers, it did become an important bulwark during the siege. As this Corps was formed after the collapse of the Armée du Rhin, its postal facilities were more appropriately named "14th Corps Armée Française" bureaux. The late formation of this army group also meant that only two postal units were formed; the headquarters and Bureau A, although Bureaus B and C were evidently authorized.

On November 8, 1870, the Garde Nationale, 13th Corps, 14th Corps, and most of the Garde Mobile were reorganized into three new armies for better operational efficiency. Virtually all of the effective fighting forces were concentrated in the 100,000-man Second Army, and a new postal system was established to service its mail. These postal facilities were organized into "Armée Française" Bureaus A, B, C, D, F, G, H, J and M. There was no headquarters bureau, and apparently no Bureaus E, I, K and L.

All of the 13th Corps, 14th Corps and Armée Française bureaux were located in fixed locations outside of the Paris walls, except for the 13th Corps headquarters bureau. Usage of the bureaux was very light since army units tended to be moved around and into Paris on a regular basis. Evidence shows that the soldiers (those who were literate) were more likely to write during their tours in Paris, and so make use of the regular postal system. Also, as shown later, the military bureaux were frequently closed, reducing the volume of mail handled, and reducing the army's confidence in the service's reliability.

13th Corps Data

Although the 13th Corps was constituted by only 25,000 men, its postal covers are generally the least scarce of the balloon-mail usages. Figure 1 shows the postmarks and killers in this series.

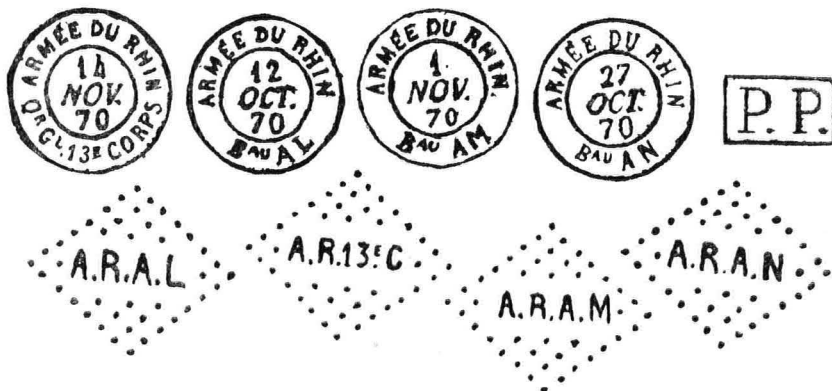


Figure 1. 13th Corps Postal Markings

Table 1 shows this study's sample distribution among the four 13th Corps bureaux.

TABLE 1
13th Corps Sample Results
Cancelling Device

Bureau	Free Frank	Postmark	Lozenge	Total	Dates of Use	Location
Headquarters	4	0	9	13	9/23-10/6, 10/30-11/24	
Bureau AL	1	1	18	20	9/29-11/18	Vincennes
Bureau AM	0	0	12	12	10/1-11/24	Bicetre
Bureau AN	0	0	5	5	10/9-11/12	?
Totals	5	1	44	50		

A number of interesting conclusions can be drawn from Table 1. First, the 13th Corps usages represent only less than 1% of our 5,000 covers, which ranks them as significant balloon-mail rarities. Further, all of the 13th Corps markings (other than "P.P." marks) reviewed in this study are in black; some of the early philatelic literature refers to red markings, which this study cannot substantiate. Of particular interest is the correlation between bureau postmarks and lozenge killers: the headquarters postmark is always seen with the "ARAL" killer; the Bureau AL postmark was always used with the "AR13eC" lozenge; and the Bureau AM and AN postmarks are always correlated with the corresponding "ARAM" and ARAN" killers. Finally, as shown in Figure 2, the Bureau AM covers are always marked with a "P.P.," half of which are in red and half in black.



Figure 2. 13th Corps Bureau AM with "P.P." Marking

Table 1 shows that only one 13th Corps cover is known with the postmark used as a cancelling device. It is also the earliest recorded Bureau AL usage (before the killers were made?), and is shown here as Figure 3. Also, the 13th Corps covers which received military free franks represent only 10% of all 13th Corps covers, an example of which is shown as Figure 4. Nonetheless, they are generally less popular with collectors because of the absence of franking.

The earliest 13th Corps usage reflected in this study is September 23, while the latest is November 24. The latter date shows that, while the 13th Corps was incorporated into the Armée Française on November 8, its cachets remained in use until the end of November. This is because the consolidation took place on the eastern side of Paris, and the 13th Corps bureaus were already in use there and remained so during the consolidation. Thus, starting

in mid-November, some 14th Corps units began using the 13th Corps bureaus as they were being folded into the new army. Further, the replacement Armée Française bureaus were not placed into use until early December, so the postal service was slow in responding to the reorganization.

Table 1 also shows that Bureau AL is the least scarce of the 13th Corps bureaus, while Bureau AN is the rarest by a factor of four. Part of the reason for this is that the bureaus were successively placed in use over time. The earliest Bureau AM usage is October 1, while the earliest Bureau AN usage is a week later.

Location also played an important role in the relative scarcity of the 13th Corps bureaus. Bureau AL, the most common, was located near a large troop concentration at Vincennes (east of Paris); the headquarters bureau, also relatively less scarce, was located in the Montparnasse train station in Paris; Bureau AM was located near a lesser troop concentration at Bicetre (south of Paris), while Bureau AN was probably located near a small troop concentration northeast of Paris. All of this bureau location information has been derived from examination of letter contents and historical literature.

Finally, it is interesting to note the October 7-29 hiatus in usage of the headquarters bureau. There was considerable French military activity during this period, so the bureau was closed for censorship reasons, or because its personnel were at the front lines.

14th Corps Data

Because of the later, less-organized formation of the 14th Corps, its postal usages are considerably scarcer than those of the 13th Corps. Figure 5 shows examples of these cachets. As shown later, there were no killers in this series.



Figure 3. 13th Corps Bureau AL With the Postmark as Cancel

Table 2 tabulates this study's finding for the 14th Corps.

TABLE 2
14th Corps Sample Results
Cancelling Device

Bureau	Black Pmk	Red Pmk	Green Pmk	Total	Dates of Usage	Location
Headquarters	17	0	1	18	10/17-11/18	Neuilly
Bureau A	0	6	0	6	10/23-11/11	Clichy
Bureau B	0	0	0	0	?	?
Bureau C	0	0	0	0	?	?
Totals	17	6	1	24		

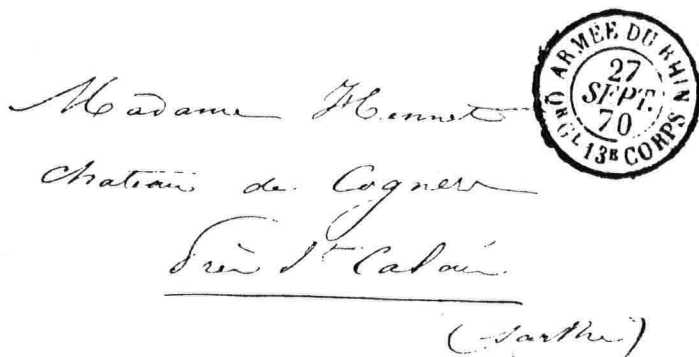


Figure 4. 13th Corps Free Frank Usage

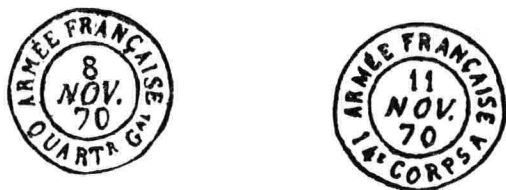


Figure 5. 14th Corps Postal Markings

The study substantiates the supposition that Bureaus B and C were never placed into use, and also shows the extreme rarity of Bureau A usages—only three auction listings were noted in a review of 5,000. By contrast, the Headquarters usages are considerably more common even though that bureau was in use for only a month. In fact, the 14th Corps bureaus show a shorter span of use than the 13th Corps bureaus. Evidently, since the 14th Corps was merged into the 13th Corps, its cachets start to disappear much nearer to the November 8 reorganization date. Thus, by the latter part of November, 1870, all of the 14th Corps was using the 13th Corps postal system. An early example of this is Figure 2, which shows 13th Corps cachets, but was written by a 14th Corps soldier being moved "to form one big Corps."

Both Table 2 and Figure 6 show that separate killers were not made for the 14th Corps, and that the postmarks were used as cancellers. Bureau A postmarks are known only in red, while the Headquarters markings are exclusively black. The only exception to this is on the earliest-known Headquarters usage, which has a blue-green postmark.

Examination of the 14th Corps letters clearly places the Headquarters Bureau at Neuilly (west of Paris, outside of the walls), and Bureau A at Clichy to the northwest of Paris. Other 14th Corps soldiers are known to have used the regular postal facilities at Auteuil (southwest of Paris), which lends further credence to the presumption that Bureaus B and C were never placed in use, since one of those bureaus would almost certainly have been established near Auteuil.



Figure 6. 14th Corps Headquarters Cover

Armée Francaise Data

Even though the Armée Francaise was larger than both the 13th and 14th Corps combined, its postal usages are considerably more scarce and, consequently, greatly sought after by collectors. The reasons for this greater scarcity are not totally clear, but the evidence indicates that these bureaux were concentrated only to the northeast of Paris, and were only open sporadically. Overall, only 25 out of 5,000 auction listings were found for ALL Armée Francaise bureaux, indicating that these cachets represent only 0.5% of all balloon mail. This ranks them among the most significant balloon mail rarities. Figure 7 shows some examples of these markings.



Figure 7. Examples of Armée Francaise Postal Markings
Table 3 tabulates the study data.

TABLE 3
Armée Francaise Sample Results

Bureau	Black Pmk.	Black Loz.	Red Loz.	Total	Dates of Usage	Location
Bureau A	4	5	0	9	12/9-12/11, 12/30-1/18	?
Bureau B	0	0	1	1	1/13	?
Bureau C	3	0	0	3	1/5-1/11	Pantin
Bureau D	0	1	1	2	1/10-1/11	?
Bureau F	0	5	8	13	12/12-12/18, 1/4-1/26	Vincennes, Lilas
Bureau G	0	1	0	1	12/26	Noisy
Bureau H	5	2	0	7	12/18-12/30, 1/19-1/20	Montreuil
Bureau J	0	2	0	2	1/6	Pantin
Bureau M	0	0	0	0	?	Nogent
Totals	11	17	10	38		

Overall, the earliest recorded usage is December 9, and the latest is January 26. Thus, although this army was created on November 8, its postal bureaux did not appear until a month later. This is due to both slowness on the part of the postal authorities, and a major French military operation during November 29-December 5, 1870. All military posts closed down during such operations, probably for censorship reasons.

The patterns of usage vary greatly according to bureau, so each will be considered separately. Generally, however, all bureaux except for Bureau C were provided with lozenge killers, although Bureaus A and H used the lozenge and postmark interchangeably as a canceller. These markings are seen mostly in black, although three bureaux (particularly Bureau F) did use red markings as well.

Bureau A used the postmark and "AFA" killer equally often as a cancelling device. All of these markings are known only in black. This bureau appears to have been open only in two distinct periods: December 9-11 using the lozenge killer only, and the end of December through mid-January using both the lozenge and postmark as a cancel. Its location has not yet been pinpointed.

Bureau C usages are quite rare, and the sample shows its use only during the week of January 5-11. It is the only bureau which shows exclusive use of the postmark as a canceller, and all of its markings are known only in black. Its location was near Pantin, at the northeast corner of Paris.

Bureau F was the most-used of the Armée Française postal facilities. Its usage is known from December 12 until December 18, and from January 4 until the end of the siege. The French attempted a significant military breakout to the northeast on December 20, so this bureau may have closed in response to that. Also, Bureau H was open during the same time that Bureau F was closed, so it may have opened just to service the Bureau F mail. All of Bureau F's covers are known with the "AFF" lozenge, as in Figure 8 (which shows an extraordinary combination of Armée Française usage on the very rare "Richard Wallace" balloon which was lost at sea). The bureau used black ink exclusively in December and red ink exclusively in January for its postal markings. It was located at Vincennes, and appears to have been the successor to the 13th Corps Bureau AL. It also moved



Figure 8. Bureau F on a "Richard Wallace" Letter

north to Les Lilas in mid-January in response to the German bombardment of its previous position.

Bureau H usages are somewhat hard to find, particularly when the "AFH" lozenge was used. Figures 9 and 10 show examples where the postmark and lozenge were used as canceller. The sample shows that Bureau H was open during two short periods: December 18 through December 30, and January 19-20. It appears to have opened in December only for the purpose of assuming Bureau F's mail-processing responsibilities. It is not clear why it reopened in January. All of its markings are known only in black. The bureau was located near Montreuil-sous-Bois, which is itself close to the Bureau F location at Vincennes.

Bureaus B, D, G, J, and M were also identified in the study, although all showed sample sizes of two or less. As such, these bureaus represent great rarities, and it is difficult to draw conclusions about their usages. Nevertheless, Bureau G (an example of which is shown in Figure 11) was located at Noisy, due east of Paris and very close to Bureau H; Bureau J near Pantin and Bureau C; and Bureau M at Nogent, the farthest east of all Armée Française bureaus. These rarer bureaus were apparently used to occasionally relieve the more active bureaus. The study did not uncover usages from Bureaus E, I, K, or L, and suggests that they may never have been placed into use.

Finally, Figure 6 shows a usage from the 14th Corps Headquarters Bureau. The postmark "Armée Française Quartier Générale," with no specific reference to the 74th Corps, has created the philatelic confusion that this postmark was part of the later Armée Française series. This study disproves that by showing no overlap in the dates of usage, as well as Headquarters usages before the November 8 reorganization. Further proof is provided on page 55 of Le Pileur's 1943 book, which illustrates a November 9 Headquarters cover bearing the private cachet "14e Corps d'Armée Etat Major Général."

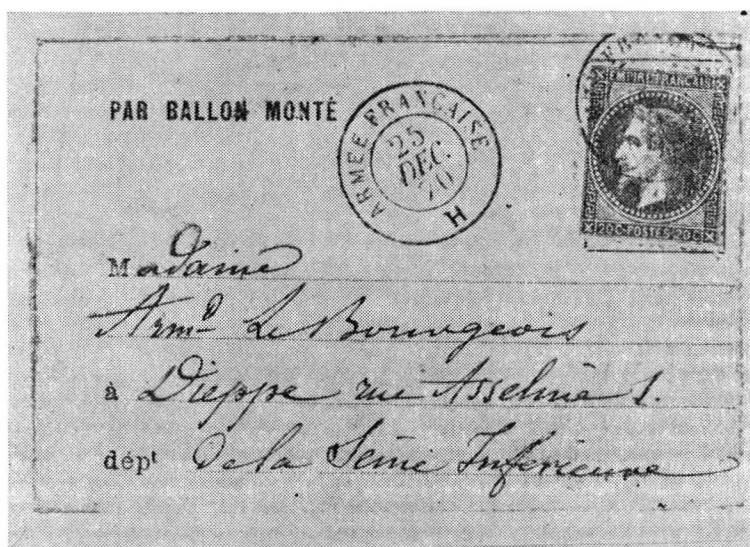


Figure 9. Bureau H Postmark Used as a Canceller

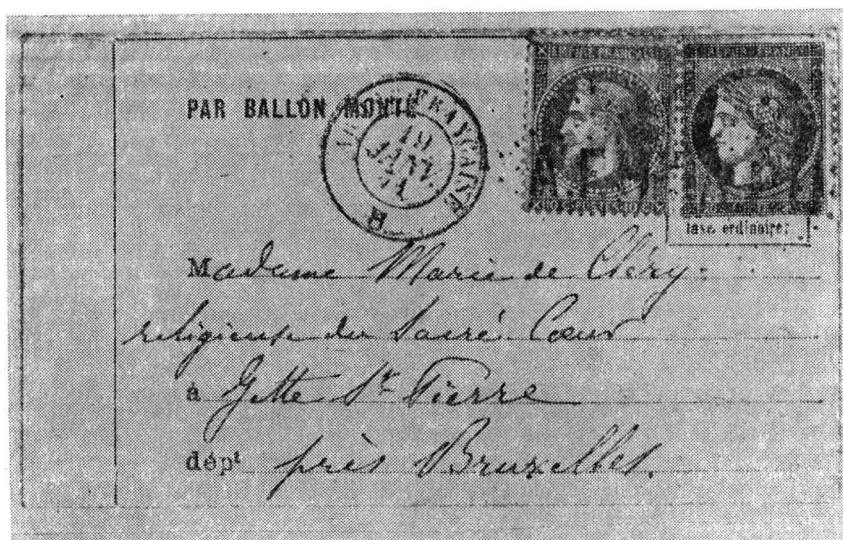


Figure 10. Bureau H AFH Lozange Used as a Cancellor



Figure 11. Armée Française Bureau G

Conclusion

The results presented here are drawn from an analysis of a sample of military bureau covers. As such, they are highly dependent on the quality of the sample. While this sample has been drawn from a wide variety of sources and should be reliable, the rarity of the pieces studied can result in some incorrect conclusions because of the small sample size.

In particular, the 13th Corps sample seems large and consistent enough to support some definitive conclusions. Likewise, the 14th Corps Headquarters Bureau has a large enough sample to be comfortable with the findings. However, the other 14th Corps bureaus, along with all but Bureau F of the Armée

Francaise bureaux, have small enough sample sizes that further data would be extremely useful in firming up the conclusions, provided that further meaningful data can be found. Specifically, more data is needed to pinpoint the location and dates of usage of several bureaux and, in the case of Armée Francaise Bureaus E, I, K and L, even to establish their existence!

Any additional data or information which can help clarify or amplify the conclusions drawn here would be gratefully appreciated by the author.

November, 1985

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DETOURING PARIS—RAILROADS, BOATS AND BALLOONS

By Gardner L. Brown

The purpose of this paper is to augment the railroad information given in the accompanying article by Steve Walske. I first became interested in the development of the French Railroads because, just as the airplanes have shrunk the effective size of our country, the railroad did the same for France years ago. Then came my interest in the Commune Revolution (Ref. 1). Mail then had to detour around Paris by horse and wagon via Versailles. Figure 1 shows the rail system in 1870 and the importance of Paris as a hub. Figure 2 shows the details of the roads and railroads of the Paris routes. Mail addressed beyond Paris had to transfer trains there. Of course during the Franco-Prussian War the rail disruptions were much more widespread than during the Commune.

It is difficult to find cross-country mail from France in this country because most of it consists of low-value covers which do not appear in the auction catalogs. The easiest, but more expensive, way is to watch for balloon-



Figure 1: French Railroads in 1870.

mail catalog listings for mail that landed in the north and was addressed to the south, or vice-versa. This is the subject that Steve Walske has addressed so very well.

There are several non-philatelic sources of information about the period. The map shown in Figure 1 comes from a book (Ref. 2) on the geography of the French railroad system and interestingly gives other maps showing the lines in 1850, 1860, 1870, 1890, 1910 and 1930. However, I prefer the map in the English translation of Field Marshall Von Moltke's book (Ref. 3) on the War. Although it shows only the general war zone, it is a much larger map and shows a tiny spur line from St. Valéry-sur-Somme to a tiny town just north of Abbeville on the main line to Calais. This fact is important in the study of the subsequent detour by sea.

Two books deal with the specific subject of railroad operations during the War. The first by Baron Ernouf (Ref. 4) takes each of the major lines and describes what happened to each as the invasion progressed. The second (Ref. 5) is by F. Jacqmin, an engineer, and describes how each bridge was blown up, which tunnels were destroyed and, in some cases, what the Germans did to restore service. We know the French blew up the bridge at Criel to prevent the Germans from using this line as they advanced on Paris after their conquest of Sedan. Jacqmin adds the information that the Germans prepared a 1225-meter detour but it was not available until 3 months later.

Figure 3 is a map of the lines in and out of Paris with the dates the

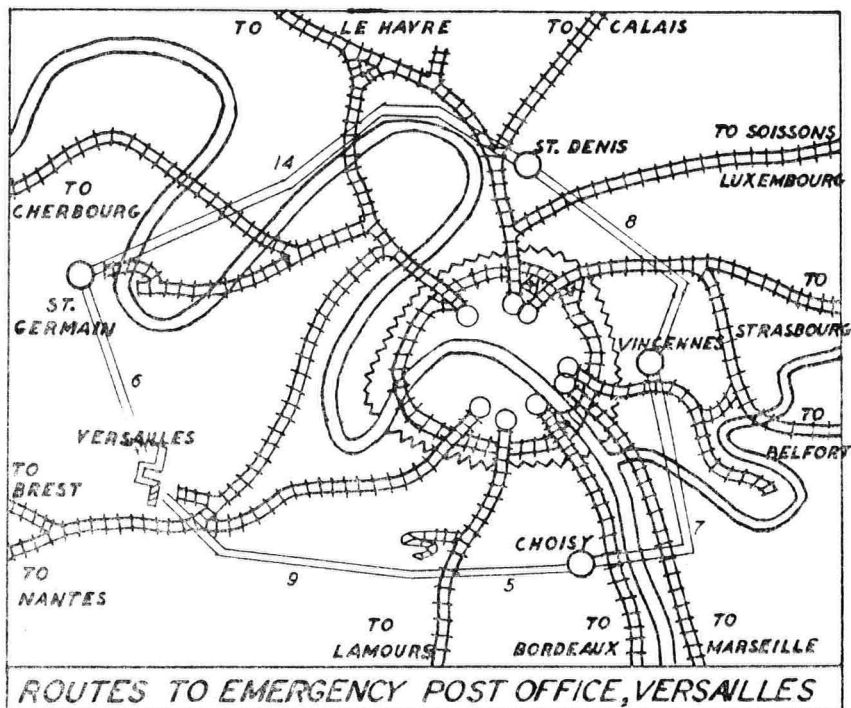


Figure 2: During the Commune Revolution cross-country mail detoured by road to the emergency post office at Versailles.

lines were cut. One of our members owns a cover sent from Bordeaux to England. With the use of the dates on the cover and the information from this map, we deduce it came into Paris on the last train from Bordeaux but couldn't go north, by train, to Calais and England. From the delivery date it must have left Paris by one of the October balloons. A real gem of postal history.

Figure 4 is a map prepared from a copy of a train schedule given me by Hubert Cappart, the current president of the Société des Amis du Musée de la Poste. The notice shows what time a letter would arrive in 87 different cities if posted at Tours at a given time on October 28, 1870. I converted the information (Ref. 6) to indicate how many hours it took to go from here to there. It assumes 4 different trains left Tours at Midnight and shows how long it took for the mail to reach various destinations. There are a number of anomalies in the map, mostly I think, because the mail had to change to different lines as in Bordeaux. The line to Bourges would have gone on to Orleans and Paris but Orleans had already been captured. The one I can not explain is the service to Bar-le-Duc which had been captured much earlier.

It is too bad we don't have this kind of information for each day of the War. However, there are many first-hand histories that give the day-to-day details about the various sectors. From this information we can deduce

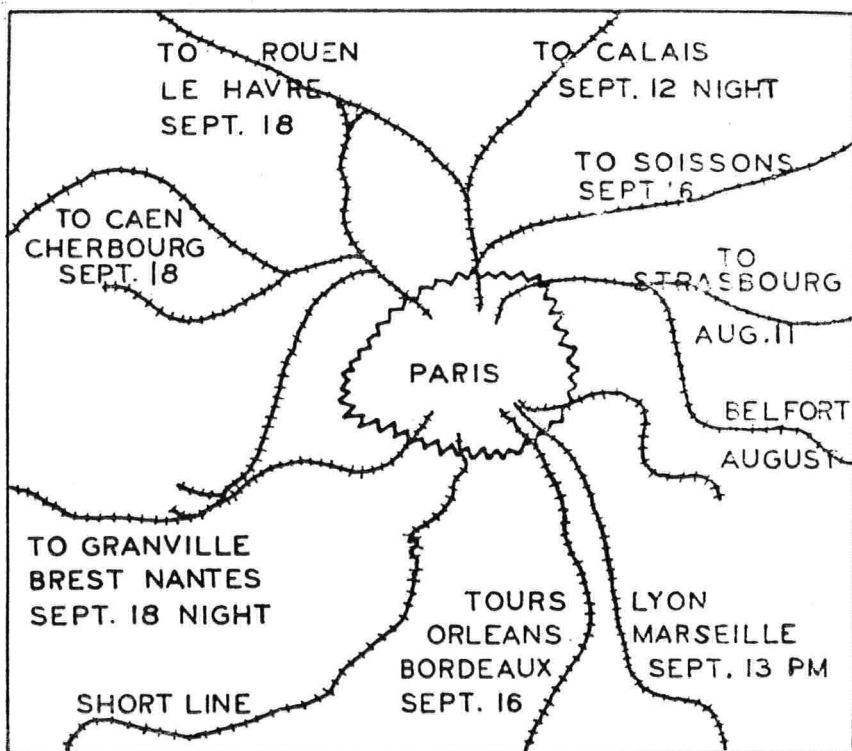


Figure 3: Dates show when each line out of Paris was cut by the encircling German armies.

what changes had to be made as successive towns were captured. A quotation from one of them (Ref. 7) will give an idea of the sort of details available; this one referring to a tunnel which had been blown up. "Six more Battalions of Infantry were ordered up from Rouen; they arrived in Amiens, one after the other, on the 23rd, 24th, 25th of December, by the railway, the repair of which had just been accomplished; its carrying power was, however, still limited by want of rolling stock."

The most disruptive event, after the beginning of the Siege of Paris was the capture of Amiens on November 28, 1870. (Fig. 5). This cut off the rail route from south to north (cross-country mail) and for a few days the mail for England went via Rouen and Dieppe. But, on December 4th Rouen was captured and France was bisected. Once more all Gaul was in 3 parts.

In addition to the fall of Amiens and Rouen, the following are towns on the cross-country rail route which were captured causing new detours to be created: Vierzon, occupied from Dec. 4 thru Dec. 7; Tours, occupied Dec. 8 thru Dec. 21 and again on Jan. 12 to the end of the war; Le Mans, Jan. 12.

After the fall of Amiens on November 28th, mail between the northern and southern sectors had to detour by sea and very few details are available



Figure 4: Time for mail to reach various cities as of October 28, 1870.

(Ref. 8). This caused a significant delay in deliveries especially when you consider the English Channel has a reputation for rough wintertime seas and the height of the tides is 20 feet compared to 4 or 5 feet in New York. This meant that when you arrived at a port you couldn't land until the tides were right.

The "White Cliffs of Dover" are on both sides of the channel which severely limits the number of good harbors. We have tried to deduce which ones were used by studying the directions of the ambulant on balloon mail in conjunction with their destination (Ref. 9). The use of two of the ports, Dieppe and Le Havre, was rendered useless by the nearby presence of the Germans on land. After the fall of Le Mans (Jan. 12) St. Malo was the northernmost port with an operating rail connection as all of the harbors on the Cherbourg peninsula were connected by rail lines which had to feed in through Le Mans. (Fig. 6).

While Calais and Boulogne were the major ports in the northern sector, one cover, with its ambulant indicates St. Valéry-sur-Somme was used at least once (see earlier reference to Von Moltke's map). I have been there to view the harbor and, despite the fact William the Conqueror launched his invasion of England from there, it would not accomodate anything much larger than a small fishing vessel.

One further source of information is the newspapers of the period. Ernst Cohn sometimes vacations in Europe and, unlike the average tourist, visits the libraries to read "all the news that was fit to print" in 1870 and 1871.

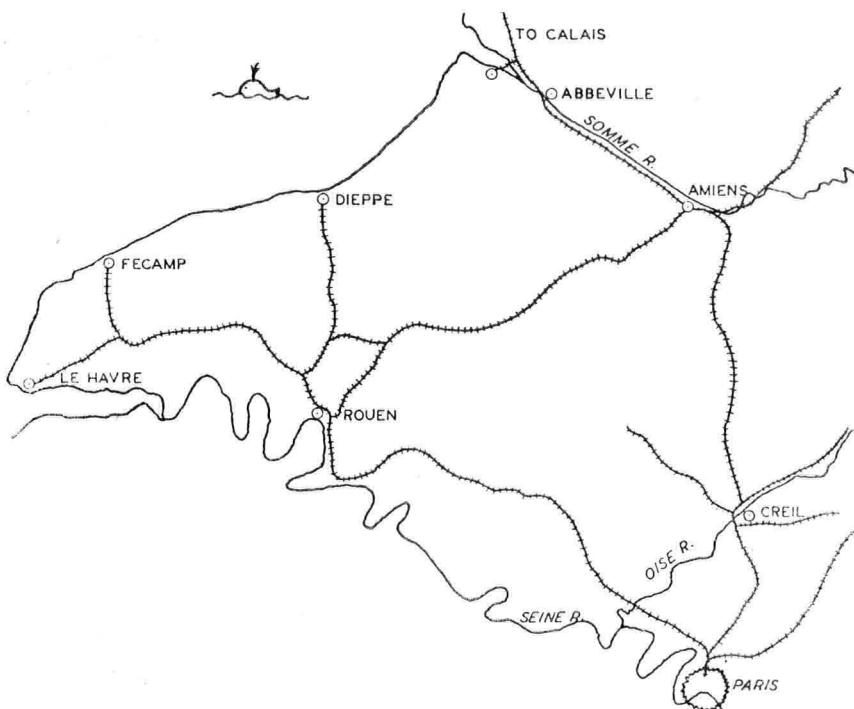


Figure 5: Details of Rouen-Amiens detour showing the importance of the bridge at Creil.

He has been very generous with the information he has unearthed (see accompanying articles).

These then are the tools of the postal historian as he seeks to play the role of a detective. One cover remains that I will probably never understand. It was posted in Vincennes October 31, the first collection. It carries a Paris transit the same day but the 2nd collection. It has an arrival-date marking in Vendome October 31, 5th collection. There was no balloon flight that day and the delivery was too swift for a line passer. The most probable explanation is that the clerk in Vendome forgot to change the date on his handstamp. The issue is complicated by the fact that, under a flag of truce, Thiers left Paris that day with his servant but he did not go directly to Tours. Perhaps his servant did?

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5. F. Jacmin, "Les Chemins de Fer Pendant La Guerre de 1870-71." Li-

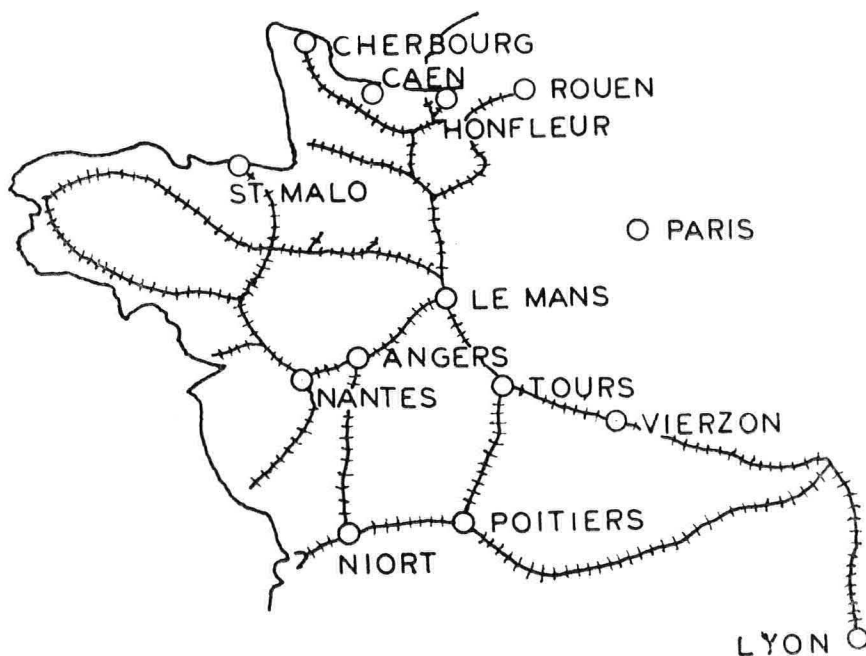


Figure 6: Details of the St. Malo, Nantes, Angers, Niort, Poitiers, Lyon detour made necessary after the fall of Le Mans.

brairie Hachette, Paris, 1872.

6. R. and G. Brown, "French Railroad Detours on October 28, 1870." *Postal History International*, May 1976, Volume 5.
7. William Blume, "The Operations of the German Armies from Sedan to the End of the War." Translated from the Journals of the HQ Staff by Manjor E. M. Jones of Sandhurst, London, 1872.
8. R. and G. Brown, "Detoured Mail During the Franco-Prussian War 1870-71; A Puzzle." *France and Colonies Philatelist* 152, Vol. 29, No. 2, April 1973.
8. R. and G. Brown, "Detoured Mail During the Franco-Prussian War 1870-71." *Collectors Club Philatelist*, Vol. 54, No. 6, Nov. 1975.

TRANSPORT OF MAIL INTO PARIS DURING THE COMMUNE OF 1871**By Ernst M. Cohn**

Anyone who has given some thought to the transport of mail INTO Paris during the Commune days of mid-March to the end of May 1871 must have been puzzled by the lack of details concerning the transport of letters that were addressed to someone inside Paris but were stopped by the legitimate government at Versailles. Who got permission to search the accumulated mail bags for mail, not just for themselves but for other Parisians as well; to withdraw such mail; and to transport it from Versailles to Paris? Later, of course, people addressed mail to forwarders with offices outside Paris. That part of the story is easy to understand.

Here are some excerpts from a story that appeared in a German periodical of 1871, a series of letters written by a Paris resident, explaining to his correspondent something about mail transport in both directions. Surely there are other such accounts extant. Perhaps, by combing all the texts, we can eventually explain the procedure in detail.

“Paris, 12 April 1871.

Dear M.

In order to send some letters with certainty, I am despatching my market helper, who is 60 years old and hence allowed to leave the city, to St.-Denis. P. S. You must have heard that no letters have reached Paris for the past 2 weeks and hence will not wonder, if you have written to me since, that I am not acknowledging the receipt of mail. All letters are accumulating in Versailles.

Paris, 19 April 1871.

Dear M.

In my last letter, written about a week ago, I mentioned my assumption that a letter or letters from you might be kept at Versailles, and that is how it was. Yesterday evening I received from the pile there your letters of 30 March and 1 April. Because our truly glacier-like condition seems to last longer than anyone can comprehend, at least up to now, our book dealers' circle (Cercle de la Librairie) decided to organize a postal service. A few days ago we sent our secretary to Versailles, where he is making his temporary home. There he calls for the mail daily for those book dealers who have given him the power of attorney to do so. Every day he also goes to St. Denis where he meets another employee of the Cercle to whom he hands the package to take to Paris. Last evening the first batch arrived in this manner, and with it I received your two letters. Tomorrow morning the second trip is to be made, and the messenger going to St. Denis will take the outgoing letters, yours included, to post them there. If Thurn and Taxis were still alive and would have to witness this postal service despite steam (power) and telegraph, he would have shaken his head often in the past six months! I did not get the envelope with the bank notes because the post office requires an official power of attorney for delivering such letters, and where should anyone get an officially notarized power of attorney in Paris today! That is not a major disaster, the bank notes can stay at Versailles until mail is again delivered at Paris. But under these conditions you were doubly inspired not to send me the draft in the same manner, i.e., in a registered letter, because otherwise it, too, would lie “firmly anchored” in the dungeon (literally: butchers' gallery) of Versailles.”

"Paris, 25 April 1871

Dear M.

Today I am writing to you again because our messenger will be going to St.-Denis again tomorrow and also because I have the time. . ."

"Paris, 3 May 1871 early.

Dear M.

Our St.-Denis-Versailles mail establishment leaves something to be desired as concerns speed. . ."

"Paris, 6 Mail 1871.

Dear M.

Day before yesterday I did not receive a letter from you. Perhaps the Versailles messenger woman will bring me one this evening. . ."

* * *

A number of other letters are cited in that article, but they contain no mention of mail. The anonymous series of letters is entitled "Aus den Tagen der Commune. Pariser Briefe eines naturalisirten Deutschen" (From the days of the Commune. Paris Letters of a Naturalized German), *Die Grenzboten*, volume 30, first semester, 2nd volume (1871) pp. 925-936.

IDENTIFICATION OF REGULAR SEPTEMBER 18-OCTOBER 11, 1870 PARIS BALLOON MAIL

By Steven C. Walske

Background

The 1870-71 Siege of Paris grew out of a disastrous (for the French) war against the nascent German Empire. In the space of only two months after the war's start, Paris found itself encircled by hostile armies on September 18, 1870. The resultant siege was to last until January 28, 1871, and one of the great triumphs of the besieged Parisians was the continuation of outgoing mail service by means of manned coal-gas balloons.

Although that service was to develop a remarkable efficiency by mid-October, it is not surprising that the postal situation was quite unsettled at the start of the siege. A number of factors contributed to this confused situation: first, the postal administration did not articulate a consistent mail program until September 27; second, the early balloons were well-used relics which consequently did not have much lifting power; and, third, weather and winds conspired against frequent departures before October 11.

All this meant that much more mail accumulated in the Paris post office than could be flown out by the September and early-October balloons. This study attempts to determine, or identify, which balloons actually carried the mail which was posted in Paris between September 18 and October 11. That analysis is greatly complicated by the fact that a small portion of that mail was actually carried on the September/early October balloons (as all the mail should have been, given normal circumstances), and a large proportion was carried on the much larger later-October balloons which finally cleared up the mail backlog.

Philatelic students seem to have avoided seriously tackling this difficult identification problem, assuming perhaps that no consistent guidelines could be determined. To a small extent, that is true, and some questionable assumptions have to be made. However, a great deal of the mail from this confused period can be identified to specific balloons with surprising consistency.

Identification of Balloon Mail

Identification of the balloon which carried a piece of siege mail, it should be noted, is one of the great passions of Paris balloon-mail collectors. Accordingly, mail which can be identified "with certainty" captures significant price premiums. At the simplest level, identification consists of evaluating the Paris posting date and correlating it with the arrival date. A piece of Paris balloon mail can be identified with certainty if its arrival date is before the departure of the next balloon from Paris. Unfortunately, only about a third of all balloon mail can be identified with certainty; however, the more interesting and challenging problem is identifying the other two-thirds.

Many factors contributed to delays in the delivery of Paris balloon mail after the balloon's landing and consequently prohibit many pieces of balloon mail from being identified "with certainty." Perhaps the most final of such delays was the capture of the mail by the Germans; with one small exception this type of delay did not affect the September/early-October balloons. A second, and significant, delay affected those balloons which landed in German-occupied France; their mail had to be transported by non-postal means to a safer area where it could be processed by the postal system. Knowing exactly how and when such "non-postal" means got the mail to a post office is

important to identification studies, but usually only scanty information is available. Third, even if the balloon mail landed in friendly territory, it still might have to detour by time-consuming and circuitous rail or sea routes around the area of German occupation. It should also be remembered that Paris was the hub of the French rail system, so that when Paris was cut off, the rail systems had to be somewhat jury-rigged to carry on, and were sometimes quite slow. Thus, knowledge of the rail system and the very fluid occupation area is also useful to this study; fortunately, the Browns have done a great deal of useful work on this subject in their "Detoured Mail During the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71—A Puzzle" (F&C Philatelist No. 152). Finally, balloon mail was also subject to delay while military needs monopolized the rail system, so knowledge of military actions is also necessary.

Thus, a more comprehensive approach to identification which incorpor-

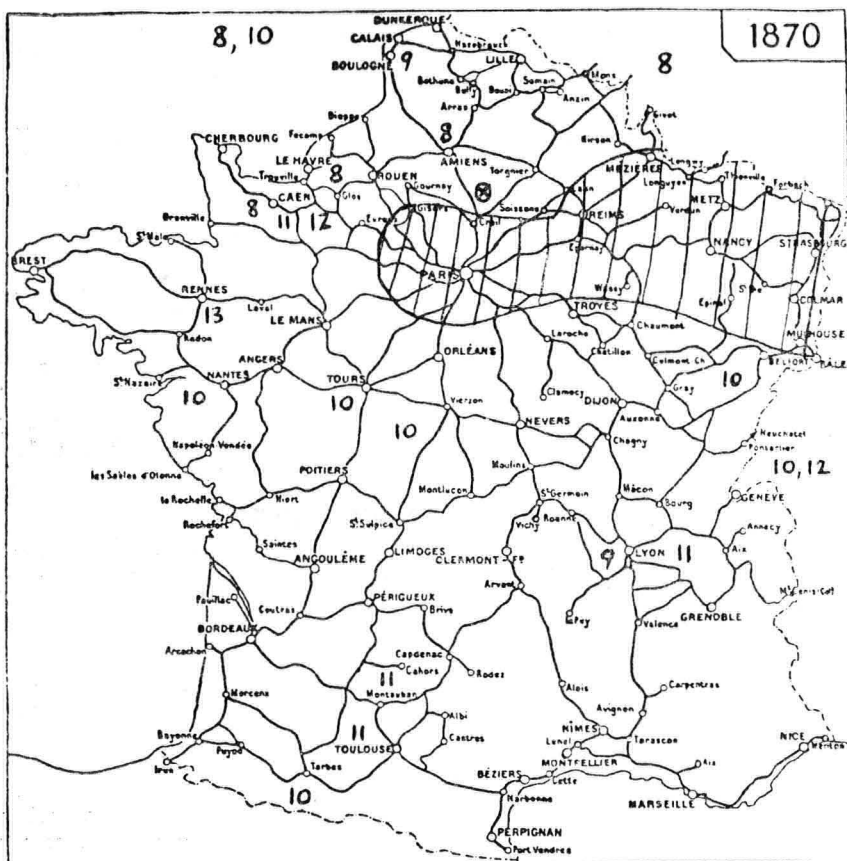


Figure 1—Arrival dates for "L'Armand Barbès"—Paris posting dates of September 30-October 6, and arrivals before October 14.

- Shaded area is German Occupation Area
- Circled "X" is Balloon Landing Point
- Numbers represent October Arrival Dates

ates all of these factors is considerably more complex, but much more effective. This method suggests that arrival dates for a given balloon's mail should fan out gradually from the point where it was initially processed by the postal system after landing, avoiding the occupation area and areas of active military operations. To the extent that a letter's arrival is consistent with that pattern of arrivals, it may be logical to assume that the letter was carried by that balloon, but only if the arrival is consistent with only one balloon's pattern. Fortunately the arrival-date patterns are different for each balloon, for the most part. In a very few cases, there is total overlap, and in many cases there is partial overlap.

Fig. 1 shows an example of such arrival date pattern.

Nonetheless, this concept of comparing arrival-date patterns of different balloons is crucial to this study. It shows that a balloon letter can be identified with certainty even if its arrival date is after the Paris departure of the following balloon. This is so when that arrival is consistent with the overall pattern of arrival dates for that balloon (i.e.: its delay is explained by normal delays in moving the mail from the landing point to the ultimate destination), and when the following balloon's arrivals at that same destination are demonstrably later. That simple concept allows fully another third of balloon mail to be identified with certainty.

How, though, can these arrival-date patterns be constructed? For that matter, how can one determine how the Paris post office bagged its outgoing mail (to determine which Paris posting dates might have been on a particular balloon), or how the mail was processed after the balloon landing? Precise answers to these questions are important to this study and its conclusions.

The Browns, in their "Pretend-Collection of Balloon Mail" (F&C Philatelist No. 161) showed the way toward constructing arrival date patterns for each balloon or each Paris posting date. They documented the idea of collecting years of auction catalogs and re-sorting the balloon-mail descriptions contained in those catalogs by Paris posting date. A database built on this excellent idea and comprised of about 5000 useful auction listings is the core of this study. It should be noted here that only regular mail posted in Paris post offices is covered in this study; other writers have written extensively on the handling of mail consigned directly to the balloonists, which generally shows different arrival patterns than the regular mail anyway.

As to how the Paris post office bagged its mail, not much concrete information has surfaced, at least to the author's knowledge. However, it is generally believed that the mail was accumulated each day (first through sixth collections of that day and the seventh collection of the preceding day) at the central post office and sorted by outgoing train line ("secteurs" in more normal times) or by foreign destination. The fact that foreign mail was sorted separately is confirmed in Cohn's "The French Mail Bags of 1870" (Postscript No. 150).

As far as the post-landing handling of the mail is concerned, Ernst Cohn has also gathered a great deal of very specific information on how and when a balloon's mail was taken to the nearest post office in his "The September Ballons Montés" (F&C Philatelist No. 204), which helps determine the location and timeframe of the central point of the arrival-date distribution patterns. Chaintrier has also done some pioneering research in this area.

Finally, this analysis will also make use of an analytical tool which is best called "free-lift power." This is a calculation which approximates how much extra lift power each balloon had available to carry mail. It starts with an assessment of the overall lift power (the balloon's size in cubic

meters times an average 0.70 kilograms per cubic meter coal-gas lift factor) and deducts the weight of the balloon and its passengers (roughly 700 kg,* for a typical 1200 cubic-meter balloon plus 80 kg for each person and his personal effects), which leaves the amount of free-lift power available for the transport of mail. This analytical approach is particularly germane to the early balloons since they were generally small, well-used, old balloons with limited lift power. In some cases, it appears that the amount of calculated free-lift power is significantly less than the amount of mail generally assumed to have been carried.

The "Neptune"—Did it Carry Any Regular Mail?

Other writers, particularly Cohn and Courtois, have questioned whether the "Neptune" carried mail processed by the Paris post office and referred to here as regular mail. There is no question that the "Neptune" did carry official mail, but this study finds overwhelming evidence that there was no regular mail on the "Neptune."

To begin with, the "Neptune" was a 2100 cubic-meter balloon which, prior to its departure from Paris at 7:45 a.m. on September 23, had been used as an observation balloon by the Parisian army. Only the pilot was on board, along with a purported 100 to 125 kg of mail. Contemporary reports indicate that the balloon's recent use as an observation balloon had weakened the lacquer veneer which covered the balloon and helped contain the coal gas. This resulted in a long inflation period, and an unsatisfactory filling of the balloon. Further, the balloon was characterized as being very leaky. All of this means that the balloon's lift power was less than might have been the case with a new 1200 cubic-meter balloon. Even so, the "Neptune's" theoretical maximum lift power was 1200×0.70 , or 840 kg. Deducting the weight of the balloon and associated equipment and ballast (700 kg) as well as Durnof's weight (80 kg) leaves only 60 kg of free-lift power. Given the leaky state of the balloon, it is highly unlikely that any mail was on board, and 100 kg was certainly physically impossible.

The auction catalog sample, which consists of about 60 listings with Paris posting dates of September 18-22, also indicates that no regular mail was on board. Of the 60, only 6 possess arrival dates earlier than September 26 (which was the date that the next balloon's mail was processed after landing), and therefore might be attributed to the "Neptune" with certainty.

At the very least, the extreme scarcity of these pieces shows that 100+ kg could not have been on board, or more listings would have been discovered in the survey. That great scarcity is much more consistent with the volumes of mail carried by the few successful line crossers at the start of the siege. Both Cohn and Amici have documented one such successful crossing in which Messrs. Brare and Geme left 6000 letters at Saint Germain on September 21 or 22. Since the "Neptune" mail would have been left at Evreux on September 25, and these line-crosser letters would have been taken to Evreux via Mantes (nearest large post office) at just about the same time, the 6 supposed "Neptune" letters in the auction sample certainly could have been line crossers.

The most persuasive evidence that no regular mail was on board was uncovered by Gabriel Mangin and reported by Amici and Cohn. It consists of a communication from the mayor of Evreux in 1870, which states on

*This figure is higher than those calculated by Cohn and Chanarya because it includes about 250 kg for ballast.

September 23 at noon that "The courier who arrived by balloon carried only official dispatches." This, in combination with the deductive conclusions above, strongly indicates that no regular mail was on the "Neptune."

What, then, became of the mail which was posted in Paris on September 18-22? Turning to the auction sample, the results are very inconsistent. Part of the difficulty in identifying the balloons which actually carried this mail is the fact that it was the lowest priority mail of the backlogged mail. Since it obviously could not conform to the September 27 post office guidelines, it is invariably heavier than the mandated 4-gram maximum. Each Paris posting date will be considered below.

September 18 is the rarest date, since the western rail connection to the outside was functioning until the 4th collection, and mail prior to that time generally caught the last train out. Most of the sample for this date shows arrivals consistent with the "Garibaldi," which left Paris on October 22. That extreme delay certainly shows the low priority of this mail! However, the sample is not broad enough to characterize all of this mail as having actually been on the "Garibaldi."

The September 19, 20 and 21 mail, which is also relatively quite scarce, shows no consistent pattern. The sample variously shows letters actually carried by the "Garibaldi" (October 22), the "Jean Bart 2" (October 16), the "Jean Bart 1" (October 14), and the "Victor Hugo" (October 18). Obviously, this probably-overweight mail was parcelled out to the October balloons only as space permitted. It was clearly not bagged together, and consequently not processed together.

The September 22 mail, which is almost as numerous as the September 18-21 mail combined, begins to show more of a pattern. Roughly half of this mail was carried by the "Washington/Louis Blanc" (double departure on October 12), and half on the "Jean Bart 2." Although there is not enough data to draw definitive conclusions, it seems as though the "Washington/Louis Blanc" mail comes mostly from the rue Bonaparte and rue St. Lazare post offices, whereas none of the "Jean Bart 2" mail comes from those offices. More data is needed to flesh this out more fully.

At this point, it might be useful to remind the reader that these identifications are established by comparing, for example, September 21 mail arrivals with the arrival patterns for a variety of October balloons. Thus, for example, the "Victor Hugo" pattern is obtained by plotting normal "Victor Hugo" arrival dates (i.e. mail with October 16-17 Paris posting dates) on a map of France. If the arrival date for a delayed September letter matches up with the "Victor Hugo" pattern, it is at least partial evidence that the letter was in fact carried by the "Victor Hugo." If an entire class of letters (such as a particular September Paris posting date) shows arrivals consistent with the "Victor Hugo" pattern, that is much more conclusive evidence that such mail was carried by that balloon.

The "Ville de Florence"—Carried Only September 24 Mail

The "Ville de Florence," which this study suggests was the first balloon to carry regular post-office mail, left Paris at 11 a.m. on September 25. This was an old balloon of 1400 cubic meters, with approximate lift power of 980 kg. With a pilot and one passenger on board, that left about 100 kg of free-lift power for mail. The balloon landed at Vernouillet (several km east of Mantes) at 5 p.m. on the 25th. The mail was taken to Mantes for processing on the evening of September 25. Mail which shows Paris posting dates of September 23-24 and arrivals before September 30 (the date the next

balloon's mail was processed at Mantes) can be attributed to this balloon with certainty.

The sample database used in this study shows 24 letters with September 23 posting dates and 37 from the 24th. Only one of the September 23 letters can be identified with certainty; the rest were clearly delayed to later balloons. By contrast, 27 or 73%, of the September 24 items can be identified with certainty. This strongly indicates that, for the most part, only mail from the 24th was on board.

The delayed mail, just as with the September 18-22 mail, appears to have been carried on a number of late-October balloons. In particular, the "Washington/Louis Blanc," "Favre 1," "Victor Hugo," and "République Universelle" all carried a part of the delayed mail. Again, this is because most of this mail was heavier than the 4-gram maximum mandated on September 27, and was therefore lowest priority mail. It appears to have been parcelled out to balloons only as space was available, and was certainly not handled as a group. Thus, no consistent arrival patterns can be constructed for this group of mail.

The "Etats Unis"—An Emerging Pattern for Delayed Mail

The "Etats Unis" left Paris on September 29 at 10 a.m. carrying a reported 80 kg of mail. The balloon's volume was 1340 cubic meters, which translates to a lift capacity of about 940 kg. With a pilot and one passenger on board (total weight including the balloon of about 860 kg, the free-lift power available for mail was 80 kg, which confirms the reported mail weight on board. Had it carried all the mail available since the last departure, it would have carried the Paris posting dates of September 25-28. The balloon landed near Mantes, where its mail was processed sometime on September 30—the earliest known arrival outside of Mantes is the first collection on October 1. One curiosity is that some of the mail was misplaced during the landing or during the transmission to Mantes, and not recovered and processed until October 17 at Pacy-sur-Eure. The sample uncovered one such letter with an October 17 Pacy transit.

The only mail which can be identified with certainty according to traditional methods are those very few covers which were marked with the September 29 Gare de Mantes cachet. This is because the next balloon's mail was processed at nearby Dreux on the afternoon of September 29. In spite of that, the examination of that next balloon, the "Celeste," shows conclusively that it could not have carried any delayed mail because of its extremely limited lift power. Thus, all mail with Paris postmarks of September 25-28, and arrivals before October 4 can be attributed to the "Etats Unis" with certainty.

Turning to the data, 59% or 77 covers, can be identified with certainty. However, the analysis by day shows remarkable differences, as shown below. These differences are due to the announcement, on September 27 by the postal administration, of the regulations regarding balloon mail, particularly as regards the 4-gram weight limitation. Once this announcement was known, the Parisians seem to have generally conformed to the weight limit, so most mail after September 26 was priority mail as defined by the postal administration. This means that greater amounts of this mail was carried currently, and that priority mail which was delayed for lack of lift power was carried out before the heavier mail from September 18-26.

September 25 mail was obviously before the announcement, and most of it was delayed to later balloons. Only 35% was on the "Etats Unis,"

and the remainder was scattered over the late-October balloons, much like the earlier delayed mail.

September 26 mail, although also before the announcement, begins to show a discernable pattern. First, 50% was on the "Etats Unis," and the remainder was largely carried on the "Cavaignac/Bart 1" double departure on October 14. A smaller portion was part of the mail jettisoned from the "Jean Bart 2," and apparently no letters were delayed beyond the middle of October.

A remarkable 70% of the September 27 mail was on board, and the remaining mail was primarily on the October 14 "Cavaignac/Bart 1" departure. A small part of this mail was also on the October 12 "Washington/Louis Blanc" departure.

Lastly, fully 75% of the September 28 mail was on the "Etats Unis," and the mail which was delayed was carried on the "Washington/Louis Blanc." Clearly, this mail conformed to the new post-office guidelines, and received higher priority handling.

The "Celeste"—Very Little Mail on Board

The "Celeste" was the smallest balloon of the siege, at 780 cubic meters. It carried a reported 80 kg of mail, although the free-lift power analysis shows at most 5-10 kg lift power available for mail. This balloon left Paris on September 30 at 9:30 a.m., and landed near Dreux (near Mantes) around noon. The mail was taken to Dreux in the mid-afternoon. Since the next balloon did not leave Paris until October 7, mail with September 29 Paris postmarks and arrivals before October 7 can be identified with certainty.

Turning to the sample, only 9 covers can be identified with certainty. A remarkable observation is that all 9 are addressed to foreign destinations, leading to the strong, and logical, conclusion that only the foreign mail bag was carried due to the extremely limited lift power. This also means that actual "Celeste" covers rank among the rarities of Paris balloon mail. To set some context, they are as scarce in the sample as "Jacquard" covers.

Further, virtually all of the delayed mail was carried on the October 12 "Washington/Louis Blanc" departure.

The "Armand Barbes"—Also Very Little Mail Carried

The "Armand Barbes" was the famous balloon which carried Minister Gambetta to his post in the free provinces. Gambetta also took his secretary along, so this 1200 cubic-meter balloon, which had been recently constructed for the Paris balloon service, had three persons on board, including the pilot. That meant very little free-lift power available for mail, and at least two contemporary sources (Nadie and Boissay) reported that only 10 kg of mail was carried. This study, both through the free-lift power analysis and the scarcity of "Armand Barbes" covers found in the 5000-listing sample, also finds that no more than 10 kg could have been carried.

The "Barbes" left Paris at 11 a.m. on Friday, October 7, after several earlier scheduled departures were deferred due to weather. The balloon was apparently very heavily loaded, as well as short of ballast, because it never attained sufficient altitude. In fact, it very nearly landed near German military units, and reportedly had to jettison some mail to evade capture. That mail does show up in the sample, as shown later on. The balloon finally landed southeast of Amiens at 2:45 p.m. and the mail was taken to Amiens around 10 p.m. on October 7. Amiens is a major rail connection in north-

west France, and connects the Paris-to-Calais and Paris-to-Lille rail lines. Since the Paris-to-Calais line was cut by the German occupation to the south of Amiens, it had been extended southwesterly to include the major Amiens-to-Rouen rail trunk. Much of the mail actually carried on the "Barbes" was processed by travelling rail bureaux working out of Amiens. The mail variously received the October 8 Lille-to-Paris rail transit, the October 8 Calais-to-Paris marking, or the October 8 Paris-to-Calais transit.

Since the "Barbes" left on the 7th, mail from September 30 through October 6 had accumulated since the previous departure. "Barbes" mail can be identified by Paris posting dates from this period, and arrivals before October 13. Only 8% of the 180-piece sample can be so identified, and a third of that 8% has an arrival pattern which shows arrivals a day later than the mail which was processed by the travelling rail bureaux on October 8. Although not documented in the contemporary literature, this slightly-delayed mail was probably from the jettisoned batch of mail. One of the remaining puzzles is trying to determine how the mail which actually flew on the "Barbes" was selected from the large amount available. One theory is that mail from VIP's or friends of the post office was culled out for early transport, but no confirmation of this exists.

The remaining 92% of the September 30—October 6 mail sorts out with remarkable consistency. With only a few exceptions, all of the delayed mail which was posted in Paris between September 30 and October 4 was carried out by the "Washington" and "Louis Blanc" double departure on October 12. Further, with virtually no exceptions, the delayed October 5-6 mail was carried by the "Cavaignac" and "Jean Bart 1" double departure on October 14.

Finally, actual "Barbes" mail (with arrivals before October 13) is quite scarce—it occurs in the sample only about twice as often as actual "Celeste" mail.

The "Washington"/"Louis Blanc"—The Last of the Early-October Delays

The "George Washington" and "Louis Blanc" were two new balloons which had been constructed for the postal service. They were also the first of three double departures scheduled to clear up the mail backlog. The "Washington" was the first of the larger 2045 cubic-meter balloons, while the "Louis Blanc" was 1200 cubic-meters in size. Together, they accounted for about 250 kg of free-lift power, which did allow the postal administration to begin reducing the backlog.

Both balloons left Paris around 9 a.m. on October 12. Five days had elapsed since the preceding departure, so mail from October 7-11 could have been carried. However, as shown above, a considerable amount of delayed mail was on these balloons, so not all of the October 7-11 mail was carried.

The balloons followed a course to the north. The "Washington" landed east of Cambrai, and its mail was taken to Douai around noon on October 13. The "Louis Blanc" flew farther north, and landed in Belgium. Its mail was taken to Lille, and processed by a travelling rail office out of Lille on the night of October 12. Lille is only about 20 km north of Douai, so the mail from both balloons was processed in close geographic and temporal proximity; this means that it is nearly impossible to distinguish the mail of one balloon from the other. The only exceptions are those few covers which show arrivals on the morning of October 13. Those can be attributed to the "Louis Blanc," since its mail got a slight head start on the "Washington's."

Mail from the next pair of balloons was processed after landing on October 15 in eastern France, so "Washington/Louis Blanc" mail can be identified if it shows arrivals before October 15. Turning to the sample, only mail from October 11 (and some from October 10—most likely from the 7th collection) appears to have been carried on the "Washington/Louis Blanc," in addition to the earlier delayed mail. That means that the October 7-10 mail was delayed to later balloons. The arrival pattern analysis indicates that all of the October 7-10 mail was carried on the October 14 "Cavaignac/Jean Bart 1" double departure.

With only one of the five possible Paris posting dates carried, non-delayed "Washington/Louis Blanc" mail is about five times as scarce as previously thought. The mail which was actually on these balloons was the September 28-October 4 delayed mail (as well as a little from earlier posting dates) and all of the October 11 mail. All of that amounts to about 250 kg actually carried.

The "Cavaignac/Bart 1"—Which One Carried the Delayed Mail?

The "Godefroy Cavaignac" and the "Jean Bart 1" made up the second double departure scheduled by the postal administration. Both were the larger, new 2045 cubic-meter size; together, they accounted for about 350 kg of free-lift power.

Both balloons left around mid-day on October 14 (the "Cavaignac" left earlier), and landed at the edge of the occupation area in eastern France in the afternoon of October 14. The "Cavaignac" did, in fact, land in occupied territory and its mail was taken to the major unoccupied town of Chaumont on October 15 in the morning. The "Jean Bart 1" landed in unoccupied territory to the west of Chaumont; its mail was taken to Nogent around 5 p.m. on October 14.

Two days had passed since the previous departure, so mail with Paris posting dates of October 12-13 was on board, as well as delayed mail with Paris dates of October 5-10, and some earlier delayed mail. This was the first balloon to have carried all of the available current mail (i.e. October 12-13).

An interesting, and difficult, question is which balloon of the two carried the current mail, and which (if not both) carried the delayed mail. It is nearly impossible to differentiate mail from these two balloons, but an important piece of delayed mail addressed to western France shows an important piece of delayed mail addressed to western France shows an October 16 Auxerre-to-Paris rail transit; Auxerre was southwest of Chaumont, and the "Cavaignac's" mail was taken eastward from Chaumont after processing. This means that the delayed piece was on the "Bart 1," and gives some indication that delayed mail was on the "Bart 1." Further, some current mail can be shown to have been on the "Cavaignac." In reality, both balloons probably carried some of the delayed mail, and all of the current mail was most likely on the "Cavaignac."

Conclusion

To summarize, much of the September/early-October mail can now be specifically identified, and many of the identifications arrived at in this study are different than previously thought. The study suggests that:

- 1). The "Neptune" carried no regular mail; those few very rare covers which had been thought to be "Neptune" covers are actually line-crosser covers. The September 18-22 mail was all delayed to a variety of later balloons;

no general guidelines which might allow specific identification of this mail to specific balloons can be determined.

2.) The "Ville de Florence" carried most of the September 24 mail; all of the September 23 and some of the September 24 mail was delayed. No general classifications of the delayed mail were deduced.

3.) The "Etats Unis" carried most of the September 27-28 mail, and part of the September 25-26 mail. The September 25-26 delayed mail was carried by a variety of October balloons, while the September 27 delayed mail was carried by the "Cavaignac/Bart 1," and the September 28 delayed mail was on the "Washington/Louis Blanc."

4.) The "Celeste" carried only the September 29 foreign mail. The remainder was transported by the "Washington/Louis Blanc." Actual "Celeste" mail is considerably rarer than previously thought.

5.) The "Armand Barbes" carried only a small portion of the September 30-October 6 mail—how that mail was culled out is unclear. The delayed September 30-October 4 mail was carried by the "Washington/Louis Blanc" while the delayed October 5-6 mail was on the "Cavaignac/Bart 1."

6.) The "Washington" and "Louis Blanc" double departure carried the October 11 mail, in addition to the delayed September 28-October 4 mail. The October 7-10 mail, which should have been on these balloons, was delayed to the "Cavaignac/Bart 1."

7.) The "Cavaignac" and "Jean Bart 1" double departure carried the October 12-13 mail, in addition to the September 27 delayed mail, and the October 5-10 delayed mail.

As a final note, it is important to remember that this study's findings are based on a sample of 5000 balloon covers, and rely on the integrity of that sample. The author believes the sample to be highly reliable, but any additional or contradictory information would be greatly appreciated.

Steven Walske, June 1986

THE SEPTEMBER BALLONS MONTÉS

By Ernst M. Cohn

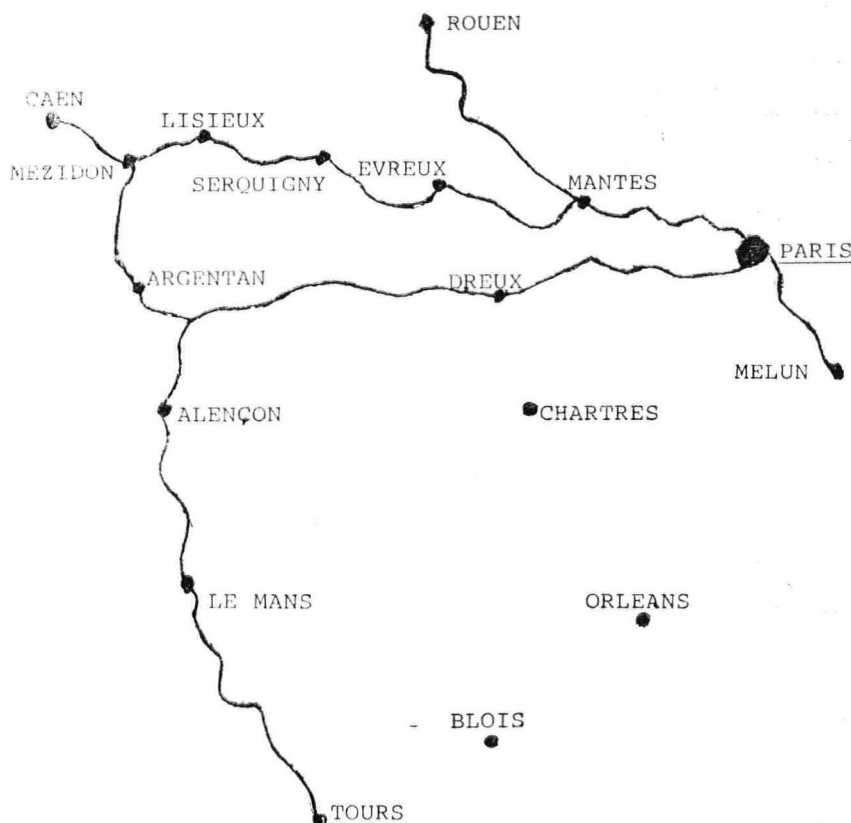
Introduction

Enough has been written in the philatelic press—and in English—about the adventurous flights of mail balloons during the siege of Paris, so that this information need not be repeated. There is, however, a good bit of detail available that has not yet been evaluated for postal history purposes, some of which leads to surprising new insights. Two major sources in particular have gone largely unused, except for a few instances:

(1) Accounts in contemporary newspapers from provincial France and abroad, as far away as the USA.

Where enough material has been found, it has already been used, e.g., for accounts about Piper's balloons, the "Montgolfier," "Ville d'Orléans," "Jacquard," "Volta," "Ville de Paris," "Général Chanzy," and "Monge." During the search for this and other information, considerably more data have been accumulated, including details that shed light on the fate of the mail aboard other balloons.

(2) Information contained in sales catalogues, some of which is as un-



A simplified map of the general area, showing the main railway lines.

reliable as are many newspaper accounts. Nevertheless, much of it is not available elsewhere and is authentic, especially when supported by photos.

Ruth and Gardner Brown have used that source for their "pretend collection," their maps showing the distribution of balloon mail by dates and locations (unpublished), lists of personally-entrusted mail and of covers post-marked with the red PARIS SC, both special types of mail useful as tracers.

It is the purpose of this study to utilize such sources as well as books and journal articles—philatelic and otherwise—that cite contemporary information but have gone largely unnoticed for postal history purposes.

To make the information useful without references to other sources, it is supplemented by the statistics for each flight as found, e.g., in appendix 2 of "The Flight of the 'Ville d'Orleans'" (1978).

The "Neptune"

1200 cubic meters, owned by post office, piloted by Claude Jules Duruof, no passengers, 100-125 kg mail (?) in 2 or 3 bags, no pigeons, left Place St. Pierre about 0745 hours on 23 September landed about 1100 hours near Cracouville (not Craconville), Eure.

The few inhabitants with whom they (two mailmen who brought 3000 letters to Triel on 24 September) could talk told them that the balloon, which had left Paris on the 23rd at 10 minutes before 8, had hovered over St.-Germain about half past 8 and that it had dropped some copies of the newspaper "National" and a certain number of cards on which one could read:

Boulevard Bonne-Nouvelle.—Bonnes nouvelles. (1)

Evreux, 23 September.—Today, about 9 o'clock in the morning, an enormous balloon passed over our town, going in a westerly direction.

An officer of the national guard, M. Emile Nepveu, quickly mounted his horse and followed . . .

About half past ten, it landed near the entrance gate of the chateau of Cracouville. . . At the same moment arrived M. Emile Nepveu and Messrs. de Vatismesnil and Lecouteux the last two being members of the general council. Messrs. Vatismesnil and Lecouteux had followed the balloon from Vernon. . (2)

Etrépagny, 24 September, 7 A.M.—Yesterday I saw a balloon, which had left Paris, from Vernon to Cracouville, where the aeronaut who piloted it made his descent on Admiral de la Roncière's property.

He carried dispatches for Tours and some 200 kilos of letters and journals.

I immediately took the aeronaut to the prefecture, where he delivered a dispatch (the one from the mayor of Paris). I received the following information. . .

Count Lecoulteux, Mayor of Etrépagny (3)

Evreux, 23 September noon.—The courier who arrived by balloon carried only official dispatches. The news from Paris are good. . . Brought to the prefecture, the aeronaut left his balloon there and departed immediately to accomplish his mission. . .

The Mayor of Evreux. (4)

Argentan, 23 September 8 P.M.—I have just seen, at the Argentan station, a traveler who left Paris this morning, going to Tours, where he will arrive with this letter. This traveler left the capital by means of a balloon, and he passed right over the enemy lines, who tried to hit him but in vain. . .

He has also brought the mail from Paris which will travel by the train to which I am about to entrust this hasty note. (5)

Argentan, 23 September (Friday) 9 P.M.—Train No. 24 left Mézidon 45

minutes late to await train 17.

This delay was due to a telegram from Serquigny, announcing a Government courier taking urgent dispatches to Tours. . . (6)

(Duruof arrived at Tours on the morning of the 24th.) (7)

(Thus, Duruof went from Cracouville by way of Evreux, Bernay, Lisieux, Mézidon, Argentan, Alençon and Le Mans to Tours. Knowing this route helps in understanding the characteristic transit markings of the mail from the "Neptune.")

Dear Friend, We are blockaded since Monday, attempts made by the post office have failed, its services cannot break through the enemy lines.

In a moment, we shall try using a balloon; I entrust these few lines to it. . . Signed Dorian (8)

(Nadar also entrusted a number of letters to Duruof, e.g., to the "Times," the "Indépendance Belge" [published in the issue of the 29th] and to his friend Mera at Lyon. Unfortunately, nothing is known about the covers of any of these.)

In the afternoon of the 25th, important news were received from Paris, dated the 20th, 21st, and 22nd September. . . The news from Paris cited above were brought by an aeronaut. His balloon contained 120 kg letters. (9)

On 29 September, letters of the 24th from Paris arrived at Brussels; it is said that they were taken to Tours by the aeronaut Duruof (sic) and transported by mail from there. (10)

(Note, however, the date of the "Indépendance.")

As concerns evidence gathered from covers, those entrusted to Duruof and posted between Cracouville and Mézidon are cancelled with the train cancel PCN (Paris à Caen) of 23 September and arrived at Fécamp, Dieppe, La Délivrande and Bordeaux on the 24th, and at Abbeville on the 26th. All bear the red cachet of the Aéroliers.

In her sales list of 1970, the late Madame Marchand had a cover cancelled at the Place de la Bourse (Paris) on the 20th, which arrived at Caen on the 24th, obviously not entrusted personally to the pilot (because of the Paris postmark) but possibly carried on the "Neptune." Still, at that time a few postmen also got through the lines, so one cannot be certain of the means of transport.

Letters posted at Tours are postmarked on the 24th with the train marking Bordeaux à Paris and arrived at Bordeaux on the 25th and at Fécamp on the 26th. LePileur mentions a cover for Fécamp, also arrived on the 26th, but with the transit cancel in the reverse direction, Paris à Bordeaux of the 24th. Both covers to Fécamp are struck with the red cachets of the Aéroliers. (11)

Cappart cites the train mark Paris à Clermont of the 24th. (12)

In addition, LePileur lists two covers with that Aéroliers cachet, one postmarked first at Tours on 2 October and addressed to Le Havre (no other cachets mentioned), the other marked at Tours on the 3rd and arrived at Caen on the 4th. If the red cachets are not forgeries, then these two covers must be true "Neptunes," despite their late dates, because no mail was exchanged between the two balloon builders; and after the departure of the "Neptune," no other Nadar balloon left Paris until 7 October.

After more than a century, not a single letter has been identified that was normally posted at Paris and undoubtedly went via the "Neptune." That peculiarity has never been explained satisfactorily. Perhaps the answer is implied in the letter from the mayor of Evreux, cited in reference (4). It must not be forgotten that the "Neptune" was the third balloon in which pilots

tried to leave Paris, the first two being unsuccessful. The post office may not have been willing to gamble on the success of this third trial, hence may have loaded only printed matter into the mail bags that were tied to the "Neptune." If so, we have another case of phantom postal history and may be searching for mail that never existed. The fact remains that the only certain "Neptunes" are those personally entrusted to its pilot.

Notes and References on the "Neptune"—

- (1)—*Le Temps* (Paris), 29 Sept. 1870, page 3, column 2 (=p3c2).
- (2)—*Le Journal d'Indre-et-Loire*, 27 Sept., p1c5, p2c1-2; also cited by Rafaele Amici in his excellent study, "Les Ballons du Siège de Paris en 1870-71," *Revue des PTT de France* No. 6 (1953) pp. 15-24, by error attributed to the 26th instead of 27th. Amici continues with a story by Tissandier from the same paper, 2 Oct., according to which "Mr. J. Duruof, who piloted the balloon, informed the people that he came from Paris carrying Government despatches for the Delegation at Tours."

"Mr. E. Nepveu returned immediately to Evreux to tell the prefect he should have a special train ready at the station to take Mr. J. Duruof to Tours. At 1:30 P.M. Mr. J. Duruof arrived at Evreux, whence he left immediately for Tours."
- (3)—*L'Avenir du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg*, 1 Oct., p2: 'L'Echo du Nord received word of the following dispatch, addressed on the 26th, during the day, to Mr. Pouyer-Quertier, President of the Lloyd at Rouen:"
- (4)—The photo of the letter of the mayor of Evreux, dated 6 Sept. 1899, is in the typed copy of Amici's study but was not included in reference 2: "Evreux, 6 September 1899.—Sir, I have the honor of sending you the information that I have found in a local newspaper of the time: . . . Yours, etc.. The Mayor of Evreux. To Mr. G. Mangin, Pensioner at Les Mureaux (Seine et Oise)."
- (5)—*La Province*, 29 Sept., p2: "L'Union bretonne cites the following letter, received by a person at Tours:"
- (6)—*Journal de Loir-et-Cher*, 28 Sept., p2c2.
- (7)—*Vossische Zeitung*, 2 Oct., p6c1, citing *Le Constitutionnel*.
- (8)—*Journal de Genève*, 29 Sept., p1c5: "Mr. César Bertholon, Prefect of the Loire, received the following letter by balloon from Mr. Dorian, Minister of Public Works:"
- (9)—*La Gazette Jurassienne*, 1 Oct., p1c1.
- (10)—*Volkszeitung* (Berlin), 2 Oct., p2c2.
- (11)—Jacques LePileur, "Les Aérostats Poste 1870-1871" (n.d., 1953?), pp. 20, 21, 189.
- (12)—Hubert Cappart, "Etude sur les plis confiés aux aéronautes des ballons montés," *Bull. No. 25, Société des Amis du Musée Postale* (1969) pp. 1-27.
- (13)—Pierre Courtois, "L'Identification des Aérostats-poste du Siège de Paris," *L'Echo de la Timbrologie* No. 1248 (Dec. 1957) p. 521. Courtois appears to have been the first to question the composition of the "mail" and the definition of "mail bags" as used in connection with the "Neptune."

The "Ville de Florence"

1400 cubic meters, owned by Ministry of Public Works, piloted by Gabriel Mangin, passenger Pierre A. Lutz, 97-150 kg mail in 3 bags. 3 pigeons, left La Glacière about 1100 hours on 25 September, landed about 1400 hours near Vernouillet, Seine-et-Oise.

THE SECOND BALLOON FROM PARIS. Report by Mr. Lutz.— . . . loaded with four bags of (p.o.) mail. . . Obligated to drop the mail bags. . . Peasants saw the bags fall and hastened to run and save them from the enemy, whose lines were only a few minutes away. . . I immediately gave what was left of the mail to some men who hastened to carry it to the post office at Meulan. Nothing lost. . . I hastened to Triel. . . we hastened as fast as possible to Meulan, where the mail had already arrived. . . I continued to Mantes. . . I hastened to Evreux, where I arrived at 3 A.M. (on the 26th). . . (14)

Evreux, 26 Sept., 2:30 P.M.—Prefect to government delegate. Tours.— Today I received messenger arriving by balloon. Mr. P.-A. Lutz du Rhône, who landed at Triel, as he said, with voluminous mail. He left by express train for Tours. (15)

. . . It is among the meadows (those of Daroches, 1 km from Vernouillet) . . . that he (Mangin) succeeded in landing. . . he gave his mail bags to the mayor (of Vernouillet) who promised to forward them to Mantes. . . in the abandoned uniform of Lutz he found a thick billfold which contained dispatches addressed to Cremieux. . . the letters from Lutz hidden in the lining of his cap. . . Mangin went to the post office (of Mantes, on the evening of the 25th) to make sure the mail bags had indeed arrived. . . The next day (26th) to Rosny-sur-Seine. . . At Evreux, Mangin saw Lutz again who had asked a mailman from Triel, Lebrun, to accompany him there. . . Upon his arrival the next day (27th) at 11 P.M. he (Mangin) hurried to transmit to Cremieux the letters abandoned by Lutz. . . Lutz who had arrived in the capital of the Touraine about 24 hours before Mangin. . . (16)

On his way from Vernouillet to Mantes, the aeronaut traversed Mézières . . . slept in the woods of Malville. . . they arrived at Passy at only 5 P.M. . . Mr. Mangin arrived soon afterwards at Evreux, carrier of valuable and confidential dispatches, which he could transmit on Wednesday evening (28th) to Mr Cremieux. (17)

I (Mangin) carried 300 kilogrammes of letters. . . Now then, Mr. Gabriel Mangin also arrived at Tours, although delayed by the care he expended on his balloon. . . (18)

. . . on the plain of Creteil(?). . . The mail that he had strewn on the plain of Creil(?) as well as that which had been retained was immediately taken to the post office of Meulan. . . Mr. Lutz brings us. . . 300 kil. of mail. . . (19)

(Hence the reports of the two balloonists agree on 300 kg mail. Yet the "Ville de Florence" would not have gotten off the ground with two men, 300 kg mail, a package of propaganda leaflets, and its normal ballast. Its actual weight of mail was between 97 (20) and 104 (21) kg, according to Paris Papers. And what happened to some of that mail strewn out of the basket?):

(26 Sept.) Another messenger bearing letters from Paris has been captured, and a balloon rose out of the city dropped some letters which we fortunately picked up. (22)

(29 Sept.) . . . even if the balloon letters, found recently, sound a bit depressed. (23)

Versailles, 30 September.—A few days ago, at Argenteuil, a balloon was not so lucky, as it was hit by three shots and came toppling over, and its contents, two French officers and some three thousand letters, fell into the hands of the 86th Regiment, quartered at Argenteuil. (24)

(Even if part of this last story is fantasy, the 4th Army Corps, which

Corrections To
"New Studies of the Transport of Mails in Wartime France 1870-71"

Several misspellings and omissions occurred:

Page:

- 19 Next to last ilne under 12 April: "acknowledge" misspelled.
20 Line 4: "Denis again tomorrow morning"
34 In ref. (12): "Postal"
35 For ref. (22): "26 Sept."; ref. (23) "29 Sept."
37 (27) should be (28); the missing ref. (27) is: "Le Journal d'Indre-et-Loire, 27 Sept. p1c2"
37 Two lines after (27) should be omitted as meaningless.
40 Line 4: "or arrival"
41 Ref. (38): "de la Loire"
41 Line above (46): "papers and succeeded"
42 Next to last line "whether it is . . ."
43 Line 3 under "The Armand Barbès": "Spuller, 2-15 kg mail . . . Place St. Pierre"
45 Line 10 from bottom: "Vexin"
47 Line 12 from bottom: "Billhault 13"
51 Line 2: "Blanc-Mervili . . ."
58 First line citing ref. (48): "Vierzon"
69 4th paragraph from bottom, 2nd line: "Indeed, mail is known . . ."
71 Ref. (80): "#1329 (1964) . . ."
72 Line 20 of text: "teriel to Tours"

held the region around Argenteuil, did contain the 8th Infantry Division that included the 16th Infantry Brigade. And that, in turn, contained the 86th Regiment of Holstein Fusiliers.) (25)

Mantes, 28 September.—To the Director General at Tours, Inspectors Evreux-Rouen.—The dispatches brought by the balloon that fell on the 24th (sic) near Melun (sic) were all sent via Mantes. There was a Journal Officiel addressed to Tours, which the postmaster at Mantes sent immediately to the Evreux office so it would be sent from there to its destination.—F.C.C., the Inspector: RICICON (or RUCICON). (26)

Tours, 27 September 1870.—Sir, A new mailing of aerostatic dispatches, arrived at Tours, has brought us the Journal Officiel of 25 September. . . Havas. (27)

The mail brings us this morning (27th or 28th) our Paris correspondence of the 24th. . . (28)

Now for the evidence provided by covers:

For personally entrusted mail, the transit marking of Tours from the 27th is typical. From there via Brest-à-Paris train (28th) to Ventnor (Isle of Wight, 1 Oct.); via Le Mans (27th) to Château-la-Vallière (30th); Périgieux (28th) and St. Astier (29th); Sancerre (1 Oct.); St. Sever (28th); St. Valéry-en-Caux (1 Oct.); Villedieu-les-Poêles (28th). Cappart also mentions a Tours marking dated the 29th; and an arrival at Bayeux on the 27th, without any transit mark.

For ordinary mail, the transit cachet of LeMans of the 27th is characteristic. From there to Alençon (28th); Sablé (28th); and St. Calais (28th). Also known are transit marks from Alençon (27th) to Putanges (28th); from Bordeaux-à-Irun (28th) to Oloron-Ste-Marie (28th); from Caen (28th) for Tilly-s.-Seulles (28th); and from Paris-à-Cherbourg (28th) to Deauville (28th).

Ordinary mail postmarked at Paris on the 24th is known without transit but arrival at Angoulême (28th), Bordeaux (28th), Béziers (29th), Caen (28th), Dieppe (28th), Etretat (28th), LeHavre (28th), LeMans (28th), Mâcon (29th), Niort (29th), Pau (28th or 29th), Toulouse (29th), and Vannes (28th).

Except for two items mentioned below, I have found no ordinary mail with Paris cancels either of the 23rd or of the 25th. It looks as though only mail bags filled on the 24th were put aboard the "Ville de Florence." Whereas, in principle, mail from earlier siege days might have been put aboard, that does not seem to have happened. And the earliest outside postmarks date from the 27th.

Here, however, are three exceptions, letters supposedly arrived on 26 September already:

(1) Cappart (29) mentions a personally entrusted letter that arrived on that day at Rosny-s.-Seine.

(2) Amici (16) shows, on page 22, an ordinary letter postmarked at Paris, Rue St. Dominique St. Gn 7E/24 Sept., supposedly arrived at "Vernouillet par Triel" on the 26th., Amici does not state his reasons for citing the date, which does not appear on the face of the cover.

The normal mail apparently was not sorted on the way. Furthermore, the 7th clearing was never sorted at Paris until the next day, i.e., the 25th, in the early morning. Thus we would have an ordinary letter, sorted at Paris on the 25th, arrived already on the 26th at Vernouillet????

(3) LePileur (30) shows an exceptional cover on page 19, addressed to a doctor at Meulan. It was cancelled the 16th by the Croydon (England) duplex, struck with the British P.D. and with the transit mark ANGL. AMB.

CALAIS of the 17th. Thus it must have reached Paris right before the start of the total blockade. There it was delayed a bit. On the back there is an endorsement in fluent handwriting "arrived from Paris by balon (sic) descended at Verneuil (sic) on 25 September 1870, delivered here on the 26th." The picture doesn't show a trace of a British stamp. But the photo of that cover, in sale #108 of Jamet, lot 794, shows the stamp. In the lot description is the statement "postmark of Meulan on back, 26 September." Of course, this cover might have been brought out by a smuggler. But this explanation cannot hold for item (2). Also, it must be remembered that a papillon of Metz, which arrived at Paris on the 18th, was forwarded and received at Saumur, where it was postmarked 1E/25 September.

Notes and References on the "Ville de Florence"—

- (14)—Le Moniteur Universel (Tours), 29 Sept.
- (15)—Le Journal d'Indre-et-Loire, 28 Sept., p2c2.
- (16)—Rafaele Amici, "La Ville de Florence," Revue des PTT de France, No. 6 (1954) pp. 15-23.
- (17)—La Gironde (Bordeaux), 2 Oct. p2.
- (18)—La Province, 3 Oct. p2.
- (19)—Le Courrier de la Gironde, 30 Sept. p2.
- (20)—Le Moniteur Universel (Paris), 27 Sept. p. 1370.
- (21)—L'Electeur Libre, 28 Sept. p2c3.
- (22)—"Journals of Fieldmarshal Count von Blumenthal" (English translation), p. 139.
- (23)—Julius Adrian Friedrich Wilhelm von Verdy du Vernois, "Im grossen Hauptquartier 1870/71," Berlin, 1895, p. 192.
- (24)—Semiweekly Tribune (New York), 21 Oct., p3c2.
- (25)—Georges Schild, "Die 'Ordres de bataille' der nord- und süddeutschen Armeen während des Krieges 1870/71," CENTEX catalogue (Fribourg, Switzerland, 1970) pp. 25-45.
- (26)—Rafaele Amici, see ref. 2.
- (27)—Le Journal de Maine-et-Loire, 28 Sept., p1c3.
- (29)—Hubert Cappart, see ref. 12.
- (30)—Jacques LePileur, ref. 11, pp. 17-19; p. 150 for Tours.
- (27)—Sept. and p. 154 for Tours 29 Sept.

The "Etats-Unis"

1400 cubic meters, owned by post office, piloted by Louis Godard, passenger Jules G. Courtin, 58-85 kg mail in 2 bags, 6 pigeons, left La Villette gas works about 1000 hours on 29 September, landed about 1300 hours near Magnanville, Seine-et-Oise.

Ministry of Interior, Directorate General of Telegraph Lines, Office of the Director General, Paris, 27 September 1870.—Mister Minister, I hasten to inform you that tomorrow, Wednesday the 28th, at 7 A.M., another balloon will leave and that your dispatches can be received until that hour at the main post office.

If you have an urgent despatch to be telegraphed, we ask you to send it to us on somewhat thin paper; we shall add to it an order prepared in advance, by means of which the pilot will require the telegraph station nearest his place of descent to send without delay to Washington the dispatch that you will have entrusted to me.

Yours etc. For the Director General, Chief of the Office
/s/ Leveillé,

(same stationery) Paris, 28 September 1870.—Mister Minister, Tomorrow morning at 6 o'clock a mail balloon will leave. I repeat the offer that I had the honor to make to you yesterday in the name of the Telegraph Administration. If you have an urgent dispatch, please send it to us before midnight, if possible; we shall arrange things so that. . . (31)

Estancelin to Prefect of Seine-Inférieure, Mantes, 29 September, 2 P.M.—I have just received, 3 km from Mantes, a messenger arrived by balloon, who left Paris at 9 A.M. . . (32)

The Fourth (sic) Balloon.—Mr. J.-G. Courtin. . . and. . . M. Louis Godard having passed Mantes, made preparations to land. . . Mr. Estancelin . . . gave the government emissary an escort to Mantes. . . A carriage with two horses was immediately put at his disposition to reach Evreux.

Mr. Courtin took the railroad to Evreux and stopped three hours at Mézidon. At Argentan he was very well received by the stationmaster. . . He continued on his way via Alençon and LeMans and arrived at Tours Friday (30 Sept.) at 9:30 P.M. He immediately transmitted to the Government the dispatches that he carried. . .

Mr. Courtin carried several thousand proclamations printed at the National Printing Works in French and in German. . .

We said that the two balloons carried 83 kil. letters. Mr. Godard and Mr. Courtin, luckier or more skilful than Mr. Lutz, did not need to throw any overboard to lighten the load. They arrived at Mantes with their load intact. (33)

ACCOUNT OF MY VOYAGE FROM PARIS ON 29 SEPT. 1870.—At the moment of departure, the gas being only smoke, I was forced to leave behind one passenger and one bag of mail from the post office. I thus took along one passenger and two bags of mail and a small bag that the voyager had taken. . .

My voyager. . . left me and promised to await me at Mantes. . . he had already left all the mail at the post office. . .

The post office of Mantes had given me a package of sealed letters to give to a general who was at Tours. . . I left (Mantes) with the driver for Evreux; it was then 7 P.M. . . we waited until the next morning. . . (on the 30th) I was taken to Evreux, to the prefecture of Evreux. . . There they took the correspondence that I had for Tours. . . my balloon. . . could not leave until the next day, where I also had to stay until the next noon, first departure. . . I thus left the next day (31 Sept.) for Tours, where I had to stay at LeMans, as the train did not go further. . . The next day (1 Oct.) leaving for Tours. . . I finally arrived at Tours at noon. . .

(Unfortunately, this account is perhaps not too reliable, because the details of Louis Godard's story shows that he had mental problems either in 1870 already or at least when the account was written down. A "cleaned up" version was published in *La France Aérienne* quite some time after his death.)

. . . the total weight of mail was 85 kilogr. instead of 120. . . We were arrested about 2.8 km from Mantes near 3 o'clock. . . Mr. Courtin. . . left with the letters that the post office had entrusted to us. . . (35)

(During the landing) one of the mail bags opened, letting some bundles of letters drop out. Three of those bundles were found again some two weeks later, by a peasant who gave them to Madame Thomas, Postmistress at Pacy-sur-Eure, who stamped them with the dater of her office (17 October 1870) and sent them on. (36)

(What should we make of that report? Pacy is on the route from Mantes to Evreux. Is it possible that someone lost these packages from a wagon

instead of from the balloon? None of these letters has surfaced in recent years.)

The mail from the "Etats-Unis" and the "Céleste" will be discussed together, after pertinent portions of the history of the latter have been cited.

Notes and References on the "Etats-Unis"—

(31)—Correspondence, American Legation Paris, Elihu B. Washburne, vol. 2, Miscellaneous Correspondence Received, May 1869-Dec. 1872 (at National Archives, Washington, DC).

(32)—Le Temps (Paris), 7 Oct. p2c1.

(33)—L'Echo de Bruxelles, 8 Oct. p1-c3-4 (from L'Union Libérale).

(34)—Typed copy of the account of Louis Godard, given to author by the late Paul Maincent.

(35)—La France Aérienne, Sept. 1897, pp. 8-9.

(36)—Louis A. Chaintrier, "Histoire documentaire et anecdotique des Ballons-Poste du Siège de Paris (1870-71)," *Echangiste Universel*, No. 649 (June 1954) p.p 122-3. ff.

The "Céleste"

700 or 780 cubic meters, owned by post office, piloted by Gaston Tissandier, no passenger, 80-84 kg mail in 2-3 bags, small government dispatch bag, 3 pigeons, left Vaugirard gas works about 0930 hours on 30 September, landed about 1150 hours near Dreux, Eure-et-Loire.

Dreux, 30 Sept., 2:20 P.M.—The Sub-prefect to the Minister of the Interior.—Mr. Tissandier, carrier of letters and dispatches, descended by balloon at Dreux. He will leave this evening at 7 o'clock for Tours and will arrive tomorrow morning. (37)

I soon arrived at Tours, where I was on 1 October at 7 A.M. (38)

The mail was given by himself into the hands of Mr. Hubert, the postmaster of Dreux, who sent it to its destination.

. . . Mr. Gaston Tissandier left Dreux in mid-afternoon. He arrived at Tours on 1 October at 7 A.M. . . a little satchel containing the official dispatches that he delivered personally into the hands of admiral Fourichon (36)

Now for the evidence provided by the covers.

Mail transported by these two balloons is not rare as compared with mail from the "Ville de Florence," but differentiating between the two balloons is usually impossible.

Let us first describe the covers that were certainly aboard the "Etats-Unis." They are characterized by the marking of the railway station of Mantes. I am aware of only two of them. One (39) was mailed at Paris, Rue Serpente 6E/27 Sept., bears a transit mark from the Mantes station of 3E/29 Sept., Alençon 4E/1 Oct., and Ecouché 1E/2 Oct. The other is a personally entrusted letter, written on 28 Sept., cancelled with the small numeral 2190 of Mantes, also Mantes railway cds 2E?/29 Sept., Elbeuf 1 Oct. (40). Its text mentions "Paul just came to tell me that he will see Mr. Godard tomorrow at the moment when he will mount the balloon." And then there is a probable cover by this balloon (41), personally entrusted and officially franked, written the 26th: "Tomorrow a balloon will leave and will take this word to you."

The most remarkable of the above covers is undoubtedly the first one, indicating as it does that some of the regular, bagged mail was processed at Mantes already.

"Céleste" mail can be definitely identified by the large 1352 and excep-

tionally the small numeral in a lozenge, both from Dreux, on personally entrusted letters. The Dreux cds appears not to have been used. Ordinary mail is certain when posted at Paris on the 29th of September and showing an earliest transit marking (on arrival) before 7 October, in general. Clearly, however, a cover postmarked at Paris, Finances 57/29 Sept. and struck with the railway mark Genève-Culoz of 8 Oct. must be a "Céleste" as well, in view of the distance, which was impossible to cover from Epineuse to Switzerland under the circumstances in such a short time.

I know of only six covers with the 1352 lozenge, dated between 27 and 29 Sept., four of which arrived at Fécamp and Brissac on 2 Oct., the others at Hastings and Dewsbury (both England) on 3 Oct. The text for Dewsbury mentions that "Gaston leaves tomorrow."

The contemporary US press contains descriptions of cards sent by the "Céleste":

One card (42) was franked with an 80-centimes stamp and sent by Jules Lermine to his brother Paul. The manuscript date of the 30th is in error, for the card was mailed at Paris on the 29th, stamped LONDON PAID 3 Oct and received at the Fisk Junior Co. Opera House in New York.

Two other cards were also sent on the 29th, one by George Kidder to his father, E. H. Kidder, at New York, the other by William Dreyer to E. Dreyer, Fayette Street, Baltimore (43). Do any of these cards still exist?

In any case, the newspaper record proves that cards addressed abroad were not put aboard the unmanned balloon, as has sometimes been claimed.

Other certain "Céleste" mail is, e.g., a letter of the 29th, posted at Pont-Neuf, received at Brussels the 3rd; Paris 60 4E/29, Geneva 6th; rue d'Eng-hien 5E/29, France-Midi 6th, Brussels 6th; Finances 5E/29, Genève-Culoz 8th; and another card, avenue Josephine 29th, Cowes (England) 3 Oct.

A group of personally entrusted covers, postmarked first at Tours on 1 October, is uncertain, with one exception. That one (44), written on the 27th, says: "A balloon that leaves tomorrow morning, if the wind is good, will bring you this little letter." As Mr. Robineau explained, that confirms that this note was given to someone on the "Etats-Unis." But that is the only certain one of the bunch.

There is no absolute proof that at least a part of the mail of the "Céleste" was taken to Tours and processed there the same day. At least one personally entrusted letter of the 29th is known to have been treated thus. Unfortunately, that still leaves open the question of the balloonist who carried it.

The letters were quickly distributed from Tours: Nantes and even Bordeaux on the 2nd; Castres-s-l'Agout the 2nd and 3rd; Dijon, Rochefort-s-Mer, Thury Harcourt, La Crau, Montpellier, Toulon-s-Mer, Vals, and Ciney (Belgium) the 3rd; Château-la-Vallière only on the 4th. Whereas a letter postmarked at Tours on 1 October arrived at Le Mans (bureau de passe 2188) on the 2nd, it did not complete the trip from there to Lorient until the 20th; why?

A personally entrusted cover of the 27th went through the Mans station on the 1st and arrived at Sablé-s-Sarthe on the 2nd. Another of the 28th was postmarked at Nantes the 2nd and Le Mans the 3rd, arriving at Luc-s-Mer the 5th; in passing one stamp was cancelled by the numeral 691 of Caen. Why this detour via Nantes? On the other hand, a personally entrusted letter of the 28th, cancelled with the lozenge 2602 of Nantes, was postmarked at Nantes on the 2nd and arrived at Machecoul on the 3rd, the direct route.

Among normal p.o. mail there is a whole correspondence for Livarot (45): Mailed at Paris on 25, transit Paris-Caen on 1; 26, Caen-Paris 2; 27, bureau de passe 691 (Caen), Livarot 1; 28, Caen 2; 29, Livarot 15, hence transported by a later balloon.

The following are examples of ordinary mail by these balloons:

25th—Cherche-Midi, Dieppe 1 Oct.; Legislatif, Yvetot 1.

26th—Paris (60), Da Susa A Torino 3, Domodossola 4; St. Antoine, Lille 2.

27th—Paris (60), Grenoble 1, redirected; Bourse, Bordeaux 1: Bonaparte, Brive 2; Enghien, Montreux 3; Lazare, London 3; Rue Amsterdam, Worthing 4.

28th—written that day, Madeleine 2?, Mulhouse 1 Oct.; Serpente, Toulouse 2; Rue Amsterdam, Bordeaux 2, Ste. Chapelle, Nevers 3.

Notes and References on the "Céleste"—

(37)—Le Journal d'Indre-et-Loire, 2 Oct., p2c3.

(38)—Gaston Tissandier, "Souvenirs et récits d'un Aérostatier Militaire de l'Armée de la Loire," Paris 1891, p. 31.

(39)—Sale Robineau 98, lot 754; also #102, lot 421.

(40)—Sale Robineau of 30 May 1979 (Courtois collection) lot 15.

(41)—same sale, lot 11.

(42)—Le Courrier des Etats-Unis (New York), 17 Oct., p2.

(43)—Baltimore Sun, 7 Oct. p1c5 (citing news from London of 6 Oct.).

(44)—Sale Robineau 75, lot 2021.

(45)—Sale Roumet, 1968.

Unnamed Balloon

125 cubic meters, owned by post office, unmanned, 4 kg postcards, no pigeons, left La Glacière about 1200 hours, shot down about 1300 hours in Bois de Fausses Reposes (between the lines at Paris).

None of these cards can be identified with certainty, except perhaps for some endorsement made on one or the other by a German soldier that it was booty. Günther Heyd mentions that some 500 fell into the hands of soldiers of the 2nd Silesian Infantry Regiment and hence were taken to Silesia as booty. Heyd put ads into Silesian local papers and succeeded in finding almost a dozen such cards. (46)

Those recovered by the French were later forwarded most likely by the "Jean-Bart No. 2," also called the "LaFayette." But belated arrival is no proof that such a card was on the unmanned balloon, particularly in view of the fact that it was shown, on hand of the Roseleur correspondence, that the Paris post office deliberately held up cards more than letters, at least at the beginning of the airlift. (47)

Notes and References on Unnamed Balloon—

(46)—Günther Heyd, "Die Ballons von Paris 1870-71," Hamburg 1970, 55 pp.

(47)—Ernst M. Cohn, "La Correspondance Roseleur Pendant le Siège de Paris," La Philatélie Française No. 306 (Dec. 1979) pp. 448-450.

Conclusions

Despite some obvious contradictions and errors in several newspaper accounts as well as in the reports of the balloonists themselves, one can—by careful evaluation of the sum total of information—arrive at insights that

are not only novel but also reliable.

Thus, e.g., mail from the "Ville de Florence" is rarer than the total loaded aboard would seem to indicate, at least as concerns positively identifiable mail. Differentiating between mail from the "Etats-Unis" and the "Celeste" is usually impossible, with rare exceptions. These deserve special premiums. But even mail from the pair of balloons is worth something over the garden variety of siege mail that cannot be ascribed to any balloon. There appears to be no way of identifying mail from the unmanned balloon, short of trusting some German inscription. In view of the "improvements" made on ballon monté mail, including German handiwork, this seems hardly worth paying a premium for.

Finally, surprises are always possible. By referring to available detailed information, one can usually decide whether such a surprise is possible or whether it is simply physically impossible and hence must be a misdescription or a forgery.

THE OCTOBER BALLONS MONTÉS

By Ernst M. Cohn

See "Introduction" to "The September Ballons" in FCP for April 1986

The "Armand-Barbès"

1200 cubic meters, owned by Telegraph Office, piloted by Alexandre Jacques Trichet, passengers Léon Michel Gambetta and Seraphin Eugène Spuller, 21.5 kg mail, 16 pigeons, left Place St. Pierre about 1100 hours on 7 October, landed about 1500 hours near Epineuse (Oise). Paris postmarks 2S/30 Sept. through 1E/7 Oct. and earliest outside pmks. through morning of 12 Oct. are possible on ordinary mail from this balloon (but note later outside pmk. cited below).

Preparations and Flight—

"The proper place for us is Tours," said M. Gambetta. "Picard, make an effort to escape if you can. We must make up our minds to venture out in a balloon, which at present is the only means of our getting out." (1)

As of Tuesday next, 4 October, we shall hold at the disposal of the Administration a first new balloon of 1200 cubic meters that can carry, with the pilot, a payload of 200 to 300 kg. (2)

2 Oct., 2030 hours, Postmaster General to Interior Ministry: Nadar will not leave. Day after tomorrow, Tuesday morning at 7 o'clock, a balloon of 1200 cubic meters, constructed by him, will be ready to fly from the Place St. Pierre at Montmartre. (3)

3 October 1870. My dear Friends: Tomorrow, 4 October, in the morning the balloon of Nadar will leave¹ . . . /s/André Lavertujon.

3 October. Director of Telegraphs to M. Nadar, Place St. Pierre, Montmartre. The balloon will not be able to leave tomorrow morning at 7 o'clock. The departure must be postponed to Wednesday morning at 7 o'clock. (3)

4 October. M. Leveillé to M. Tracelet. The Interior Minister leaves tomorrow morning on our Nadar balloon from Place St. Pierre at Montmartre. He leaves at 5 in the morning. . . (3)

The balloon departure, ordered for 5 October, did not take place until the 7th. (5)

7 October. Employee at Solférino Tower to Director of Telegraphs. Balloon carrying the Minister and Balloon May left at 1115 hours in a north-westerly direction. (3)

To stop the activities of francs-tireurs, our Second Guard Regiment marched to Chantilly last week and then advanced via Creil and Beauvais. Our First Company almost made a very fortunate capture during that march. A balloon with several persons in its basket was descending. At a height of about 100 meters they tossed out a rope, probably in the opinion that we were Mobile Guards. Two dozen hands were immediately ready to grab it and pulled for all they were worth. But from a height of about 200 feet the aeronauts must have recognized us after all, because all of a sudden they got rid of the rope and it rained sand, which was being emptied from the basket to lighten the balloon and make it rise again. Even though half the company was immediately ready to shoot the rare birds down, the lieutenant forbade it, thinking they would have to land anyhow. Later some bullets were sent

¹Nadar's balloon will not have left, and this letter has probably reached us by the Gambetta balloon. It is postmarked at Amiens on 8 October. — Gironde. (4)

after them but they had ascended too high. We saw from later reports in French newspapers to our sorrow that the aeronaut was none other than Gambetta. We should surely all have been decorated had we delivered the French War Minister as our prisoner. (6)

Tours, 10 Oct. According to a private telegram to the Frankfurter Journal, Gambetta was not wounded by a shot at the balloon. (7)

MINISTÈRE
des Intérieurs

Paris, le 18 Octobre 1870

CABINET
des Ministres

Madame

*J'ai le bonheur de
vous apprendre qu'un pigeon
arrivé de Tours nous annonce
à l'instant que votre message
est arrivé en parfaite santé*

*Agreés, Madame,
l'hommage de mon respect
Le chef du cabinet*

Cherry

Fig. 1. This message concerns the safe arrival of one of the balloonists who left Paris on October 14 or 16. Pigeongrammes 4, 5, and 6 of the first official series all arrived on 18 October.

Reports on Mail—

4 October, 2210 hours, Director of Telegraphs to Postmaster General. . . Tomorrow at 5 o'clock departure of Messrs. Gambetta and Spuller. Much ballast. They will no doubt take little mail. Please hand over small package sent to you the other evening, addressed to Mr. Steenackers, and small letter to give to the telegraph office nearest the place of descent and which is very urgent. (3)

According to the *Electeur Libre*, the "Armand-Barbès" carried 10 kg mail and 16 pigeons. (8)

According to the *Journal d'Indre-et-Loire* (Tours), the balloon carried 2 kg mail. At Creil the Württembergers shot at it and hit Gambetta's hand. It landed in a tree at 1445 hours. (9)

Tours, 10 October. The balloons (sic) that carried Messrs. Gambetta and Spuller through so many dangers brought to Tours only a few copies of the *Journal Officiel* of Paris and a small bag of letters weighing some 15 kg, i.e., containing a very small amount of correspondence. (10)

Reuters, Tours, October 10. The balloon containing M. Gambetta brought only 10 kilogrammes weight of dispatches. . . The balloon brought also 20 carrier pigeons. . . (11)

Tours, October 11. Gambetta's balloon brought 39,000 letters (if the paper figured, as did most sources, 4 grams per letter, then that was just short of 10 kg). (12)

The two balloons contained pigeons, and the former also carried 10 kg of letters. (13)

We may hypothesize that the "Armand-Barbès" carried a No. 5 mail bag: In his chapter on post-office line crossers during the siege, Mallet mentions that each of two mailmen carried such a bag (p. 115); and that they left with 10 kg letters each a second time (p. 116). (14)

One of our friends from Lausanne has kindly sent us an excerpt from a letter received on the 13th (October) from Paris by manned balloon. Of five (letters) sent since the start of the siege, this is the only one that has reached him: Paris, 5 October. . . (Arrival in Switzerland on the 13th would have been impossible for mail from any later balloon.) (15)

9 October. At the moment we are all busy reading letters that came from Paris in a balloon and fell into our hands. I estimate them to number about 30,000 (this probably refers to "Piper I" but may also include mail from this balloon). (16)

We have received, by balloon that landed on the 11th (sic) October near Vigny in Vessin (sic), and piloted by the aeronaut (blank) an issue of the newspaper *Le Gaulois*, reproduced on thin paper by photography. The letters are microscopic and difficult to read. . . Newspaper of the siege (16th day).—This incomplete and garbled item refers to the mail forwarded via Magny-en-Verin, which is about 59 km from Paris on the main route Paris-Rouen-Le-Havre (from a contemporary description). (17)

A unique "pli confié," i.e., personally entrusted cover, hand-dated 3 September (sic for October), carries the red *Aéronautes* cachet and a transit marking of Luzarches, 10 October as well as arrival marking of St. Malo, 14 October. It, too, must have been tossed out of the "Armand-Barbès" near Creil. (18)

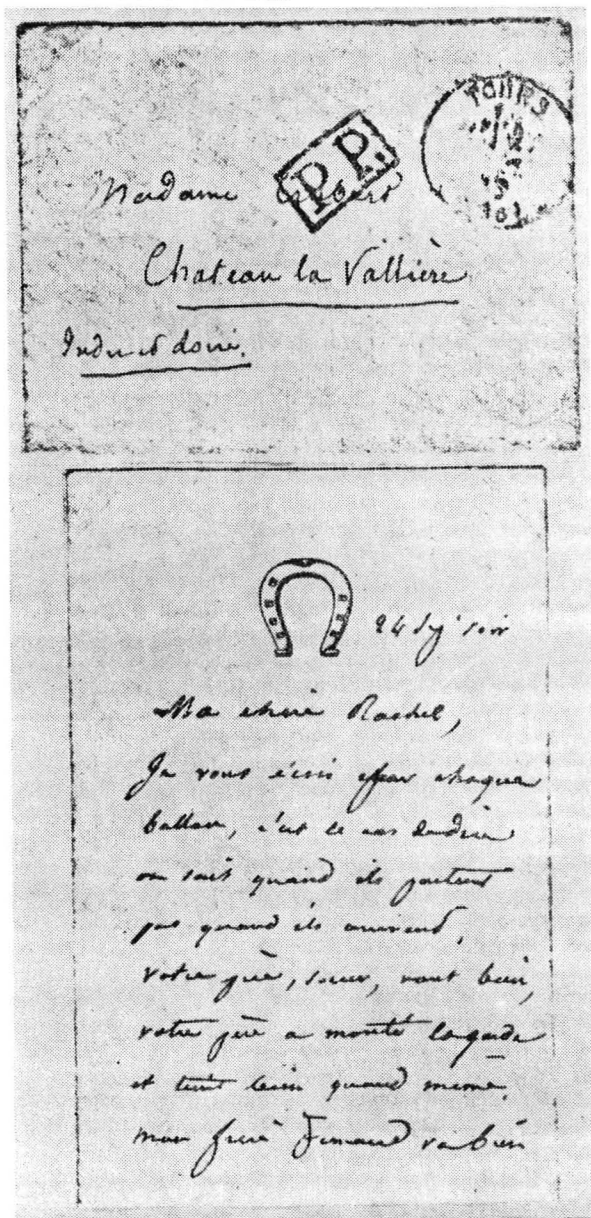
Notes and References (if not shown, year is 1870)—

1—The Daily News (Kingston, Ont.), 13 Oct., p1c5-7

2—Jean Prinnet and Antoine Dilasser, "Nadar," Paris 1966, p247

- 3—Paul Maincent, "Textes et Documents pour servir à l'histoire vraie des Ballons du Siège," Paris 1952
- 4—La Gironde (Bordeaux), 11 Oct., p11; also Le Journal de Genève (Switzerland), 13 Oct., p1c5
- 5—Andrè Lavertujon, "Gambetta Inconnu," Bordeaux 1905, p103
- 6—Egmont Fehleisen, "Der Deutsch-Französische Krieg," Reutlingen 1894, pp309-310 (from Elberfelder Zeitung)

Fig. 2a, b. Letter personally entrusted to Gabriel Mangin of the "Ville de Florence" by Colonel Foy, addressed to his sister near Tours(a). Stationery (b) is precursor to SERVICE DU BALLON, the first printed stationery for airmail.



- 7—Mainzer Journal (Morgenblatt), 12 Oct., p2c1
- 8—L'Electeur Libre (Paris), 13 Nov., tabulation
- 9—Le Journal d'Indre-et-Loire (Tours), 12 Oct., p3c3-4
- 10—Le Progrès du Nord (Lille), 14 Oct. p2-c2 (from L'Etoile Belge)
- 11—Times (London), 12 Oct., p5c1
- 12—Alabama State Journal (Montgomery), 12 Oct., p3
- 13—G. de Clerval, "Les Ballons Pendant le Siègle de Paris," Paris 1872, pp26-27 (from Le Moniteur, Tours)
- 14—François Mallet, "Les Aéronautes, les Colombophiles du Siègle de Paris," Paris 1909, vi+153 pp.
- 15—Le Nouvelliste Vaudois et Journal National Suisse (Lausanne), 23 Oct., p2c23 -
- 16—Julius Adrian Friedrich Wilhelm von Verdy du Vernois, "Im Grossen Hauptquartier 1870/71," Berlin 1895, p202
- 17—Le Journal de Bordeaux, 15 Oct., p2
- 18—Société des Amis du Musée Postal, Bulletin No. 36 (Paris) 1971, pp86-92
- 19—Paul Maincent, "Histoire du Ballon 'George Sand'," Amiens 1965, p63, cites "Jules" Trichet from Le Petit Journal of April 1871: I had. . . 3 pigeon cages and a bag of mail from the post office. . .

The "George Sand"

1200 cubic meters, owned by Charles W. May or William W. Reynolds, piloted by Joseph de Révilliod, passengers May, Reynolds and Etienne Cuzon de Rest, no mail (?), 18 pigeons, left Place St. Pierre about 1100 hours on 7 October, landed about 1600 hours near Crémery (Somme). Except for textual reference to a balloonist, personally entrusted mail cannot be distinguished from that of "Armand-Barbès."

They (the balloonists on the "George Sand") carried with them several hundred letters, despatch bags from the Legation of the United States and of the Netherlands Legation; also three baskets containing twenty carrier pigeons and thirty bags of ballast. (There is no evidence for diplomatic pouches aboard.) (20)

Reynolds and May had orders for rubber-tired velocipedes, a new silent cavalry corps. (There is no evidence for this.) (21)

(14 November) William W. Reynolds, an ill-looking New Yorker who came out of Paris in a balloon with Mr. Gambetta, wants to go back to France. (22)

(2 May 1871) Charles W. May called. He is a specious sort of man and not one that I would care to cultivate or ever to trust. (22)

May, C. W., Firnhaber & Cie., commissioners (néts-commissionnaires), Boulevard Haussmann 50; and May, Ed. (H.), artist painter, Bullaut 13. (23)

(6 Feb. 1871) Wm. W. Reynolds, 19 Maiden Lane, NYC, wrote to correct an item of 29 January and to cite Gambetta's thank-you note for the gift of the balloon. (24)

(17 Feb. 1871) Anon. letter correcting Reynolds, saying May is an American artist living in Paris. (25)

(All this confusion obviously arises from the fact that there were two Mays in Paris, Charles and Ed. While there is no doubt that the balloon did not carry any diplomatic pouches, there appears to be some doubt whether it did carry post-office mail bags. But in view of the scarcity of ordinary mail postmarked outside of Paris between October 8 and 12 or 13, it seems unlikely.)

Notes and References (if not shown, year is 1870)—

- 20—N. Y. Herald, 29 Jan. 1871, p5c3
- 21—Düsseldorfer Zeitung, 19 Oct. p3
- 22—Benjamin Moran (first secretary at U. S. Embassy, London), diary entries (at Library of Congress, Manuscript Room)
- 23—"Annuaire-Almanach du COMMERCE et de l'Industrie ou Almanach des 500,000 adresses (Didot-Bottin), 1870" (73rd year)
- 24—N. Y. Herald, 7 Feb. 1871, p5c3
- 25—ibid., 17 Feb., p8c4

Personally Entrusted Mail on "A-B" or "G-S"**A—With Aéroneutes' Cachet.—**

- Luzarches 10 Oct. St. Malo 14
- Magny 8 Oct.+Lozange 2161, Nantes ?, to Mme. Vinoy
- do. St. Cyprien 13
- do. Serguigny à Rouen 13, Le Tréport 13
- do. Chamboulives 14, Paris Red Cross cachet
- do. St. Malo 15
- do. London 17, to Daily News

The above markings are characteristic from the "A-B"

CP2 Calais à Paris D (day) 8, Miribel 11, to Mme. Dortu

CP1 Calais à Paris 1° 8, London 11

CP1 Calais à Paris 8, Marseille St. Marcel 12

Calais à Paris 8, Turin 14



Fig. 3. Letter personally entrusted to Gaston Tissandier of the "Céleste" by member of Choppin family, one of whom became chief of police during siege of Paris. Ministry of Finance handstamp on back.

These are "A-B" mail, IF only that balloon carried mail with the Aéronautes' cachet.

B—CP2 and/or Calais à Paris 8 Oct.—

Fécamp 8

Paris à Calais 2, 8, Abbeville 9

Carentan 9

Le Tréport 9

Brest 10

Nantes 10, Machecoul 14

Périgeux 10, Bourdeilles 10

Sables d'Olonne 10

Chamboulives 11

Marseille 11 (Nov?)

Angers 14

C—Lille à Paris 8 Oct.—

One was carried by May, Lille à Paris night train cachet

Paris à Calais 8, London 8

Paris à Calais 8, Manchester 9

London Paid 8

Boulogne-s-Mer 8

France-Ouest 8, Brussels 8

Le Havre 8

Yvetot 2E/8

Domart (Somme) 9

LeMans 9

Mariemont (Belgium) 9

Paris à Givet 9, for Belgium

Tours 9

Tours ?, Lubersac ?

Arcachon 10

Bordeaux 10

Brest 10 (carried by May—same as above?)

Fontenay-le-Comte 10

London 10

Lyon 10

Puy-de-Dôme 10

Tonnay-Boutonne 10

Blois 11

Troyes 11

Machecoul 13

D—Lozenge 3997 and Tours 9 Oct.—

LeMans 10, Rennes 11

Parnic 11

Montauban 11

Bordeaux 11

St. Valéry-en-Caux 11

Gand (Belgium) with due mark

E—other.—

Paris à Bâle 10, 4034 (Troyes), Esonnes 29 March 1871(!)

Fécamp 8

Nantes 9, Machecoul 10

Chartres 10, Angers 11, 30 due

Clermont-Ferrand 10

The "Piper I"

1200 cubic meters, owned by A. Piper, piloted by Racine, passengers A. Piper and Jacques or Frédéric Friedmann, 70 kg mail, 2 pigeons; left La Villette gas works about 1515 hours on 7 October, landed about 1530 hours near the Fort de l'Est. Aeronauts descended and balloon flew off. Some mail was recovered and sent later by other balloon(s). Characteristic pmk.: Trouvée à La Courneuve/Le 10 Oct. 1870. All other so-called "Piper I" mail, all or mostly cards, doubtful.

Solférino Tower, 7 Oct. 1870, 3:40 P.M.—Engineer, Solférino Tower, to Admiral Cosnier, Admiral LaRoncière, Commanding General St. Denis, and Governor Paris.—A balloon launched from the gas works of La Villette, manned by three persons, has just fallen in our lines, near the Fort de l'Est. The three persons descended and the balloon left again. Copy signed by The Director. Sent 7 Oct. '70 at 4:30 P.M. (26)

A THRILLING ADVENTURE. Perils of Balloon Travel From Paris.—We have to thank Messrs. Gustave Kühn & Co., of No. 7 Murray Street in this city for the perusal of some original letters from Mr. Jacques Friedmann, their representative in Paris, which detail the mishaps of a party that left Paris on the seventh of October for Tours, in a balloon, and had the ill luck to fall prematurely and close to the Prussian lines of investment. Mr. Friedmann wrote to Mr. Kühn on the sixth of October, announcing the intended trip. Mr. Piper, a government contractor, attempted to leave Paris by balloon on the 28th of September, but had been prevented at the last moment by his bulk and weight. He then had a balloon constructed expressly for his own use, as urgent business affairs required his presence elsewhere than in Paris, and the following letter of Mr. Friedmann, which we translate from the original, describes the result:

Paris, October 13, 1870.

Dear Mr. Kuhn:—

On the 7th of October, Mr. Piper and I ascended in a balloon, and have since then endured the most terrible sufferings. . . I send you herewith enclosed a clipping from the Figaro of October 10, which gives the most exact details. . . We append the extract from the Figaro of October 8 (sic). . (27)

Our balloon left the same day as that of Mr. Gambetta. . . It measured 1200 m³ but took 2100 m³ of gas because it leaked. We landed . . . near Dugny . . . Bullets from both sides greeted us when we were still in the air . . . Our balloon bounced once. (Piper, the aeronaut, and "little Frédéric, you know, the clerk of Dangaud" got out.) The balloon, lighter by three persons or 220 kilograms, left again and I hope that you will receive it with my papers and things: A bag containing toilet articles, two binoculars, our contract, copies of all correspondence with Intendant Perrier and the war minister, furthermore plenty of letters and newspapers, a revolver and my clothes . . . At our place of refuge I buried a large package of letters. I do not know whether one will drive the Prussians from Dugny soon, then I shall go to look for it. . . Anyhow, I shall leave again by balloon and am busy with that. This morning (it is 6 A.M.) I shall entrust this letter to an aeronaut who is leaving from Place St. Pierre, and then I shall bring suit against my balloon seller. . . (28)

From Dugny, the eastern front of Paris, the Hamburger Nachrichten learn. . . Yesterday five of them (balloons) were over our front. One fell between our and the enemy posts, and our people saw three people who got

out and quickly retreated into nearby bushes. A second came down between Le Bourget, Blanc-Mervil (actually LeBlanc-Menil), both places occupied by us. Officers and uhlans rode towards it but it rose before they arrived and they could not see whether the shots fired after it had any success. . . A third flew fairly low above us in an easterly direction. When it was fired upon, a small balloon (parachute) fell out, to which a bread bag was fastened, in which was a small package of tobacco. . . Another balloon with private correspondence and without a basket came to earth near Gonesse (actually Gonesse). . . (29).

Despite the mention of five balloons above, only four are described. The first is clearly "Piper I," the second the "Armand-Barbès," the third the "George Sand," and the fourth may well be one of the Roseleur balloons, a series of toy balloons sent by a Paris chemist; quite a bit of that correspondence survives today.



Fig. 4. Letter personally entrusted to Alexandre Jacques Trichet of the "Armand-Barbès," sole cover known with red Aérostiers and red Red Cross cachets; thrown out of balloon, salvaged and postmarked the next day at Magny-en-Vexin.

(25 Jan. 1871) William Piper, a doubtful American, got a passport from me. (22)

Piper, A., from Bordeaux, shipping agent, Rue d'Enghien 44.—Friedmann (Jh), representing J.-G. Van Leeuwen (called Lion), jewelers, Rue Bleue 1 (is this the same Friedmann?).—There is no Dangaud listed, but a Dagneau-Thierry, manufacturer of brushes and paint brushes, Bièvre 28. (23)

I found myself in front of the barricade above the Route de Flandres, in front of the Forest of Aubervilliers, when that balloon descended between the village of La Courneuve and that of Dugny. Two or three minutes later, the balloon rose again, perfectly inflated, as it was at its departure, and flew at great speed towards the north-east.

Not a single shot was fired. . . and during one and a half hours, while I remained in front of that barricade, from where one can see plainly, with the naked eye, the villages of Courneuve and Dugny, I did not see the shadow of a Prussian nor of a free-shooter. . . That Fort of La Courneuve exists only in the imagination of the writer of the Figaro (I am told that it did exist, however.) (30)

At the moment all of us are busy reading letters that, arriving from Paris by a balloon, fell into our hands. I estimate there to be about 30,000 (entry dated 9 October). (31)

Paris, 6 Oct.—My dear, good Gabri: I am about to undertake a peculiar journey, perhaps my last, which would be unpleasant for me. Because I cannot leave Paris any other way, I shall fly off by balloon. . . (He tells his mistress to turn to his brother for help, in case he is killed.). . . Your A.P.

P.S.: Since I could not fly off with Godard, I had a balloon built for myself, since the matter cost only 23 thousand francs cash or 20 thousand francs in drafts. Departure (is) 7 October. (32)

Notes and References (if not shown, the year is 1870).—

The reports from Piper and Friedmann are more or less the same. The report from Devismes, ref. 30, is totally different. The story of the Figaro is evidently based on that of Piper, but the type setter changed that to Ziper. Then, because the Figaro said "yesterday," the date for the flight has been wrong in the philatelic literature ever since. Apparently that newspaper account was the only one consulted by philatelists. Even when the telegram from the Solférino Tower surfaced again, that date was not corrected for some twenty years. . .

26—as (3), p8, telegram of 7th, but incomplete text. For a complete copy, see Hubert Cappart in Doc. Phil. #104 (1985); see also L'Avenir National, 9 Oct., p1c4-5, which mentions departure of two balloons in morning and a third at 1400 hours (from gas works) that seemed to land near Pierrefitte and then rise again suddenly and very high.

27—New York Herald, 9 Nov. p5c2

28—Journal de Bordeaux, 16 Oct. pp1-2, letter from A. Piper to his brother, W. Piper, at Bordeaux

29—Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 22 Oct., First ed., p2c2-3

30—Le Temps, 12 Oct., p3c1, letter from merchant Devismes, 130 Faubourg St. Denis, dated 10 Oct.

31—Julius Adrian Friedrich Wilhelm von Verdy du Vernois, Im Grossen Hauptquartier 1870/71, Berlin 1895, p2c2, entry for 9 oct. The weight of this much mail precludes it to be from the "Armand-Barbès," so it must be from "Piper I."

32—Neue freie Presse (Vienna, Austria), evening ed., 20 Oct., pp2-4 feuilleton by P. L., "A Captured Mail." The package that was captured also contained the Journal Officiel and the Gaulois. Texts are cited from four letters to Cette, some place in Calvados, Boulogne, and Bordeaux. The last is excerpted here and appears to have been in the mail of the "Piper I." IF that is so, then perhaps that balloon carried a bag of cards and one of letters.

Mail from the "Piper I"

All cards, all marked "Trouvée à la Courneuve. . ."

R. Bonaparte 29 Sept., Limoges 22 Oct., M. Teyssèdre

30, Dieppe 20 Oct., Mme. Gand

3 Oct., Mme. Bachelot

Paris (60), 30 Sept., Falaise (forwarded), Mme. LeRuy

3 Oct. 20-c stamp

Pl. Madeleine 30 Sept., Marseille, Mlle. Henisse

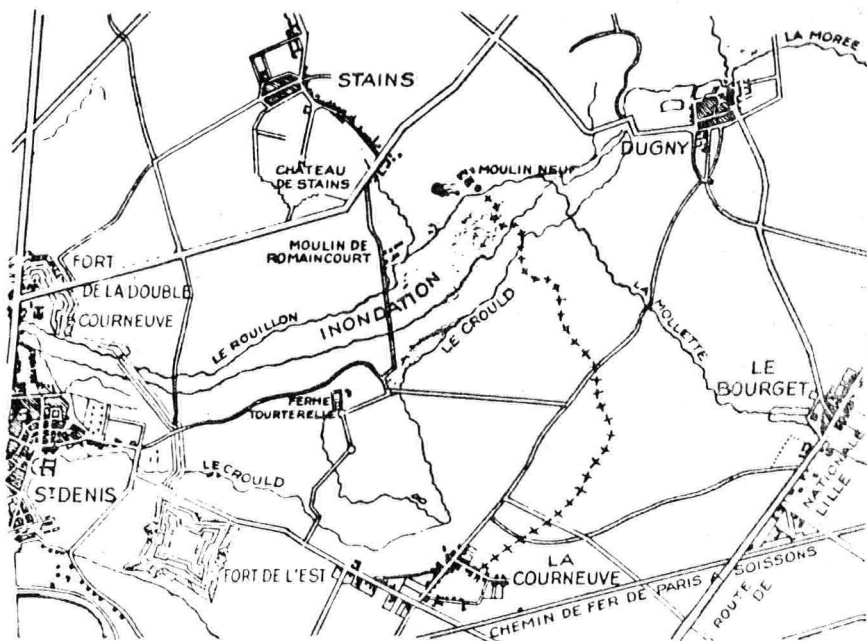
30, Menton, stamp lost, Mme. Boivin

R. Ecluses St. Martin 30 Sept. France Ouest 3, 19 Oct., M. Catala

Braine-le-Comte 20 Oct., Stamp lost

More details about both Piper balloons are to be found in E. M. Cohn, "Piper's Balloons in the Siege of Paris," Stamps, 17 June 1972, pp710-721.

The supplement of the Illustré of 12 October 1870 contains a sketch showing the area where the "Piper I" landed, according to the late Victor Chanary, who also gave me a photocopy of that illustration. It is unsuitable for reproduction here. Victor also supplied the map showing the flooded plain. The "Piper I" landed near the farm Tourterelle.



The "Washington"

2000 cubic meters, owned by Post Office, piloted by Albert Bertaux, passengers Louis-Charles van Roosebeke and Edouard Albert Lefaiivre de Bâhaine, 300-400 kg mail, 25 pigeons, left Gare d'Orléans about 0730 or 0830 hours on 12 October, landed about 1130 hours near Cambrai (Nord). In principle, Paris postmarks from the later box-clearing periods of 7 Oct. through 6E/11 Oct. with earliest outside postmarks of 12 and 13 Oct. must have flown on this or next balloon. Occasionally, differentiation between these two balloons is possible, as will be shown.

The "Washington" is a balloon that, having left Paris on the 12th in the morning at 7:30, came to land four hours later, i.e., at about 11:30 A.M., 8 km from Cambrai, near Carnières, at a place called le rio d'Avesnes. . .

We have seen the three voyagers; we have also seen the balloon. . . It was shown in the court of the under-prefecture, where a large number of people came to see it. . .

Three-quarters of an hour later, Mr. Bricourt (the mayor of Carnières) had the three voyagers at his table. Towards 3 o'clock they entered Cambrai and brought to the post office the five enormous bags of letters that they had brought from Paris (about 100 kilograms).—Other papers copied 400 kg, which seems to be correct. (33)

A Paris paper says it was 300 kg mail. (34)

Lille, 12 Oct., 2:45 P.M.—Prefect of Nord Department to Government at Tours. A first balloon descended at Carnières, near Cambrai, and carried, in addition to the pilot, Mr. Lefèvre, Secretary of the Vienna Embassy, and a pigeon raiser. The second balloon, driven to Valenciennes, and from which I have no news yet, is said to have Mr. de Keratry as a passenger. (3)

(The report that a bag of mail was used as ballast, though often repeated, e.g. below, appears to be wrong.)

The four (remaining) bags of mail were turned over to Mr. Rousseau, receiver of mails at Cambrai. . . Mr. Lefèvre de Béhaine. . . had himself taken to Douai, where he arrived in the afternoon and staid overnight. The next day he gave the letters entrusted to him to Mr. Vincent, receiver of mails. . . Upon his arrival at Tours, on 14 October, with the 25 pigeons, Mr. Van Roosebeke put himself at the disposal of the Delegation. . . (35)

(It will be seen that last names are spelled haphazardly. The correct—or most probable—spelling is always given in the headings.)

Notes and References (if not shown, year is 1870).—

- 33—La Belgique, 18 Oct., p3c2-3 (this is one of many papers that quoted the same story from La Gazette de Cambrai)
- 34—L'Electeur Libre (Paris), 14 Oct.
- 35—Louis Auguste Chaintrier, "Histoire documentaire et anecdotique des Ballons-Poste du Siège de Paris (1870-71)," L'Echangiste Universel (Apr. 1954-Feb. 1963)

The "Louis Blanc"

1200 cubic meters, owned by Telegraph Office, piloted by Henri Eugène Adrien Farcot, passenger Gustave Traclet, 125 kg mail, 8 pigeons, left Place St. Pierre about 0900 hours on 12 October, landed about 1230 hours at Tournai (Belgium). For general remarks about mail, see "Washington" heading.

Arrival of a Paris Balloon near Tournai.—Yesterday (actually the 12th) near 1 o'clock a balloon manned by two people was seen from our town. . .

it fell near a Mill of Havinnes. . . left Paris around 10 o'clock. . . The voyagers came back to Tournai around 4 o'clock and took the train for Lille a little later, with their mail enclosed in a large bag. The principal goal of the voyage, after delivery of the correspondence, is Tours. . . The balloon was piloted by Mr. Farco (sic); it carried 125 kg of mail. (35)

. . . an enormous balloon carrying three sacs of mail for the Government at Tours and a large number of private dispatches addressed to people living in France, Belgium, Switzerland, etc. . . About 2:30 o'clock the aeronauts took leave from us and went via the railway station of Havinnes to send their mail bags at Lille, whence they returned the next day to fold up their balloon and put it in a safe place. . . They put their Belgian mail into the hands of the stationmaster of Havinnes who immediately forwarded it to its destination. (36)

At Lille. . . I asked for the telegraph office. There I gave them my special dispatches addressed to the Delegation of Tours and got a receipt for them. I ran to the post office and quickly returned to the station where a train was about to leave, having a traveling post office to which I delivered my mail bags and letters for which I also got a receipt. . . I was happy thinking of the 10,000 readers who, next day, would have news of their families. . . (37)

Lille, 12 Oct.—7:15 P.M. Special Commissioner Baisieux to Interior Minister, Tours. Farcot, a courier who left Paris this morning by balloon, has just arrived with his dispatches. (3)

Farcot's notes about mail: Meanwhile, mail was brought from everywhere and entrusted to the departing aeronaut. I had to multiply myself to respond to all demands. Here a soldier, there a sailor, a mobile who, seeing the departure, had quickly written and presented me with his letter. I was obliged to turn away from the never ending requests.

The carriages of the post and telegraph offices arrived. . . One made me distinguish. . . a large bag of letters and said to me: "If you are menaced by the enemy and you have no more ballast, throw this sack last: But before doing so, open it and take out this smaller bag, you must retain it at all costs. Save it in the woods or wherever you can, but preserve it above all!"

And then: "Here, to put them in your billfold, these dispatches of the government; you will give them to the first French telegraph office you find, they must absolutely not fall into the hands of the enemy. If that disaster should threaten, rather destroy that package at any price!" (38)

At this point I wish to introduce a seminal article by the late Pierre Courtois, which not only corrected some bad mistakes of LePileur's but also for the first time introduced the idea of using tracers for distinguishing mail carried by two balloons that left Paris the same day. He used letters entrusted personally to the balloonists as tracers, primarily those with the red cachet of the Aérosters but also others that either were mailed at a place specific for a balloon or that contain references in the text that permit definite statements as to the carrying balloon. His prime example is the distinction of mail carried by the "Washington" and the "Louis Blanc":

In a number of cases the cachet of the Compagnie des Aérosters constitutes an element of discrimination (=tracer) of which the application seems to surpass by far the few covers that carry that imprint. . . One can thus conclude with certitude that all letters carrying the cachet of the Aérosters and carrying the manuscript dates of 8 to 12 October 1870 as well as some transit or arrival marking between the 12th and 18th October 1870 have

all been transported, not by the "Washington," to which they have been mistakenly attributed, but by the "Louis Blanc". . . (Courtois then goes further and uses the transit markings found on definitely attributable covers to assign non-entrusted mail to the same balloon as long as they carry the same transit markings.) (39)

Notes and References (if not shown, year is 1870).—

35—L'Economie (Tournai), 14 Oct. p3c1

36—ibid., 19 Oct., p3c1-2

37—La France Aérienne (Feb. 1897) pp4-8

38—ibid. (Nov. 1890) pp6-7

39—Pierre Courtois, "L'Identification des Ballons Montés," L'Echo de la Timbrologie, No. 1221 (1955) p313 and No. 1226 (1956) p20

Personally Entrusted Mail on "W" and "L-B"

A—1334 lozenge and Douai 13 Oct cds (1 or 2 circles), hence "W"—

. . . à Paris 14, Bern (Switz.) 17

Paris à Calais 14, Boulogne 14

Bayeux 14

Lille 14, London 14

Namur 14

B. de Passe 3219 (Moulins) 15, Etretat 15

Bordeaux à Irun 16, Biarritz 16

Les Andelys 16

Moutiers-les-Mauxfaits (Vendée) 17

Brest 18, to Mme. Zédé

Fleurier (Switz.) 18

Geneva (Switz.) 18, Rapperswil 18

Seignelay 18

Rapperswil (Switz.) 19

B—With Aéronauts' cachet, hence "L-B," all with LIL-P and Lille à Paris 12

Bédarieux

Etretat 14

Fécamp 14

St.-Cyprien 14

Questembert 15

Rennes 15 (two demonstrably different items)

Dijon 16

Granville 16

Basel Badischer Bahnhof, Heidelberg 17, Mrs. Seinguerlet (mother)

Geneva 19

The letter from A. Piper (see "Piper I") to W. Piper flew on this balloon and must have arrived at Bordeaux at the latest on 15 October.

C—Text mentions Nadar balloon, hence "L-B"—

2982 lozenge (Pornic), Pornic 17

PC2 Paris à Calais 14, Boulogne-s-Mer 14

D—see "B" for Lille à Paris 12, hence apparently "L-B".—

Lille à Paris 12, Etretat 14

Lille à Paris 12, Fécamp 14

E—Indeterminate—

Lille 13 & 14, Ventnor 15

Calais à Paris 13, Manchester 14

Paris à Calais 14, 4033 lozenge and Trouville 15

204(6) lozenge of Gare de Douai 3E/14, Lille 4E/14, Lille à Paris 14

(a late "W"?)

The "Godefroy Cavaignac"

2000 cubic meters, owned by Post Office, piloted by Pierre Edme Godard, passengers Emile de Keratry, Edouard Auguste Jay, Quesneau, 170-200 kg mail, 4 pigeons; left Gare d'Orléans about 1000 hours on 14 October, landed about 1445 hours near Brillon, close to Bar-le-Duc (Meuse) and not too far from Chaumont-en-Bassigny (Haute Marne). Paris postmarks from late morning of 12th to early morning of the 14th and earliest outside postmarks through the morning of the 16th characterize mail flown on this or the next balloon.

The "Godefroy Cavaignac" was scheduled to depart on the 12th at 1100 hours with Tissandier, Ranc, and Ferrand aboard, but was torn by the wind during inflation, to be repaired and ready within two days, according to Paris papers. (40)

At 3 o'clock I had the mail bag (singular) put in the second vehicle, covered with leaves and manure for safe arrival at Chaumont. . . (The whole area was occupied). . . At Couzamont-aux-Forges the mayor refused to let me stay, I slept in the community without his knowledge. . . At 8 o'clock the next morning I left the place with a guide for Chaumont, where I was safe. (41)

A balloon. . . landed at Brillon (Meuse), 9 km from Bar-le-Duc and 16 km from the Haute-Marne Department. . . Godard with three others and five enormous mail bags that arrived this moment (at Chaumont, 15 October, 0800 hours). . . (42)

Letter dated Versailles, 25 October 1870.—Sir: I have the honor of receiving your letter dated yesterday concerning Mme. Kératry, and I am sorry to say that it would be hopeless to employ myself on her behalf with the military authorities for obtaining an exception of the principle they have adopted not to allow any person of French nationality to leave the invested city—I remain. (43)

The Paris papers agree upon about 170 kg of mail. (44)

In Bonneuil (s-Marne, just southeast of Paris, beyond Créteil) a monster balloon carrying several persons from Paris, rushed overhead. A patrol of Ulans (i.e., lancers) pursued it. (Uncertain date, but most likely on the 14th). (45)

Chaumont, 15 Oct.—8 A.M. Prefect to Interior, Tours, to Prefects Doubs and Côte-d'Or and Sub-Prefect Langres. A balloon from Paris landed without accident at Brillon (Meuse), 9 km from Bar-le-Duc and 16 km from the Haute-Marne in an area occupied by the enemy who followed it very closely in vain. It was manned by Godard and three other people, one of whom is a colonel. It contained among others five enormous bags of mail that arrive this instant in my office and that I am delivering to the post office. I await the aeronauts.

Chaumont, 15 October.—11:14 A.M. (sent 2:05 P.M.). Keratry to Government, Tours. Left yesterday 14th from Paris at 10 A.M. by balloon that landed near Bar-le-Duc, escaped pursuers, slightly hurt leg and head by sudden drop. . .

Chaumont, 15 October.—2:20 P.M. Sub-Prefect to Interior, Tours. Mr. Keratry and two persons accompanying him on mission were in the balloon of Godard arrived at Brillon. They leave at noon by special train, you will receive special telegram at same time as this. . .

Chaumont, 16 October.—3:11 P.M. Prefect to Interior, Tours. Godard was not captured as I had told you, he will be here in an hour with his bal-

loon and will leave right away for Tours.

(3)

Notes and References (if not shown, the year is 1870).—

40—For example, *L'Avenir National* (Paris), 13 Oct., p1c4-5

41—*La France Aérienne*, 1-15 Dec. 1897, p8

42—*La Gironde* (Bordeaux), 18 Oct. p1

43—Bismarck to Washburne, in Elihu B. Washburne's papers (Manuscript Room, Library of Congress) vol. 72

44—For example, *L'Electeur Libre*, 16 Oct. p2 (172 kg) and *Le Moniteur Universel*, 16 Oct. p1423 (170 kg)

45—Ad. Birkholz, "Das 2. Hanseatische Infanterie-Regiment Nr. 76 im Kriege gegen Frankreich 1870 und 71," Hamburg (1871) p24

The "Jean Bart"

(also called "J. Bart I," "Wm. Tell," or "Chr. Columbus")

2000 cubic meters, owned by Post Office, piloted by Albert Charles Tissandier, passengers Arthur Ranc, Emile Victor Eugène Ferrand, 170-400 kg mail, 5 pigeons, left Gare d'Orléans about 1315 hours on 14 October, landed about 1700 hours near Nogent-s-Seine (Aube). For characteristic postmarks of mail, see preceding balloon.

The Paris papers agree pretty well on the amount of mail having been 270-300 kg., whereas the Tours paper thought it was 400 kg. (46)

Troyes, 14 Oct., 8:10 P.M. . . (A balloon landed not long ago near Villeneuve (Aube) carrying 5 bags of mail. Had left Paris at 1 o'clock.) (47)

At Vierson we met Mr. de Kératry and his companions. . . We were obliged to make a tremendous detour, to go by way of Troyes, Dijon, Nevers and Bourges to get to Tours two days later. (48)

Notes and References (if not shown, the year is 1870).—

46—*Le Gaulois*, 16 Oct., p2 (300 kg), *L'Electeur Libre*, 16 Oct., p2 (300 kg),

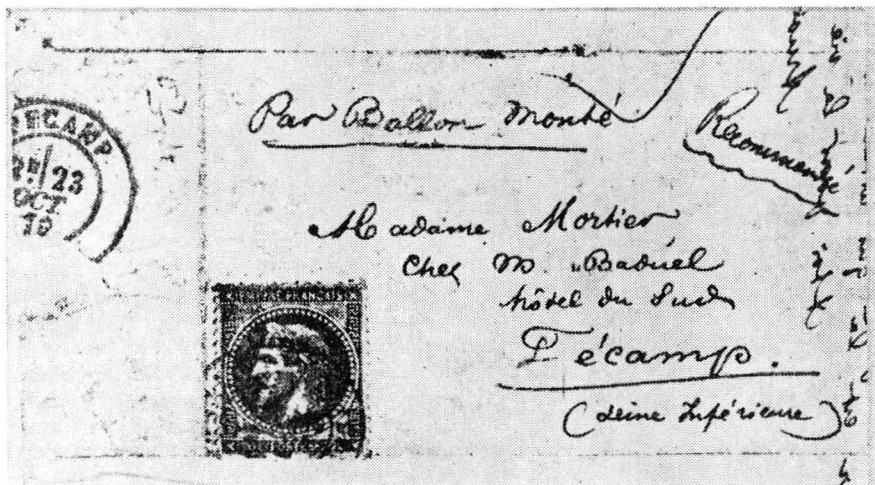


Fig. 5. Letter personally entrusted to a balloonist on the "République Universelle."

- Le Moniteur Universel, 16 Oct. p1423 (270 kg), Le Moniteur Universel (Tours edition, 400 kg).
 47—Le Moniteur Universel, 16 Oct., p105
 48—Le Journal d'Indre-et-Loire, 19 Oct. p2c3-4, report by Albert Tissandier on the "Jean Bart"

Personally Entrusted Mail on "Cavaignac" and "Bart"

The 978 lozenge is typical of the "Cavaignac," being the numeral of Chaumont; and the 4034 lozenge (Troyes) characterizes the "Bart."

A—"Cavaignac" mail, 978 lozenge or 978 Bureau de passe dater.—

Paris à Besançon D (night) 15, Montpellier 17

Chaumont Bureau de passe 16, Mulhouse 17

Bordeaux à Irun 18, Arcachon

LeHavre 18

London 18

Machecoul 18

Arcachon 19

B—"Bart" mail, 4034 lozenge.—

Troyes 15

Paris à Bâle 16, Tours 16

Tours 16

Valence 17

Nevers 1E/18, Mme. Ernest Delagrange

Trouville-s-Mer 18

Veules (Seine-Inf.) 18

Bordeaux à Irun 19, Bayonne 20, Anglet

Brussels 20

Alexandria (Egypt) 22, Mme. Eugène Hess

LePileur cites one example for entrusted mail with Paris à Calais 14 Oct. and one for an ordinary letter posted at Paris on 2E/13 Oct. Both arrived at Trouville on the 15th. This is extremely early for both balloons.

Whereas the Troyes and Chaumont markings are characteristic, each for one of the above balloons, covers lacking these markings are difficult if not impossible to assign to this pair of balloons, in view of the prompt delivery of at least some of the mail from the subsequent pair of balloons.

The "Jules Favre I"

2000 cubic meters, owned by Post Office, piloted by Louis Mutin Godard, passengers F. Malapert, Charles Bureau, and Alexandre Félix Joseph Ribot, 195 kg mail, 6 pigeons, left Gare d'Orléans about 0730 hours on 16 October, landed about 1220 hours near Chimay (Belgium). Paris postmarks from afternoon of 14 to 7E/15 October are possible on ordinary mail from this and next balloon.

L'Electeur Libre mentions that the "Jules Favre" and the "Jean Bart" ("J. Favre I" and "La Fayette," the latter also called "Jean Bart II") together took out 500 kg mail. (49)

L'Etoile Belge (Brussels) publishes this telegram at the top of its latest despatches: Marienbourg, 16 October.—A balloon that had left Paris at 7 this morning and carried four travelers and two bags of mail landed in the Bois de Vireilles, near Marienbourg, at 1 P.M. The balloon was piloted by Mr. Godard Jr. (50)

Lille, 16.—11:55 P.M. Special commissioner, Baisieux railway station, to Interior, Tours. Messrs. Malapert and Charles Bureau landed by balloon with Godard near Chimay (Belgium) with Government dispatches, are leaving for Tours.

Lille, 17.—10:45 A.M. Prefect of Nord to Interior, Tours. Messrs. Charles Bureau, Secretary to Mr. de Keratry, and Mr. Malapert, claiming to be a lawyer of the supreme court, stayed last night at Lille and left this morning for Tours. They had left yesterday morning from Paris by balloon and descended at Chimay (Belgium).

Argentan (Orne). 18.—11 A.M. Ribot to Arrignon, Interior Ministry, Tours. Left by balloon, landed in Belgium. Will be at Tours this evening at 6:30. Meet me at station. Get room and clothes. (3)

. . . I carried 200 kg mail, 6 pigeons, and 10 kg newspapers to sacrifice. . . we were in the Forest of Brabant, at Foix-Chapelle, near Chimay (Belgium). . . Midway Mr. Ribot left us, taking with him the despatches, telegrams, and pigeons that had been entrusted to him. . . At Chimay we put the material into a railway car. . . At Charleroi we had to change trains. Finding no space on the train, I had to stay at Charleroi. . . I went to the hotel where I was told the voyagers from the other balloon ("Jean Bart II") had arrived. Seeing Labadie, we embraced like brothers. . . The next morning at 6 o'clock we left for Lille. . . We had to wait four hours. . . We left for Douai where I met Mr. Ribot again, who had arrived by way of Val-



Fig. 6. Letter personally entrusted to a balloonist on the "Montgolfier," proven by early pmk from Pontarlier.

enciennes. We continued towards Amiens, where we arrived just in time to take the train to Rouen. We carried the government dispatches of the two balloons with us. We left for Rouen and Argentan and, after leaving there, heard the voice of Mr. Malapert in the next compartment. . . (51)

Notes and References (if not shown, the year is 1870).—

If the story as published in 1897 can be trusted, it seems that not only did the men from the two balloons all come together again, but also that Ribot's special attempt misfired, of getting away in a hurry to deliver urgent dispatches quickly at Tours.

This is one of several indications that the railway traffic in and near occupied France had suffered greatly and that mail from balloons that arrived at about the same time in about the same place, and which had to be taken through occupied France, cannot be disentangled today, with very few exceptions, because of the lack of locomotives and consequent delays.

49—L'Electeur Libre, 18 Oct. p2

50—L'Economie (Tournai), 19 Oct.

51—La France Aérienne, 15 Jul. 1897, p9; 15 Aug. 1897, pp9-10

The "La Fayette" or "Jean Bart II"

2000 cubic meters, owned by Post Office, piloted by Henry Labadie, Passengers Jules François Dary and Pierre Claude Barthélemy, 270-300 kg mail, 6 pigeons, left Gare d'Orléans about 0950 hours on 16 October, landed about 1445 hours near Dinant (Belgium). For characteristics of ordinary mail, see preceding balloon.

Unfortunately, it was not so for the departure of the "Lafayette," a second balloon that should also have left this morning, a few minutes after the "Washington." Inflation of the "Lafayette" was easy enough, but when it had to be maneuvered for launching, the wind blew with fury for a few moments against the immense machine. . . In a moment the net was torn and the balloon itself severely damaged by large tears, emptying itself with much noise while being held by a company of marines. . . (52)

(The Gaulois says it carried five mail bags, the Electeur Libre that they weighed 305 kg; both speak of the "Lafayette.") (53)

On 16 October, one passed for the first time from Paris in front of our chain of posts. Naturally all posts fired upon it as quickly as possible, but the balloon came down further to the right, before the Prussian line of posts near Drancy. (54)

Descent of a Manned Balloon at Evrehailles.—One writes from Yvoir, 16 October, 8 P.M., to L'Ami de l'Ordre: Towards 3 o'clock we saw, above the Château de Senenne(?), a balloon only 200 or 300 meters high. From there, it was directed to the plain of Champal. . . near the village of Evrehailles. The lucky travelers got out and the balloon disappeared in the clouds. . . The basket carried three travelers, five bags of dispatches and mail, and two cages carrying some 20 pigeons. . . After a little rest the voyagers went to Yvoir, having put their basket on a carriage. . . In the evening they took the train from Dinant to Namur to go to Tours. . . (55)

Lille 17.—11:15 A.M. Prefect of Nord to Interior, Tours. Messrs. Barthélémy and Dary, manning the balloon "Le Jean-Bart," having left Paris yesterday Sunday at 10 A.M., have landed near Dinant (Belgium) at 2:45 in good health with dispatches and pigeons. The pigeons and their carriers leave this evening for Tours. (3)

Notes and References (if not shown, year is 1870).—

52—Le Figaro, 14 Oct., p2c6

53—Le Gaulois, 21 Oct., p2c2; L'Electeur Libre, 21 Oct., p2

54—First Lt. Schneider and Capt. Falcke, "Das königlich sächsische 2. Grenadier-Regiment Nr. 101" (The Royal Saxon Second Grenadier Regiment No. 101), 2nd ed., Dresden 1898, p75

55—L'Impartial de Bruges, 21 Oct., p3c1

The following refers to ordinary mail:

The second (balloon, i.e., the "La Fayette"), however, when it passed near Soissons, experienced a German volley of fire that forced it to rise and, to do so, to abandon 120 kg of ballast. What was the ballast? Evidently sand, but also mail coming from one of the five bags that it carried. One finds, in fact, covers from Vic-sur-Aisne of 17 (and 18) October, Anizy-le-Château of 18 and 31 October as well as 2 November, Crécy-sur-Serre postmarked there on 17, 18, 19, 23 October and 7 November, and Sains of 17 October.

If a single mail bag had been thrown out, it would have been posted at Vic-sur-Aisne and we should not have the postmarks of three other towns where little packages of cards arrived one after another as they were found by the peasants. (Jacques LePileur, *Les Aérostate Poste 1870-1871*, Paris 1953, p37.)

Thus, all belated transit markings mentioned by LePileur are characteristic of mail tossed out from the "La Fayette." Other ordinary or personally entrusted mail cannot be assigned to one of these two balloons except in special cases.

Personally Entrusted Mail on "JF I" and "La F"

Hand-dated letter of 15 October, transit Alençon 19, arrival Brissac 21; from text: "Ernest hopes to let this little note leave tomorrow with the secretary of Mr. Keratry who parts by balloon." Since that was Mr. Bureau, the letter was taken on the "Jules Favre I."

With or without lozenge 3997 (Tours), Tours 18 Oct. transit.—

Autrèche 19

Bordeaux 20

Bordeaux à Irun

Bordeaux à Lyon, Pau 20

Erest 20 (Zédé correspondence)

Cognac 22

Toulon 21

The "Victor Hugo"

2000 cubic meters, owned by Post Office, piloted by Jean Pierre Alfred Nadal, no passengers, 440 kg mail, 6 pigeons, left Tuileries about 1140 hours on 18 October, landed about 1730 hours near Soissons (Aisne). Paris postmarks from mid-morning of 16th to mid-morning of 18th are possible on ordinary mail.

Mr. Rampont. . . declared to us that, since the decree about the new method of sending letters by balloons (had been published), all correspondence put into the mail had largely been sent and, after the departure of the "Victor Hugo," not one letter would remain in Paris. (56)

(This announcement was apparently premature. It was repeated, still too early, after the departure of the "Montgolfier.")

(The "V.H." took 500 kg mail and) a manifesto in German and French from the pen of Mr. Bonvalet and others, and which is an appeal to the fraternity of nations; several examples were distributed among those assisting the launch. (57)

Aided by farmers, Mr. Nadal was able to hide his mail bags in the farm of Vauleron, then, during the night, had them transported to Nesles and Noyon, whence the post office expedited them to their destination. (58)

As concerns the personally entrusted letters, they were posted at Tours when Nadal arrived there on 21 October. (59)

(But it will be seen that Nadal must have arrived at Tours at least one day earlier.)

Notes and References (if not shown, year is 1870).—

56—Le Gaulois, 20 Oct. p1c6

57—Le Moniteur Universel, 18 Oct. p1430

58—Le Nord, 28 Oct., p3c4-5; Le Journal de Maine et Loire, 28 Oct., p4c5

59—Pierre Savelon, "La Poste Pendant le Sièg," vol. 1, Paris 1955, p17

Personally Entrusted Mail on "Victor Hugo"

With the red Aéronautes cachet and 3997 (Tours).—

Château-la-Vallière 22

Dinard 22

Firminy 23

Mezidon 22 and ? 23

Paris à Calais 22, Newport 24

With Aéronautes cachet and Tours.—

20

21, small 1953 (Clermont), Clermont-Ferrand 23

21, Flavy-le-Martel (Aisne) 27

21, Niort 27

With Aéronautes cachet.—

Avranches 22, to Granville

Sables d'Olonnes 23

With 3997.—

Bordeaux à Irun 22, Pau 22

Bureau de passe 3112, Granville 22

Espalion 22

Geneva (Switzerland) 23, Locarno 30

Paris à Lille 23, Tirlemont 23

Tours 21, Rennes 22

With Tours.—

20, Jersey 25

20, Niort 21

21, Beaune 24

21, Besançon 24

21, Montauban 22

21, Thann 27

22, Fécamp 23

None of the above.—

CP2, Paris à Calais 22 "B" night, Rouen 23 (?)

The "République Universelle" (or "La Fayette")

2000 cubic meters, owned by Post Office, piloted by Louis Jossec, passengers Henri Antoine "Antonin" Dubost and Gaston Prunières, 300-

350 kg mail, 6 pigeons, left Gare d'Orléans about 0910 hours on 19 October, landed about 1130 hours near Lonny (Ardennes). Paris postmarks from afternoon of 18th to very early morning of 19th are possible on ordinary mail.

A balloon was sent up with the mail today. I could follow it as it sailed over the Prussian camp. How aggravating it must be to Bismarck. (60)

The *Electeur Libre* mentions twice that the "Lafayette" took 305 kg mail, though the second time it is the "La Fayette." (61)

Yesterday the whole village of Lonny was in an uproar. At half past eleven in the morning, a magnificent balloon, manned by Mr. Antonin Dubost, another individual and a marine officer (actually a sailor) as pilot landed in the woods of Ravily (Ravelin), between Lonny and le Ham, very close to a post of national guards. The guards sought to take the ropes, but the aeronauts, not knowing with whom they were dealing, threw ballast and rose again while throwing out a mass of German proclamations. The balloon moved rapidly and the basket was dragged through the trees that it broke, so that it was thought that the travelers would be crushed any moment.

Finally, 200 meters further on, the balloon fell into the woods and the aeronauts got out, very happy to be surrounded by Frenchmen. Five big mail bags were attached to the basket, which itself was filled with a large number of the *Journal Officiel* dated that same day. The balloon was torn from top to bottom. It was folded and with its basket was loaded on a carriage to be taken to Mézières. Mr. Dubost and his companion left immediately for Rocroi to reach Belgium and then Tours. The marine officer accompanied his balloon to Mézières. (62)

The mail bags, first given to the mayor of Lonny, were transmitted by him to Mme. Lecourt, the postmistress of Renwez, the next day. (63)

The mail was taken with an escort to Rocroi. (64)

(From the evidence cited below, both stories appear to be true, so that some mail must have been taken to each of the two places.)

Savélon mentions two reports, one of which claims that Prunières went via Mézières, Rocroi, Lille, Amiens, Rouen, and Le Mans to Tours. The other route is via Mézières, Châlons, and Dijon, where he mailed the letters entrusted to him personally; then via Nevers and Bourges to Tours, where he arrived with his companions on the 25th. Here again, perhaps both routes are right, if the group split. The Dijon covers are listed below, but more evidence that they are from this balloon would be desirable. (65)

Notes and References (if not shown, year is 1870).—

60—Weekly Wisconsin (Milwaukee), 23 Nov., p4c1, letter of William E. Cramer, 19 Oct., from Paris.

61—*L'Electeur Libre*, 21 Oct., p2; 13 Nov.

62—*Courrier des Ardennes*, 22 Oct., cited in *Etudes Ardennaises*, No. 22, July 1960, p42

63—Louis A. Chaintrier, "Histoire documentaires et anecdotique des Ballons Poste du Siège de Paris (1870-71)," *L'Echangiste Universel*, No. 669, Feb. 1956, p9

64—Mayor Horbette of Lonny, letter of 19 Oct. to *Courrier des Ardennes*, publ. 23 Oct., acc. to *Etudes Ardennaises*

65—as ref. 59, p18

Personally Entrusted Mail on "République Universel"

Letterhead "Compagnie du chemin de fer de Paris à Orléans," Paris, 19 Oct.: "... I am at the Orléans railway station where I am watching the de-

parture of the balloon that is taking five official bags to be used for ballast. . .," lozenge 3179 (Rocroi), Rocroi 19
 3179, Rocroi 19, Givet à Paris 23, Nantes 26
 3113 (Renwez), Renwez 19, Givet à Paris 22, Livarot 24
 3113, Renwez 19, train mark 23, Tours 25
 3113, Renwez 19, Besançon 26
 Bureau de passe 1307 (Dijon) 22, to Arcachon
 1307, Dijon 22

The "Garibaldi"

2000 cubic meters, owned by Post Office, piloted by Iglesia, passenger Hippolyte Felicite Paul de Jouvencel, 450 kg mail, 6 pigeons, left Tuileries about 1140 hours on 22 Oct., landed about 1330 hours near Meaux (Seine-et-Marne). Paris postmarks from morning of 19th to mid-morning of 22 are possible on ordinary mail.

The "Garibaldi" carried 5 bags of mail weighing 300-450 kg and was the last to leave from the Tuileries. (66)

. . . Then we saw Esbly; on the right Couilly, the houses of my neighbors and finally my own. . . We had arrived in front of a little woods not far from Genevai, near the railway station. I entered it. I burned my officer's commission, my pass as a deputy, the coded dispatch and all my papers. . . I remounted the Tilbury and told my guide to try sending the pigeons to Tours if anything should happen to me. (He arrived at Tours at 1700 hours on the 24th.). . . (67)

A telegram from the sub-prefect of Sens, dated the 23rd at 1 o'clock, announces that the "Garibaldi," which had left Paris on 22 October at 11:20 A.M., was hit at an altitude of over 2000 m by a projectile that is supposed to be newly invented.

Mr. de Jouvencel, sent by the government, landed safe and sound between Meaux and Lagny near the Prussian lines; having arrived at Sens with six pigeons, he left immediately for Tours. (68)

The mail was hidden in a few minutes; the balloon itself had risen again, to come back down a few hundred meters further on, where the peasants deflated and hid it in a ditch under leaves so well that, when the Prussians sent a large number (of soldiers), they found only little bits of paper strewn from the balloon before it fell and which carried an appeal to the fraternal sentiments of the German people. . . The mail had been processed at Quincy; a large bag of it had been taken to Meaux and distributed secretly, the remainder sent to Coulommiers, then from there to Provins (23 Oct., but see below). . . (69)

Provins (Seine-et-Marne), 27.—9:45 A.M. Postmaster to Government Tours and to Postmaster at Fontainebleau. Received this morning load from balloon, 5 bags weighing about 400 kg and coming from Coulommiers, two sealed packages with seal of Minister of Justice, addressed to Mr. Crémieux. . . at Tours, Chief of the Cabinet. I shall send an express by my son. Answer if possible. Forward if absent. (3)

Brolles, 30.—4:30 P.M. Postmaster of Melun to Director General of Posts, Tours. I have the following details from Provins regarding the two balloons. Received 5 packages on 25th, received about 800 kg total the 27th, all coming from Paris on the 22nd by balloon. Three packages on the 28th brought by the second balloon from La Ferté Gaucher without details as to name, origin, weight 200 kg, part of the consignment. On the 29th, large

number of consignments for Ambee at Nogent, after sorting at Provins. (3)

(According to Chaintrier, 5 bags of mail were taken to Coulommiers and 3 to La Ferté Gaucher, all being sent to Provins on 25 and 27 October.)

(Pierre Savèlon found the lozenge 3379 of Sens on an Aéroliers cover which, though undated and unmarked by the post office in any other way, must have been written between 12 and 27 October. He considers that this was a cover posted at Sens, through which de Jouvencel traveled as the sole aeronaut during that period (with or without his pilot). Note, in that connection, the telegram from Sens of 23 October, cited above.)

Notes and References (if not shown, the year is 1870).—

66—Le Gaulois, 24 Oct., p2c5; L'Electeur Libre, 24 Oct., p2; Le Moniteur Universel, 23 Oct., p1445

67—Paul de Jouvencel, "Récits du Temps," Paris 1873, pp 265-302

68—L'Organe de Namur, 29 Oct., p3

69—Dr. Vre. Jean Durieux, "Les ballons montés du Siège de 1870," Bull. Soc. Littéraire et Historique de la Brie, vol. 27, 1970, 13-17 (from diary of Mr. Veyseron of Meaux)

Personally Entrusted Mail on "Garibaldi"

With Aéronautes cachet.—

396 (Beaune), Recy-sur-Ource 1E/5 Nov.

Le Havre-Paris 2 Nov., London 2

Paris-La Rochelle, Erquelines-Paris 2 Nov., Amsterdam 3

Tours 1 Nov., Belgium 3 and 4



Fig. 7. Letter personally entrusted to a balloonist on the "Vauban" or "Col. Charras" from well-known Marcuard-Schall correspondence. Double-weight postage not permitted in normal p.o. mail but explained because it is a "pli confié."

Tours 1 Nov., Granville à Paris B 2

Tours 1 Nov., Granville 3

Tours 1 Nov., Paris à Arras 3, St. Petersburg 4 (=16) Nov.

Tours 1 Nov., Quimperlé 3

Note that the personally entrusted mail apparently did not travel with de Jouvencel. Without the Aéronautes' cachet, a Tours postmark of 1 November is not a proof that the letter traveled by this balloon.

3031 (Provins) lozenge cancel.—

Bordeaux, Arcachon 1 Nov.

London 4 Nov.

Geneva (Switz.) 2 Nov.

Mauzé 3 Nov., Tonnay Boutonne 4

Other

3997, Tours 29(!), St. Valéry-en-Caux 29

The "Montgolfier"

2000 cubic meters, owned by Post Office, piloted by Sané (or Sené?). Hervé, passengers Eugène N. H. Delapierre and Joseph-Maria LeBouëdec, 220-390 kg mail, 2 pigeons, left Gare d'Orléans about 0830 hours on 25 Oct., landed about 1215 hours near Heiligenberg (Bas Rhin). Paris postmarks from mid-morning 22 Oct. to very early 25 Oct. are possible on ordinary mail, almost all of which was destroyed.

The Gaulois specifies 338 kg mail, the Electeur Libre 280 kg and repeats that all old mail had left. (70)

Paris, 25.—Stationmaster, Gare d'Orléans, to director general of telegraphs. The balloon left this morning at 8:30. Good ascension. . . (3)

Dugny (near Verdun), 25 Oct. . . The Fifth Company of our Reserve bataillon Jülich made an interesting catch today at Mixéville (Nixéville). A balloon was spotted there which, it seems, was landing against the will of the occupants. Because it was being received with shots, the aeronauts thought it timely to get away by sacrificing the treasures entrusted to them. They threw out seven packages of letters, and the lightened balloon, which had approached the ground to about 60 paces, rose again. In the packages, which weighed no less than 306 pounds, were dispatches dated the 24th and addressed to the government at Tours. They were sent to our headquarters at Charny, where further inspection will show the whence and whereto. The balloon probably came from Paris, unless such new military mail found its Daedalus at Verdun already. (71)

On 26 (sic) October a balloon landed near Strasbourg, which came directly from Paris, as was apparent from some newspapers left in its basket, dated the 25th. Our soldiers noted the peculiar arrival but were able only to capture the balloon, whereas the balloonists—there are thought to have been four—were able to flee. (72)

Tours, 31 October.—To the Director General. I have the honor to inform you that I left Paris on 25 October. . .

The sky was covered, the clouds low. At 11 o'clock, thinking I was far enough from Paris, I gave the order to land. Soon I had a vast plain before me, with some villages to the East.

Some 300 meters from the ground, I gave the order to let down the drag rope over a village that we would have to pass, when a lively volley came from there. Several shots hit the balloon but none hit the basket. Cavalry went in our pursuit. Having no more ballast, I ordered one mail bag to be cut off; because the balloon continued to descend, I had a second bag cut off. . .

At 12:15 I tried a second landing. . .

immediately informed that I had landed near Mützig, occupied by 500

Prussians, I took the most urgent measures to deflate the balloon, put it into the basket, and transport everything into the vineyards. At the same time the inhabitants of Heiligenberg gave us peasant clothes, buried the mail bags, our arms, our uniforms; and in an hour, led by a guide, the son of the mayor, Eugène Krupper, we entered into the forest just when the Prussians appeared at the entrance of the village for a search. . .

(On October 27, after two days of hiking in the rain) I left behind Colonel de la Pierre, my travel companion, at Gérardmer. He had been wounded two days earlier, walking had become impossible for him. . .

(On October 27, at 9:30 P.M.) at Giromagny, I found the first French outposts. I breathed freely; my dispatches were intact and I was sure to fulfill my mission. . .

During that whole trip, the sailor Hervé showed a devotion and an activity truly meritorious. . . (73)

A commandant descended from a balloon at Heiligenstein (sic), near Molsheim and Strasbourg, having left Paris in the morning of the 25th, and escaped the Prussians thanks to the inhabitants, the mayor, and the priest of the town. He came on foot across the Vosges mountains to Belfort. . . (74)

Notes and References (if not shown, the year is 1870).—

- 70—Le Gaulois, 27 Oct., p1c6; L'Electeur Libre, 27 Oct., p2
- 71—Kölnische Zeitung, Extrablatt (free to the troops), 29 Oct.-4 Nov., p3c4
- 72—Strassburger Zeitung und Amtliche Nachrichten für das General-Gouvernement Elsass, No. 22, 1 Nov. p3c3
- 73—LeBouëdec's report, printed in Charles Mengin, "Histoire de la Deuxième Armée de la Loire," Paris 1871, vol. 1, pp 63-69
- 74—Robert de Fontaines, "L'Aérostas de Belfort," Doc. Phil. No. 55 (1973) p17, quoting the diary of Col. Denfert-Rochereau, commander of Belfort. According to de Fontaines, the visit by LeBouëdec to Belfort took place on 29 October, whereas LeBouëdec himself reports that he arrived at Belfort on Friday (28th) at 0700 hours and at Besançon that evening at 1730 hours.

Personally Entrusted Mail on "Montgolfier"

Judging from the rarity of mail—any mail—that can be positively identified as having flown on the "Montgolfier," most of what was captured at Nixéville and at Heiligenberg must have been destroyed.

A piece of mail is cited by LePileur that is highly unusual. It is No. 291 of the Journal Officiel, dated 22 October, under wrapper (hence presumably entrusted to a balloonist, because newspapers were not allowed in the ordinary mail under wrapper). The wrapper shows a transit mark of Perthes-les-Hurlus (Marne) of 26 October and arrival at Annecy on 1 November. Thus, some few pieces of mail must have escaped the watchful Germans near Nixéville and been sent through the French post office(s) near there.

Details of one kind of mail carried by LeBouëdec are found in an article by Dr. Jacques Fromaigeat (Balasse Magazine No. 212, 1974, pp 24-25). He describes pieces, similar to one shown by LePileur, written by members of the 62nd Regiment and given to Delapierre or LeBouëdec. The characteristic is the blue cachet GARDE MOBILE/62e RÉGIMENT/LE COLONEL. The covers are partly unfranked, because franking was obligatory only for ordinary balloon mail, and partly franked. Once mail had been transported outside of Paris by whatever means, soldiers' mail was free during the war.

A few years ago I discovered that covers postmarked PARIS/ETRANGER

were also entrusted to the balloonists. The proof was one thus marked on 25 October, with an arrival mark of Pontarlier from 29 October. Details of the proof are reported in Feuilles Marcophiles (No. 226, 1981, pp 5-6).

The "Vauban"

2000 cubic meters, owned by Post Office, piloted by Epiphane Guillaume, passengers Frédéric Reitlinger and Edouard-Martin-Corneille Cassiers, 270-290 kg mail, 23 pigeons, left Gare d'Orléans about 0900 hours on 27 October, landed about 1300 hours near St.-Mihiel (Meuse). Paris postmarks from the morning of 25 October to early 27 October are possible on ordinary mail.

The Electeur Libre indicates 290 kg mail, the Moniteur Universel 270 kg. (75)

. . . To their great disappointment, the voyagers found that they were near Metz, above the Prussian lines.

What to do now? Landing was inevitable and aeronauts, telegrams and letters were about to fall into Prussian hands. Their fear was great. They decided to lose their lives rather than to let their telegrams fall into the hands of the enemy. It was thus decided to read a package of dispatches that Mr. Cassiers had undertaken to give to General Bourbaki, and to burn them afterwards, which was done. . .

The aeronauts remained hidden for 48 hours. . .

They took the train and went by way of Vigneul (Vigneulles), Fresnes (Fresnes-en-Woëvre), Damville (Damvillers) and Montmédy to Virton. Having sent letters and telegrams, they separated, (Reitlinger) going to Tours and Cassiers to Antwerp. . . (Guillaume is not mentioned at all.) (76)

Lille, Saturday, 29 Oct.—An aeronaut who had left Paris on 27 October arrived today at Lille (via Brussels). He fell on Thursday near Metz. . . (and) was obliged to burn his dispatches. He could flee by way of Belgium. There is (thus) no official information (from Paris). (77)

(Many reports from France, Belgium, and Germany got the "Vauban" and the "Bretagne," often mistakenly called the "Normandie," confused. Both flew on the same day and landed near each other.)

LePileur states that 3 mail bags were passed on to the post office at Fresnes-en-Woëvre and two to Bar-le-Duc. Indeed, mail from the former, hand stamped on 29 October, and from the latter, hand stamped on 28 October. Some of the Bar-le-Duc mail is also stamped at Chaumont-en-Bassigny, with the normal handstamp and with the bureau de passe (978) stamp of 30 October.

The Fresnes mail bears the same date as that carried by the aeronauts of the "Bretagne," which makes a distinction of personally entrusted mail by these two balloons normally impossible. On the other hand, since the "Bretagne" is usually thought not to have had any normal post-office mail bags aboard, mail cancelled at Paris and postmarked at Fresnes ought to be from the "Vauban." But there is some doubt whether or not the "Bretagne" had post-office mail bags along. . .

The book Reitlinger wrote in 1899 about his flight on the "Vauban" is worthless as far as details are concerned.

Some of the Bar-le-Duc mail was personally entrusted, and it seems that that person was the pilot, who went his own way after the landing. One of the letters, its stamp cancelled by the Bar lozenge 305, says "One of the men of my company, whom I have detached for this delicate service, just told me

that he was told to pilot the next balloon, the departure of which is fixed for tomorrow. He offered to carry my letters. . ." (78)

Lille 29.—7:10 P.M. General Bourbaki to Minister of War, Tours. Mr. Cassiers has arrived here by the balloon "le Vauban," saying he was the bearer of dispatches from General Trochu for me. Mr. Cassiers was obliged to burn them on the way. Thus it is as though General Trochu had sent me nothing. Perhaps Mr. Reitlinger, who is at Tours, knows what the general wishes from me. I await the response with impatience.

Chaumont 29.—8:50 P.M. Postmaster to director general of telegraphs and director general of posts, Tours. I have received advice that a balloon fell in the Meuse (Department) with four bags of mail weighing 200 kg which were sent to me from Wassy by an express that will arrive probably this night. I have asked General de Langres to use the sole locomotive that exists (here) and shall send the dispatches to Tours as promptly as possible. The general will grant my request. (3)

Notes and references if not shown, year is 1870).—

75—L'Electeur Libre, 29 Oct.; Le Moniteur Universel, p1465

76—L'Echo de Bruxelles, 2-3 Nov. p2c3

77—La Journée (Brussels), 30 Oct. p1c1

78—Robineau auction, Nov. 1961, lot 224

Personally Entrusted Mail on "Vauban"

Details about this and the other balloons that landed nearby towards the end of October are given in Feuilles Marcophiles #226 (1981) pp 5-6, where I also pointed out that the severally cited lozenge 141 and cds of Arcis-s-Aube for 27 and 29 October are obvious mistakes. The dates appear to refer to message dates, the pieces having been flown on the much later "Nièpce."

Mail from the "Garibaldi," the "Vauban" and the "Colonel Charras" all occur postmarked at Tours on 1 November. The Aéroliers cachet would eliminate the "Vauban" as a possibility. A letter written on the 28 or 29 could only have flown on the "Colonel Charras," if it carries that Tours date. Unless the text specifies a balloonist, other mail with that Tours cds cannot be assigned to a specific balloon.

The 978 lozenge (Chaumont) exists with and without the Aéroliers cachet, the latter being characteristic for a "Colonel Charras." Together with the 305 lozenge and/or the Bar-le-Duc cds, it is characteristic of the "Vauban." Otherwise it cannot be assigned to a certain balloon, again supposing that the text does not mention a specific balloonist who carried it.

305 lozenge and Bar-le-Duc 28 (unless otherwise specified).—

Bureau de Passe 978 30 Oct., Geneva (Switz.) 3 Nov.

Autreche 2 Nov., Niort 4

Beaune 2 Nov.

Bordeaux 2 Nov., Arcachon 2

Castelnaudary 3 Nov. (and others)

Toulon 3 Nov. (text mentions "his" sailor)

Bar-le-Duc 29, 3997 (Tours), London 3 Nov.

305 lozenge only.—

Bureau de Passe 978 30 Oct., Geneva (Switz.)

Arcachon 1 Nov.

Fresnes-en-Woëvre 29 Oct. (not specific, either "Vauban" or "Bretagne").—

Chamboulives 9 Nov.

Grasse 10 Nov.

Le Mans Nov.
 Pleine-Fougères
 St. Malo 10 Nov.

The "Bretagne"

2000 cubic meters, owned by Prévert (privately), piloted by René Cuzon de Rest, passengers Frederic Gonner Worth, Jules Aimé Ballot, and Manceau, probably no ordinary mail, 7 or 9 pigeons, left La Villette gas works about 1400 hours on 27 October, landed about 1730 hours near Hennemont (Meuse), with a second landing soon thereafter. No ordinary mail has ever been identified as coming from that balloon.

Pilot and passengers, one of whom was an Englishman, were captured with the balloon and most of its contents. The result of this first capture of air travelers was the start of international air law. The details of this development have been published. (79)

Earlier, a very detailed history of the flight and its aftermath was published. (80)

Some of the contemporary news items were used in recent articles in the American and French philatelic press. (81)

For personally entrusted mail from this balloon with the cds of Fresnes of 29 October, see the preceding balloon.

Notes and References.— if not shown, year is 1870).—

79—Ernst M. Cohn, "Documents on the Origin of International Air Law," Federal Bar Journal, vol. 27, #3 (1967) 314-324

80—Paul Maincent, "Histoire de 'La Bretagne,' Aérostat du Siègle," L'Echo de la Timbrologie #1329 (1963)-1354 (1966)

81—anon., "A Mystery Contest for Our Readers," Airpost Journal vol. 48 #1 (1976)10-11; #4 (1977)122; Ernst M. Cohn, "La Bretagne—Rediscoveries Concerning a Paris Siege Balloon," F&C Philatelist #167 (1977)1-5; idem, "Le Ballon LA BRETAGNE du Siègle de Paris," Soc. Int'l de l'Histoire Postale, bull. 42, 2-11.

Personally Entrusted Mail on "Bretagne"

In addition to what is mentioned under "Vauban" above, Jean-François Brun (private communication) reports a cover with the Fresnes cds of 29 Oct. and an Aérostatiers cachet on back, Elbeuf arrival on 10 November. This is clearly from the "Bretagne," because the "Vauban" could not have carried any mail with that cachet.

The "Colonel Charras"

2000 cubic meters, owned by Post Office, piloted by Victor Ferdinand Gilles, no passengers, 450-460 kg mail, 6 pigeons, left Gare du Nord about noon on 29 October, landed about 1630 hours near Langres (Haute Marne). Paris postmarks from morning of 27 to morning of 29 October are possible on ordinary mail.

The Gaulois (450 kg) and the Electeur Libre (470 kg in 8 bags) agree fairly well on the weight of ordinary mail carried. (82)

This was the last siege launch that Nadar attended. (83)

Chaumont, 30.—1:27 A.M. Director of Posts to Director General of Posts, Tours.—A second manned balloon fell at Montigny-le-Roy with 450-

500 kg of mail. I shall try sending it to Tours together with that which fell in the Meuse Department by the only locomotive (available) in a single trip. Nothing received at Chaumont as yet.

Chaumont, 30.—9:30 A.M. Prefect to Interior, Tours. Gilles, captain of the balloon "Colonel Charras," left Paris at noon, just arrived at Chaumont at 6 o'clock. Good news from Paris. Gilles leaves tomorrow morning for Tours, bearing Government dispatches. (3)

Clamecy (Nièvre), 31 Oct. 9:50 P.M.—Sub-prefect of Clamecy to prefect of Nevers. Captain Gilles has just arrived by special train from Chaumont with dispatch from Government at Paris. He piloted a balloon, "Colonel Charras." He has six pigeons. Landed yesterday between Langres and Chaumont after having been shot at by Prussians and (our own) Mobiles. . . Captain Gilles will be at LaCharité tomorrow morning with his balloon. Let a special train be prepared. He may be at LaCharité around 4 o'clock. (84)

Sub-prefecture of Clamecy, 1 November.—Mr. Prefect: Here is the verbatim copy of the telegram that I received yesterday evening at 7:30 P.M.: Nuits-sous-Ravières, 31 October 1870, 4:30 P.M.—Gilles, captain of battalion to Sub-prefect Clamecy. The Colonel Charras asks Mr. Sub-Prefect to have available for his disposal three carriages for transporting him and his material to Tours. Mr. Gilles carries dispatches for the Government.—It is for that reason that I had telegraphed you. When these gentlemen arrived I got the explanation. The telegram was right, except for the word "battalion" instead of the word "balloon," and the phrase "to the Sub-prefect of Clamecy" had been interpolated. It should have read "Gilles, captain of the balloon 'Le Colonel Charras' etc.". . . (85)

Notes and references if not shown, year is 1870).—

82—Le Gaulois, 31 Oct., p2c1; L'Electeur Libre, 31 Oct.

83—L'Avenir National, 1 Nov. p2c6

84—Text communicated by Hubert Cappart (1970)

85—Photocopy of letter in archive at Nevers, sent by Madame Charbolin, Direction des Services d'Archives, Nevers (1976).—Nuits-sous-Ravières must be a hamlet near Ravières, itself a little village off the beaten path in the Yonne Department. How did Gilles manage to go there or to have a telegram sent from there?

Personally Entrusted Mail on "Colonel Charras"

In view of the bunching up of mail towards the end of October in the occupied area, the only certain "Charras"-entrusted covers are those hand-dated after the departure of the "Vauban"; but see also the Aérostiers cover to Bressuire below. In any case, this example illustrates the importance of the hand-written date in balloon letters.

LePileur cites a cover, hand-dated 24 October, with Aérostiers cachet, 978 (Chaumont), Bressuire 2 November; this can only be a "Charras."

All the following examples are hand-dated 28 or 29 October; with the possible exception of the last one, each is undoubtedly a "Charras."

Langres 30 Oct., London 7 Nov.

AP (Auxerre à Paris), Tours 1 Nov., Beaune 3

Aérostiers, Tours 1 Nov., Granville 3

Tours 1 Nov., Bâle 5, Mannheim 6

Tours 1 Nov., Brest 3, St.-Renan 3

Tours 1 Nov., Brest 2

Boulogne 2 Nov.

2650 Neuvy-Pailloux 4 Nov. (or "Fulton"?)

