

France & Colonies Philatelist



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Another Accepted Date Bites the Dust on Type Sage

By Your Editor

For many, many years, the statement has been repeated from one handbook to another, that the 40c Type Sage Type 1 (N under B) was first put into use on June 1, 1878. Yvert's specialized catalog, Lochard's "Vieux Timbres," and all the rest, give this date. The Kohl Handbook tells of a controversy that raged as to whether Type 2 of the 40c had appeared **before** Type 1 --- on the basis of an old report of 40c Type 2, with N under U as used in June 1878. Gibbons' catalog at one time gave March 1878 for 40c Type 1 but has corrected that error.

Incidentally to checking, by seeing and in part acquiring, earliest possible dated postmarked copies of the 40c in both types, I had a real thrill in June 1956. Miss M.M. Parlett, of Vista, Calif., sending me a few 40c stamps as a response to an appeal in the Western Stamp Collector, included one 40c Type 1, shy one corner but with postmark dated April 25, 1878, at Paris, Place de la Bourse.

The photos herewith show this copy, both as it appears and in a light print to bring out that postmark date conspicuously. These pictures now ~~strike~~ the old June 1 date flat on its face, "dead as a doornail." All catalog editors are asked please to note..... and act.

Accessory to this discovery, I mention:

Eight years of search of a 40c Type 2 with N under U, used in 1878 or 1879, have failed. The earliest postmark date seen, on a copy which I now own, is August 4, 1880; and the next is in 1881.

Furthermore, the evidence is now in print, for everyone to see. that the 40c Sage Type 1 (N under B) is printed from stereotype cliches and not from an electrottype plate. See article, Collectors Club Philatelist, March 1956.

For comparison: Dr. Carroll Chase showed that the 5c Sage Type 1 was in use as early as March 27, 1876, illustrating the clinching copy just as is now done for the 40c, in No. 48 (Nov.-Dec. 1949) of this journal.



FESTUNG LORIENT **An Unknown Issue of Stamps in France**

By Emile Maurin

The stamps of Festung Lorient, eleven years after their issuance, are still waiting for the rightful place in the catalogs except for one recent listing by Thiaude.

In the spring of 1945, shortly before the defeat of Germany, I had a great surprise. Paying a visit to an old friend, whose family was in Lorient, I was invited to read a letter coming from that "pocket" of German-held territory. The letter was taken from its envelope in my presence. This letter was unwontedly franked with a 1.50f Petain stamp, although the use of these stamps had already been outlawed and had ceased for many months. Looking at the cover with some care, I saw a small surcharge, apparently printed, and rather difficult to read, on the stamp.

It turned out to be two words, in two lines:

Festung
Lorient

But, except for Thiaude, the catalogs still are silent about this issue, though years have passed. When the story of these rarest French stamps is told, perhaps it will not be entirely dark as to why they have not been listed.

In December, 1944, the Germans held only two "pockets" in Brittany. These were Lorient and St. Nazaire. In each pocket there were a number of towns, with many inhabitants. The shooting war was at a standstill in both areas so that a modus vivendi was officially concluded. Contact with external areas was reestablished; mail went to and fro.

In St. Nazaire, stamps were soon not to be had. With the approval of the Kommandatur (the German military administration), the Chamber of Commerce produced locally made stamps, which were recognized as valid by the French authorities on mail coming out of that pocket. These are listed by Yvert and by Thiaude.



**Festung
Lorient**

Surcharge
3 times
actual
diameter

In Lorient, with a smaller population, there was no shortage of stamps. For reasons not patent to us, the German Kommandatur there decided to surcharge them, not allowing the use of unoverprinted adhesives on mail it permitted to be dispatched. The term "Festung Lorient" used by the Germans, means Fortress Lorient or Stronghold Lorient.

Two official documents reveal to us the details of this ruling. The older is dated May 1, 1945. It is an official declaration by German First Lt. Schmitt, in charge of the German post office. It was made to the French postmaster of La Baule. Here is the text, translated, of this declaration recorded by "le receveur des P.T.T. de Baule." :---

"I, the undersigned, First Lieutenant Dr. A. Th. Schmitt, having been delegated to negotiate with American and French authorities outside the Fortress of Lorient, declare that the recommencement of mail (letters and post cards) between French civilian living in liberated zones and non-liberated ones had been established by an agreement with the French Red Cross X G 2, (Captain Nelleau) in Vannes. All the mail sent by the French civilian population of the Lorient "pocket" had been assembled at the main German

censor office, through the Kommandatur offices in the various sectors. As there was no French post office in the mainland area of the Lorient "pocket" the office chief of the German censorship, at the same time German army representative in Lorient making contact with the Allied forces (1st Lt. Schmitt) acted as French postmaster. He issued needed stamps, furnished by French P.T.T. offices, to mayors of the various towns included within the mainland area, postmarked stamped letters with the German censorship device except a few postmarked by P.T.T. offices in Quiberon, Belle-Isle and Ile de Groix. It is understood that these three offices were open, but because of censorship were unable to provide a regular service."

"The stamps were distributed to mayors, after being surcharged by the German censor office with "Festung Lorient" in small type. Orders were issued that thereafter only mail with the stamps would be accepted and transmitted by the German censorship bureau, after affixing its own seal specially made for this service."

"Mails thus established were sent in three different ways, exclusively by the German censor office here:"

"1) To liberated France, her colonies and protectorates, about 3,500 letters were forwarded after Jan. 1 1945; about 2,500 bore stamps. Red Cross messages are not included in this number."

"2) To French workingmen in Germany, via the Feldpost air mail, not including mail to French prisoners of war, 160 letters were franked with French stamps surcharged "Festung Lorient" and sent to their addresses in Germany (4, 4.50 or 5 francs in stamps according to weight of the letters). 65 letters bear the Feldpost mark upon the French stamps; the others were cancelled by the P.T.T. office at Groix."

"3) From the Lorient pocket to the St. Nazaire pocket or vice versa by German ocean service. This mail was in action from the beginning of January, but in the Saint Nazaire pocket, civilians were informed officially by the P.T.T. officials only on Feb. 19, for military reasons. The mail carried from Lorient to St. Nazaire was 334 letters and post cards; from St. Nazaire to Lorient 419 letters; between Jan. 1 and May 1."

"The following stamps had been overprinted with the words "festung Lorient" and allotted to mayors in the mainland pocket of Lorient. A small stock was put at the disposal of the German censorship office for franking needs:"

"Mercury 10c--650

"Mercury 10c, 650---30c, 600---40c, 180---80c, 1800."

"Petain 60c, 105---70c orange, 300---80c green, 300---1f, 150---1.20f, 180---1.50f brown, 1800---2f, 150---4f, 200---4.50 f typo, 100---4.50f engraved, 70."

"Interzonal post cards 1.20 f, 30."

"Arms 5f, 75."

"Arch of Triumph 4f, 25---5f, 30---10f, 4."

"By request of a few philatelists the following stamps were struck with "Festung Lorient" and used mostly as franking on mail to Saint Nazaire:

Petain stamps 1.50+3.50, 20---Great Men, 15 sets."

"Declaration issued on May 10, 1945, and sent in quadruplicate to:

The Receveur du Bureau de Post. of the P. T. T. at La Baule;

The Chief of the Censorship Office in Lorient;

Mr. Brun, expert, Galerie de Beaujolais, Paris I."

"Signed, Oberleutnant Dr. A. Th. Schmitt, Head of the German Censorship Office."

The second document, dated May 26, 1945, is a police report made by the Directory of the National Police after hearings at which Lt. Schmitt testified. Though it repeats almost completely the official declaration received by Mr. Rocque, postmaster at La Baule, the further details given in it justify publishing it also, in translation:

" French Republic"

"Declaration" (Procès verbal)

"Ministry of the Interior
General Head office
of the National Police

"Year one thousand and nine hundred and forty five; the twenty sixth of May.

SUBJECT: Surcharging of French stamps by the German authorities at Lorient.

We, Martin Pierre, inspector of the superintendency brigade of the territory of, Rennes, Judicial police officer aide to the Procurator of the French Republic:

CONTENTS: Declaration of a certain Alfons Schmitt, Lieutenant in the German Army."

Having seen the instructions of Lt. Morice, regional delegate for the investigation of enemy war crime; Having seen the instructions of the Police Deputy heading the Superintendency brigade of the Territory of Rennes"

"We heard the mentioned Schmitt, 39 years old, 1st Lt. to the General Staff of the 25th Army Corps, who answered as follows to our questions in the French language:"

"After December 1944 I was in charge of censoring and forwarding civilian mail entering or leaving the Lorient pocket."

"In January 1945 I assumed the duties of P. T. T. office chief, since the reestablishment asked for by the mayors in the mainland area towns of the Lorient pocket has not been granted by the French administration."

"I supplied myself with regular French stamps at the P. T. T. offices of Belle-Isle, Groix, and Quiberon. These three offices were operated under French supervision, but regular services were conducted via the Kommandatur for censorship reasons."

"All stamps obtained from these offices were surcharged by myself with a device bearing the words 'Festung Lorient.' The ink was black."

"I surcharged the following values: I can indicate for you the approximate quantities:"

I. Mercury Type.	II. Petain.
10c 650	60c 120 1f.20 180
30c 300	70c 300 1.50 1800
40c 180	80c 300 2f 150
50c 1500	1f 150

III Arms (to Germany).

5f 75	4f 200; 4.50f large 75
	4.50f small 100

IV. Arch of Triumph.

4f	25
5f	35
10f	4."

"Moreover I must state to you that for the benefit of a few philatelist from St. Nazaire pocket, I surcharged with the same device:

Petaín Birthday Issue,
1.50 + 3.50 20

Great Men 15 sets."

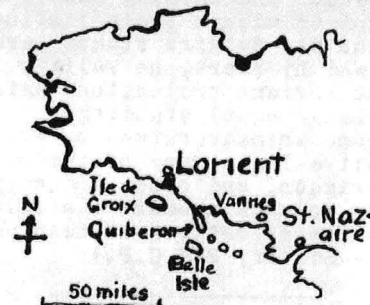
"I cannot tell you these philatelists' names!"

"Mail leaving Lorient pocket was sent to three different destinations: Liberated Zone, St. Nazaire pocket, and Germany."

"I distributed all these stamps at face value, through the Kommandatur at Lorient, to representatives of the various towns included within the mainland portion of the Lorient pocket. I distributed them at face value also, via the French P. T. T. postmaster at La Baule."

"Carefully read, and signed, "Inspector T," Schmitt, Oberleutnant." "P. Martin."
(End of official report).

The "Great Men stamps referred to are Yvert Nos. 612-617, Scott Nos. B179 to B184. The 1.50 + 3.50 Petain stamp is Yvert No. 606, Scott No. B175.



The surcharged 5f Arms is the 1944 Flanders, Scott No. 467. The Mercuries are of course the issue with inscriptino "Postes Francaises." The surcharging of the Arch of Triumph stamps, a Liberated France issue, is rather anomalous, coming side by side with the Vichy Petains. But as the stock of Petain 4f and 450f, and Arms 5f was too small for the volume of mail to Germany, a supply of stamps was asked, from Vannes, with which office traffic was easy. The other Arch values were not overprinted, because there were enough low values of Mercury and Petain stamps in Lorient.

The overprint is not typographic. It was imprinted with a handstamp. It is more often met with double, triple, inverted, or slantwise, than once and well centered.

Besides the postmark of the dispatching office, every cover bears the purple German Censors office mark of Lorient. Moreover, these covers the handwritten signature of Schmitt.

The smallness of the issue is almost without precedent, certainly without it among French stamps, for a series made strictly for postal actual use. There was no monopolizing of the material; but the waste basket was the destination of most of this priceless philatelic material, which was not noticed by most recipients. A few covers, almost always bearing a 1.50f as the stamp, have survived here and there. Probably few complete unused sets have survived; less than 20 are known, almost all of course without the 10f stamp.

This scarcity quite likely is one reason why the catalogs fail to notice the Festung Lorient issue. Thiaude, in fact, does not specify which stamp exist but speaks of "Mercury and Petain stamps" vaguely, giving a price of 3500 francs for any stamp used; and no unused price. Mr. Arthur Lafon, writing in Le Timbre Nos. 41 and

42, 1949-1950, about this series, says only the Jacquot specialized catalog of Germany lists them, giving unused prices thus: 50c Mercury, 8000f; 80c Petain green, 8000f; 1.50f Petain at 3000f. No used-copy prices are given. Jacquot does not report the 10f Arch of Triumph, nor the items surcharged for the collectors.

I have one interesting unusual cover, with surcharged stamps cancelled at Groix with the French postmark, and a German censor imprint---different from that normally used during World War 2. I have a number of covers with the "usual seal" or censor mark.

We can lament the unwonted request, unfortunately satisfied, of the stamp people who in such tragic times went begging favors of an occupying enemy at bay. As these stamps did not see use, it is correct to disconnect them from the normal issue.

These documents, as here presented, surely are unequivocal. The stamps surcharged "Festung Lorient" satisfy exactly all criteria for legitimate postage issues. They were made for the purpose of franking letters, by authorities who had the power to do so. This cannot be said of many of the "Liberation Issues."

It is now for the catalog makers to recognize the facts and to adjust their listings accordingly. As the St. Nazaire stamps are listed, by Thiaude and by Yvert, no valid reason for omitting the Lorient productions exists. They are of precisely equal standing.

(Note: Some animadversions by Mr. Maurin about the comparative legitimacy of the British Guiana famous 1c crimson, and other one-copy-only items and imputing to catalog-makers a desire not to list stamps "never met", have been omitted as irrelevant.--Editor, F. & C.P.)

Excellent Serial on Cameroun

Beginning in January 1956, a serial on this country has been running in the monthly, "The Philatelist," published by Robson Lowe, 50 Pall Mall, London, S.W.1. The author, Mrs. H.G. Porter, starts with the German occupation, goes through the short British era, and from June onward has been handling the French issues. The treatment is comprehensive, with adequate postal history throughout, and detailed reports of stamp varieties. (30 cents per number; \$3 per year).

Though not as detailed as that in the Kohl Handook Extension (Handbuch der Briefmarkenkunde, 1941) Mr. Porter's serial does include every point of significance therein, and is in our own language.

Group Meeting Dates

As we go to press, word as to the programs at the coming Group meetings is not yet in hand.

But the dates of the New York meetings can be given. Members from everywhere are not only entitled to attend these meetings, but they are most cordially invited.

All meetings, 8 p.m. at the Collectors Club, 22 East 35 St., New York, N.Y. Members who wish to dine together meet at the Club around 6 p.m.

The dates are:

Tuesday, Sept. 11th (Not Sept. 4)

Tuesday Oct. 2.

Tuesday, Nov. 6.

Tuesday, Dec. 4.

For various valid reasons, all bourse doings, whether selling or swapping, have had to be discontinued at the Group meetings. This may be unfortunate, but cannot be avoided.

* SECRETARY'S REPORT *

May 15 to July 15 1956

NEW MEMBERS: Welcome.

- 652 Freiday, George W. Jr. Hebron Academy,....
Hebron, Maine..(Modern France & Col..)
- 653 Warfield, Corinne, 617 West 168th. Street,
New York 32, N.Y. (19th. Century)...
- 654 Auerbach, Fred A. 575 Riverside Drive,....
New York 31, N.Y. (France & Colonies.)
- 655 Lundstedt, Tom. 1143 First Avenue,.....
New York 21, N.Y.
- 656 Belinfante, J. 1809 Rabinia Road,.....
West Lafayette, Indiana..(France.)...

APPLICATIONS PENDING:

- 657 Evans, Alexander, 180 Livingston Street,..
New Haven 11, Conn.....
- 658 La France, Leo J. 4525 Nicholas Drive,....
Knoxville 18, Tenn. (France 19th.Cent.
- 659 Ramsey, John P. 81 Spring Garden Street,..
Hamden 17, Conn. France & Col. Genl...

REINSTATEMENT:

- 482 Stevenson, Marjorie E. 305 South Lang Ave.
Pittsburgh 8, Penna.....

DECEASED:

- 178 Weber, A.H., Berkeley, Calif., June 18 1956,
age 96 years. (Had lapsed as a member..
within very recent months)

CHANGE OF ADDRESS:

- 67 Nouss, Henry O. to P.O.Box 1056, Pompano--
Beach, Florida.....
- 79 Morton, John B. to 155 Cleveland Avenue,..
Buffalo 22, New York.....
- 476 Walter, Mercer C. Brig.General to Head---
quarters, Fort Sill, Oklahoma.....

Respectfully submitted
Charles Bretagne, Secretary

MEMBERS' APPEALS

Want and exchange notices only; members only; no charge; one or two insertions only. Those who reply will please offer only what is asked.

Wanted--France Nos. 12 and 13 on cover, single or used with any other number; preferred single. Quote price; do not send covers. Charles F. Harrity, 818 Hampden Blvd., Reading, Pa. (Member 254).

Unused French Revenues wanted. Also can use practically anything after 1915 in nice shape mint or used. Send with best price or will make offer. Brainerd Kremer, 8 Lee Pl. Upper Montclair, N.J. (Member 8)

Paris Star numeral cancellations wanted on Scott Nos. 26, 27, 32, 33, 53, 56, 58, 59, 61 and 62. Submit on approval with price for each item. The numeral must be 8 or higher 123 and up are most wanted. Brig.Gen. Mercer C. Walter, Headquarters, Fort Sill, Okla. (Member 476)

To buy or exchange, wanted: World War 1 Regimental Seals. Walter C. Utt, P.O. Box 373 Angwin, Calif. (Member 615)

Wanted: "French-related phantasies, such as the Boulanger and Chambord issues of France, or those of Counani, Clipperton Island, etc. Walter C. Utt, Box 373, Angwin, Calif. (Member 615).