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FRENCH  
 PRECANCELS

1868

to

1922

by

STEPHEN G. RICH

Editor-Secretary Vaurie has asked for this article, because a number of the members of the F. & C. G. have let him know that they desire some specific information in the precancel field. Thanks to an article by Henri Menard of Paris, "France Type 1," in the Precancel Bee, August 1934, and various shorter articles by Mr. Menard and others from 1933 to 1938, fairly definite information is to be had.

France was the third country in which precancelling was done. The United States had the practice as early as 1844 on the Hale Locals; on government issues it appears here in 1857 or early 1858; and Austrian newspaper tax stamps are known precancelled as early as 1859. The earliest date we have for any actual precancelling of French stamps is December 19, 1868, according to Mr. Menard.

The earlier French precancels, prior to 1893, are usually considered a separate group, spoken of in Yvert's catalogue as "Annulation pour les Imprimés." The picture of a newspaper front, at the start of this article, shows the

method used, and at once tells us that this usage is a genuine precancelling in every sense of the word. The stamps were affixed to the blank sheets on which journals were printed. The heading or text was printed over the stamp. No further cancelling of the stamp was done; none was required. Thus the stamp was cancelled before mailing, before it paid postage or any revenue tax. The mere question of whether the cancelling was done before or after affixing is without bearing on the precancel nature of the usage. The cancellation is done with a device - the type as set up for the paper - not used for any other cancelling; hence not even the most exacting "purist" can even claim that this is a mere "provisional precancel" usage. It is furthermore a definitely authorized usage, by an official decree.

The newspaper stamps of the 1868-69 issue are the most plentiful ones in this precancel group, which is known as Type 1 or Universal Style F-1 among precancel collectors. In fact, they are apparently not known cancelled in any other way, so far as present reported

(Continued on back page)

# KNOW YOUR FORGERIES

(Continued from p.16)

## SAINTE MARIE DE MADAGASCAR

1894 - Groupe type - The whole set has been forged by Fournier (see General Issues) and his forged cancellation is: double circle, 21½ mm, inner circle interrupted, STE MARIE 12 SEPT 95 MADAGASCAR.

## ROUAD

1916 - Vertical surcharge - hand stamped overprint - there are many forgeries. The originals show a break in the head of the R and in the vertical bar of the D.

In the second set there is a forgery of the surcharge on the 5 fr. and of the double surcharge on the 3c. A rare variety is the 2 piastres on 50c without background tint. This variety is offered with the tint removed chemically; close examination will reveal traces of it.

Some of the originals were legally used in Port Said during the winter of 1919-20, but the varieties surcharged on stamps of Alexandria are completely bogus.

## REUNION

1852 - We hope that nobody is going to be so foolish as to buy these two gems of the French Collection without being sure of what he is buying. For the sake of the record, however, we say that these stamps were reprinted five times. The originals are framed by two thin lines and one thick line; on all the reprints the frame lines were redrawn and have but two lines, one thin and one thick. The only set of the reprints that has any real value is the first one made in 1866 for Mr. Moens. Besides the reprints, Serrane describes no less than thirteen different forgeries; - an amusing and ancient one has at the top in English! --- the words REUNION ISLE. Some were made by Fournier, others have the words FAC SIMILE printed in the margins 8 mm. over each stamp.

1885-86 - These surcharges were forged for most stamps and the different types require specialized study. There was an error 52 on 40c Eagle of which a few copies were sold; the error was then spotted and corrected, --later on the postmaster privately copied it, but he was caught red-handed!

1891 - The overprint was forged on both the originals and forged stamps (see General Issues). Most of the forgeries come from Fournier who also used the following forged cancellation: - double circle, 20½ mm., REUNION 23 SEPT. 91 ST BENOIT.

1892-1912 - Groupe type - The whole set was forged by Fournier (see General Issues) who accompanied it by the cancellation: double circle REUNION 2 E/20 JANV 1892 ST BENOIT.

1917 - Surcharge 0.01 on 4c - The surcharge was forged in Reunion itself, including the varieties, which are very dangerous; by connivance they received genuine cancellations (1917).

1915-16 - Red Cross - All the varieties have been forged very cleverly. The authentic composition was stolen from the printer and used in Reunion to make clandestine printings of the Black surcharge and its varieties. They then received genuine cancellations.

1889-92 - Postage Dues - There were two printings and there are ten varieties for each

value. These were reprinted in panes of 6 instead of 10. There are also several very dangerous forgeries which can be spotted by the printing method and paper and other discrepancies. On the originals the word POSTES is always 10 mm long. In the Fournier forgeries the S-shaped ornaments under the N of REUNION and over the S of POSTES lack the small black dot terminals of the originals. The forged cancellation used is the same as that used on the Groupe type.

1890-1903 - Parcel Post - Yvert 1, 2 and 2a (not listed by Scott). The frame was typeset in Reunion. Fournier forged these by lithography, the inner double frame line in these being 1½ mm thick instead of 1 mm in the originals, and the letters of CENTIMES are 2 1/3 mm high instead of 1½ mm in the originals. In the originals, the fleurons in the circles are shaded, but this detail was overlooked by Fournier.

## PORT SAID

1899 - For the forgeries of the first set see French Offices in the General Issues.

1899 - Surcharged 25c and VINGT-CINQ on 10c. There are dangerous forgeries, notably the 25c, which should be expertized. On the originals of the VINGT-CINQ the surcharge, being so large, is almost always badly centered and the stamps show a portion of the surcharge from the row above, either the bottom of the letters CINQ or especially the tail of the Q. In the Fournier forgeries the hyphen is missing.

1902 - Forgeries of the Merson type (see General Issues).

1921 on - and Postage Dues. All the valuable surcharges have been forged, many with great care. Expertization is essential.

## OUBANGI

1916 - Red Cross - Forged surcharges are numerous, especially of the rare varieties. As these varieties are very expensive, they should be expertized.

## OCEANIE

1892-1907 - Groupe type - The whole set has been forged by Fournier (see General Issues).

1915 - Surcharge E F O - and Red Cross - The variety inverted surcharge has been cleverly forged; expertization is necessary. The same applies to the inverted surcharges of the Red Cross Issue.

1916-21-24 - Surcharges applied locally -- The gum on the stamps used had become brown due to climatic conditions; any surcharge on a stamp with undiscolored gum should be rejected. The variety inverted surcharge of the 19 24 stamp has been very exactly forged, and should be expertized.

## OBOCK

1892 - Postage stamps and postage dues with curved or horizontal OBOCK overprint - Overprint was applied locally, the curved one by means of a rubber stamp and the horizontal with a wooden stamp. The original curved overprint is 13½ mm long, the height of the first O being 4 mm. A dealer got hold of the rubber stamp some years later and made some extra overprints of the more expensive values and of the varieties; fortunately the heat of Africa had so shrunk the rubber that the "reprinted" over-



prints now measure 3 mm high by 12 long.

There exist also large numbers of forged surcharges, some very well made - and all these stamps should be expertized. The forged surcharges exist on both original and on forged stamps (see General Issues for postage and dues stamps). The Fournier sets have the lower loop of the B too high in the curved overprint, the horizontal overprint is 18 instead of 17½ mm long, and the upper oblique arm of the K is too short. The cancellations made for these are: double circle, inner interrupted OBOCK 27 MARS 92 COLONIE FRANCAISE; same but with date changed to 26 SEPT 92 - both in blue or black.

1892 - Stamps of the preceding set with horizontal overprint with additional surcharge of large numerals of value - Forged surcharges of all of them both on the originals and on the forgeries of the preceding set - expertization is necessary.

1892 - Groupe type - The whole set was forged by Fournier (see General Issues).

1893-94 - There are very dangerous forgeries of the 5 fr. of 1893 and of the 25 and 50 fr. of 1894. In the Fournier forgeries the quadrille network is too shiny and disappears in benzine. We again remind collectors that these latter two high values were mainly for fiscal purposes.

After the office of Obock was closed, all the large stamps were used in Djibouti with and without surcharge, the 10c on 10 fr., 5c on 25 fr. and 10c on 50 fr. While cheap with the surcharges, they are very dear without, so, as you might guess, the surcharges have been scratched out and the stamps sold as those of Obock; usually two superposed blue cancellations try to hide the spot from which the surcharge has been scratched out.

#### NOSSI-BE

All the overprints and surcharges have been copiously forged, some are on the forgeries of the Dubois type (see General Issues), but all the dangerous ones are on original stamps. Those made by Fournier are accompanied by the forged cancellations: double circle, 22½ mm, NOSSI-BE 10 OCT 91 MADAGASCAR; idem, but with 95 instead of 91, HELVILLE 22 AVRIL 09 NOSSI-BE.

The original surcharges of the first issue are always in pale or light dull blue, the same color as that of the cancellation in used copies. The surcharges indeed were made with the same ink and as progressive postal needs required. Later on and to make a little bizness, reprintings were made in ultramarine and indigo; some of these reprints went through the mails - which proves exactly nothing since it was the postmaster who was doing the reprinting. The surcharges of the second set were also reprinted.

As practically all the stamps of Nossi-Be are very rare and very expensive, it should not be necessary to say that expertization is absolutely necessary.

1894 - Groupe type - The whole set has been forged by Fournier (see General Issues).

#### NIGER

Apparently there are no forgeries.

#### NEW HEBRIDES

1920-21 - There are forgeries of all the provisional surcharges; the 5c on 50c of the first issue should be expertized.

#### FRENCH PRECANCELLED DUES

By Emile Dorbritz

(From Vol. VIII No. 7, March 15, 1935, of "The Precancel Bee")



4TH TYPE

The precancelled due stamps of France are not mentioned in the specialized catalog of France and Colonies. This is both surprising and regrettable, for these stamps have been in use for some years. Up to now two persons have written on them, but not very definitely. The first to draw them to the attention of collectors was Mr. Ralph M. Williams, an American collector. His article is very clear but incomplete for lack of documentation. The second person is our friend Mr. Pere, who has likewise discussed these stamps without treating certain essential details. This is, no doubt, a mere oversight.

(Two paragraphs explaining the nature of a precancel are omitted.)

I describe the specimens which I now possess. This description follows chronological order and the numbers given are those of the 1935 Scott Catalog.

1st type. Equilateral triangle, with 13 mm. sides, empty, in black, on number 637.

2nd type. Isosceles triangle 14 x 16 mm., letter A within, in black, on number 639.

3rd type. Isosceles triangle 13½ x 15 mm., letter A within, in black, on number 640.

4th type. (Illustrated.) Isosceles triangle 13 x 14 mm., letter B within, black, on numbers 632, 638, 639 and 640.

5th type. Isosceles triangle 14 x 17 mm., letter R within, in black, on numbers 662, 663 and 668.

6th type. A larger or smaller portion of an ordinary postmark on the stamp only. The impression does not tie the stamp to the cover. In black, on number 668 only.

The 2nd, 3rd, and 4th types come only with the letters A or B which distinguish the two divisions in the post office that handle delivery of insufficiently paid mail.

The 5th type with the letter R is used only on stamps covering refunds.

All these overprints are done not in the office of Boulevard Brune, but at the main receiving office in the Louvre. They are done with a roller and occur in all positions; inverted, sideways, to right or left, double, etc. Those well centered and perfectly straight on the stamps are least common.

Number 668 is the only stamp on which I have seen the 6th type. Specimens of this must, of course, not be removed from the cover or piece because it is not possible to distinguish these from any other cancellation if that is done. I consider this type semi-official because it arose from the initiative of some employees desiring to make their work easier.

The first five types are precancels of an official nature beyond any question. They are made with rollers manufactured specially for them. On many of these stamps the impression is poorly placed and successive subjects of the roller appear as two incomplete triangles separated at an interval of 4½ mm. at the base. These impressions are always in line.

(April 15, 1936)

#### New French Due Precancel



France 1935  
Due stamp

Writing to Wm. J. Michels in March 1935, Mr. Henri Menard says:

"I have received a sending from Hoover Brothers with a French due stamp of 2 francs (postal customs due) that is certainly a precancel. It is handstamped X in circle by the Postal Customs in sheets before use. It is very curious and uncommon."

The stamp is 2 francs mauve, Scott no. 603, with precancelling in dull black. Scott please note that this stamp is not "bright violet" or any shade of violet but a perfect mauve.

#### NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to our new members:

- 137-HAHN, Charles-P.O.Box 152, Winnetka, Ill.
- 138-MILLER, Michael-26 So. Calvert St., Baltimore, Md. (Siege of Paris issues-Balloon post)
- 139-ARNOLD, A.S.-Metuchen, N.J.  
(Siege of Paris issues-Balloon Post)
- 140-HENNIG, Bernard A.-30 N. LaSalle St., Chicago, Ill.

#### - CHANGE OF ADDRESS -

ANDRE, R. (130) to 4735 - 39 St., Long Island City, #4, N. Y.

#### KNOW YOUR FORGERIES . . .

1924 - The 50c on 25c watermarked multiple crown and C.A. comes with a forged watermark, a stamp of the 1912 set having served for this purpose, as about three-quarters of the stamps show no part of the R.F. watermark. The forgery is crude.  
(To be continued)



information goes. The 1868-69 newspaper stamps paid either a tax or both tax and postage, but the precancel usage was the same regardless of their function.

After the tax on newspapers was repealed in October 1870, such of these stamps as were in stock continued to be used up for postage only, with this same precancelling. Mr. Menard reports that some saw service as late as 1873. From October 1870 onwards, postage stamps of the regular issues appear in precancel usage.

These postage stamps include everything from the 1 centime imperforate of the 1853 Empire issue (on both colors paper) onwards, that supplied the correct rate for a single newspaper of varying weight. The list of known stamps thus precancelled can be found in the Hoover Precancel Catalog, Foreign Section, 1936 Edition, and is more complete than that in even the latest Yvert specialized catalog. The Bordeaux issue of 1870 is represented; and a number of the Type Sage stamps. The usage lapsed about 1880 according to Mr. Menard; the present author has not seen any between 1878 and the brief revival of the usage in 1891. Mr. Menard reports 1893 usage. The 1900 Type Blanc issue 1 and 2 centimes stamps occur thus precancelled and a copy in the present author's collection shows the year date 1903 on one of these 1 centime stamps. This last brief revival ends Type 1 precancelling.

Complete newspapers, or front sheets showing date, are definitely hard to find. Even specimens off cover are by no means easy to find except for the 1868-69 newspaper stamps.

Type 2 of the precancels, the famous rollers of 1893, are the real rarities of the French precancel field. All the evidence in hand indicates that this was a definite experiment with precancelling, conducted at two periods in 1893. A hand-operated roller was used for precancelling the stamps in sheets, and apparently some form of permit for their use seems to have been issued. Very few copies have come down to us even on piece, and at this writing none have been reported on entire cover.

IS PARIS  
MPR IM  
10 10 10  
SEPT 93  
93 93 9

The roller consisted of four straight lines of repeating inscription, as first used. No year date occurs in these first period usages, Feb. 6 to March 21. The identification of the year of use as 1893 is not positive, but the absence of year date would make it unlikely that these usages were in Feb. and March 1894, after the more extensive trial. Hence we speak of them confidently as February-March 1893. A fair number of stamps are known with first period precancelling, but save for the then current 5c, 20c and 30c, they are indeed rarities. The 30c was once so considered.

Usually the precancelling runs vertically on the stamp, about equally divided between reading upwards and reading downwards on these first period copies.

The 1893 rollers were in use again from Sept. 9 to Dec. 11 of that year, and this time on stamps from 1 to 75 centimes face value. The 3, 4 and 5 centimes are the least scarce. Cancellation runs vertically, about evenly divided between reading upwards and reading downwards. The same date occurs in each direction, on the same denomination, in a few cases, notably Sept. 11 on the 5c. The year is apparently missing in a few cases, but this may be poor inking only. The day is definitely missing on a fair

number of September and October copies of the 4c and 5c. The day and year occur inverted on Oct. 5, thus indicating that each line was probably a separate metal ring fitting onto the main cylinder of the device.

Double cancellation occurs sparsely.

The Hoover Catalog, mentioned above, lists all the known stamps in Type 2, for each period separately. The relative and actual values have changed materially, with material coming to hand as it was discovered, since that book appeared in 1936. The "normal" cancellation, reading across the stamp, is mentioned therein, but thus far is reported only from a 30c on March 2, now owned by the present author. "Normal" here does not mean usual, but is the precancellists' term for a cancellation reading across the stamp and in erect position. Many precancellings, not only French but American, literally are most abnormal or entirely unknown in "normal" position.

After the 1893 trial and the 1903 brief revival of Type F-1, France did no more precancelling till after World War I. Beginning with 1920, stamps were again issued precancelled, for printed matter as in previous cases. These were overprinted at the Government Printing Office, where they were manufactured. Thus all these later French precancels come within the group called "Bureau Prints" by precancellists, in reference to the production of such material at the Bureau of Engraving & Printing in the case of U.S. precancels. France was the third country to have Bureau Prints, as Belgium began them in 1906 and the U.S. in 1916.

The 1920-22 Bureau Prints have the well known three-line printed precancelling, which is here pictured. The 1920 precancels come for Paris only; those for 1921 and 1922 both for Paris and for all offices. Undoubtedly the most difficult to find of the whole group are the 15 centimes with the two 1921 precancellations,

on G.C. paper. On ordinary paper these are quite plentiful. Counting the varieties on G.C. and ordinary paper, this group of dated Bureau Prints includes just 21 items. But it is doubtful if any collector has yet assembled all 21.

The regular half-circle "Affranchissements" precancels replaced the earlier Bureau Prints with the start of 1923.

Pairs of any of the French precancels prior to 1923 are definitely scarce, and apparently larger multiples are unknown. In fifteen years of collecting, the present writer has been able to secure 6 pairs in Type 1 (one on entire journal), one of Type 2, and none of the 1920-22 Bureau Prints.

Revenue stamps of various sorts are found precancelled in Type 1, both in this period and later. Mr. Menard is authority for the 15c Ceres of the 1872 issue being used as a revenue, when found precancelled in this type.

The reader is referred to the Hoover and Yvert catalogues for all listings and pricings. The prices in the Hoover book were an accurate record of the market in 1936, based on a uniform discount of 50% from the quotations given. In many cases the relative worth of items has changed materially since then. The division of the 1920-22 Bureau Prints into five separate types, following usual precancel catalog usage and making each year a separate type, under the "Paris" and "France" groups, need not confuse anyone.

