

FRANCE and COLONIES PHILATELIST

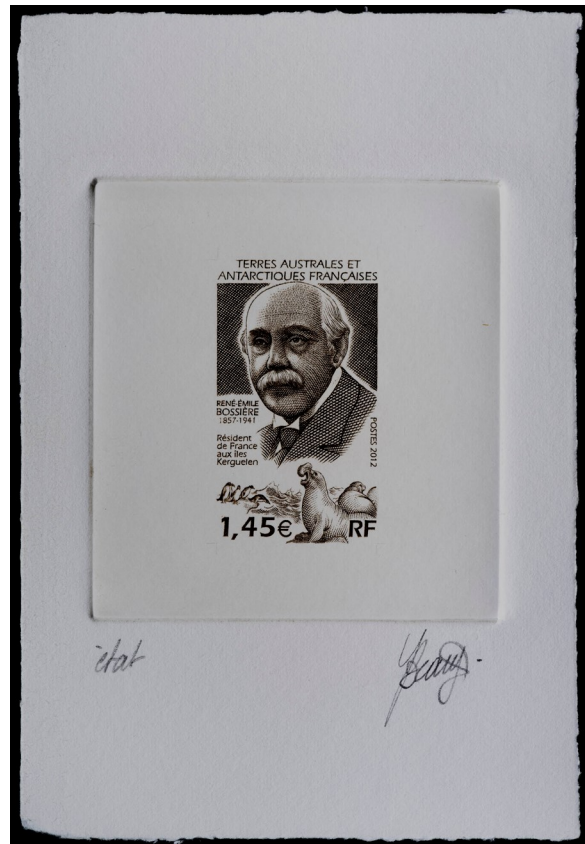
October 2020 Whole No. 342
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*Free French Semi-postals
From Martinique
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*Modern French-Area
Proofs*

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Remit to: Ben Bump

43 North Rd

Hampden, MA 01036

Paypal: benbump@hotmail.com

All communication about membership, subscriptions, publications, back issues, activities and services of the Society should be sent to the Corresponding Secretary:

Joel L. Bromberg

P.O. Box 17

Narrowsburg, NY 12764-0017, USA

All contributions to and questions concerning the contents and policy of this periodical should be sent to the Editor:

Norval Rasmussen

875 Vandalia Rd

Morgantown, WV 26501

Phone: 304-290-6117, e-mail: nrasmu@gmail.com

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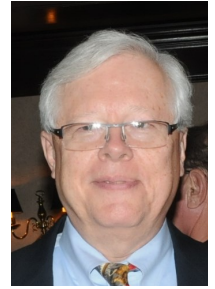
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President's Letter



Well, where are we now? In the past several months we have seen every 2020 national stamp show canceled with a single exception – St. Louis. As things turned out, because so few exhibitors were able to meet their commitments to the show, St. Louis was in fact not a national level show. To give you an idea, at one point more than 140 frames were committed, but only 40 frames were filled when the show opened.

As I write this I have seen a single email with a suggestion that the Rocky Mountain Stamp Show, our planned 2021 meeting place, may be canceled. We know that ARIPEX, the Phoenix area show, has canceled its 2021 show. I am a member of the Garfield-Perry March Party committee, and as of now we have held a single planning meeting with no decision about whether to have the 2021 March Party. The hotel is more than willing to work with us, but their food service remains closed.

Yet we are trying something new to us. We are copying many other philatelic societies – Collectors Club of New York, the APS and the Royal Philatelic Society of London, for example – by having on-line presentations. Elsewhere in this issue you will see our schedule for the next few months. We settled on the last Tuesday of each month, 7:30 PM Eastern time, as our standard. Our planned speakers will offer a variety of France and colonies philatelic subjects as we test your interest in virtual meetings.

We are using Zoom as our meeting platform. It turns out to be reasonably accessible (although I have friends whose electronics are too out-of-date to participate), and not very expensive. We can have as many as 100 participants (wouldn't that be great?), and the meeting is limited to 24 hours. I don't think that will be a problem.

You might guess that we were happy with the turnout for Ed Grabowski's Guadeloupe presentation in August. I was our second entertainer, competing with the first presidential debate. We were finished before President Trump and Vice-President Biden began their rather different form of entertainment. About ten people attended our virtual meeting, which was enough to continue.

One of the reasons to do these presentations is to find and encourage new members. At this point we are only inviting our members, although by the end of October we hope to reach out to others through the APS website, for example.

Our society directors and officers had scheduled a meeting in August, but so little had happened, we skipped our meeting in favor of another one in November. Let's hope that life has started to return to normal by then and we find a reason to meet.

Where might we be headed? There is some Covid-19 analysis that makes it seem like we could return to normal life today. In late September I read an open letter signed by over 500 Belgian doctors and many more health professionals. This letter calls for an immediate return to normal life, with at-risk people taking special care on their own. They support their assertions with many footnote references to scientific studies.

Here in Ohio, we are probably middle-of-the-road. The governor and public health departments continue to dictate policies to prevent more rapid spread of Covid-19. We must wear masks in any building open to the public – restaurants and bars being the most common examples. We discourage large groups. Schools are in session in some places, not others, because the decisions are being made by each district. Ohio State was ranked second in a national college football poll even though they hadn't played a game yet.

We also see the more extreme limitations imposed by California and New York. And no one really knows what is right or wrong, what will work best and what won't work at all. We see articles stating that Covid-19 is mutating in a way that hand washing and masks will no longer prevent spread of the disease. One Covid-19 article said there are already over 1,200 identified mutations of the original virus!

So with so many possibilities for the future, there are real questions about stamp shows. Will we have them? Will our aging dealers refuse to support them? Will exhibitors refuse to bring their exhibits? Will judges refuse to work in groups at the frames? Will state or local rules prevent us from gathering in sufficient numbers to support the costs of having a show? What does this mean to our hobby?

Thinking back to what we know about the hobby in, say, 1900, there were already many, many stamp clubs. The Royal and the APS were already around and fairly well established. Garfield-Perry Stamp Club was ten years old. There were exhibitions with accompanying bourses. There were also at least hundreds and probably thousands of collectors who were not interested in the social aspects of philately. Just as today, there were many interests and many disciplines.

There were still many developments to come, such as our realization that postal history would help us understand the development of mail delivery. We have applied technology to our hobby as it has become available – from tongs, watermark fluid and magnifiers we now use x-ray fluorescence, computer scans and other non-destructive analysis techniques. If philately continues to grow, we will undoubtedly find more ways to use science.

Do we need our specialty societies? Should we continue as the France and Colonies Philatelic Society? Heck yes, as long as our members continue to support us. When I think about what I have been able to add to the knowledge of the 1900 French Congo pictorial issue during this pandemic (and would have even without the pandemic), I am glad to have our journal for publication. Our society helps promote philately, the hobby of kings (back when there were more of

them) and at least one American president. So let's renew our interest in France, its former colonies and the wonderful stamps and postal history that this part of the world has provided for us.

Please stay healthy and join our virtual meetings. There is certainly room for more.

Editorial

Norval Rasmussen



I welcome two new contributors to our journal this issue. I hope you enjoy Richard Elliott's excellent discussion of French area proofs and Louis Fiset's article on censoring Axis Diplomats' mail during WW II, as much as I did. Many regular contributors are in and I'm pleased to say that content for January and April is in hand. Lest I regret that statement, don't stop writing. I could still use brief cover descriptions and such for column closers. I'm sure none of us like that "white space." My wife, a retired journalist and history professor, is patiently working with me to eliminate white space.

To members who missed Ken Nilsestuen's Zoom conference last month, a recording may be accessed at the Zoom site. As I was unable to copy the url to this journal I have asked our web master to post it. I can also send it by email to anyone interested, nrasmu@gmail.com.

We have added to our email address list over the past months, but, again, if you are not receiving a digital edition, **we do not** have your address. Send it to Joel Bromberg, contact information on the mast head.

Modern French-Area Proofs, Part 1: Overview and Deluxe Proofs

Richard Elliott

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Introduction

The French proof-issuance program

The proof-issuance program of the French postal administration is, without doubt, the most extensive ever undertaken by a major stamp-issuing country, probably by a wide margin. For almost 100 years, beginning in 1923 and continuing today, a proof was printed of almost every engraved stamp (and many printed using other methods) issued by France and up to forty dependencies. During the heyday of the program, from around 1960 to 1984, a proof of most engraved stamps was issued in three different formats—deluxe proofs (Figure 1), artist’s proofs (Figure 2) and trial color proofs (Figure 3)—and in more than 30 different colors.

The quality of the proof-issuance program is equally impressive. Extraordinary care was taken in the choice of layout, paper, ink color, embossed seals and other characteristics to ensure an attractive appearance, and the design of the proofs was refined over a period of sixty years.



Figure 2. A typical artist’s proof from the period 1963-1985 showing the impression of the die around the stamp and the embossed seal at lower left. The signature of the artist, Eugène Lacaque, is unusually difficult to decipher.



Figure 3. A sheet of 25 trial color proofs with four rows of mono-colored stamps (one row repeats the pink color) and five multi-colored stamps in the bottom row. Three ink color codes (pink Ro208, blue BL512, and brown BR619) are written to the left of the stamps. The numbers stamped at left indicate the sheet number, printing process (T.D. 3) and date printed.



Figure 1. A typical deluxe proof from the period 1967-1998 on a small sheet measuring about 4" x 5".

Quantities produced were limited to 8-28 for artist's proofs, 200-300 for most deluxe proofs, and around 30 sheets for trial color proofs. The proofs were not sold to the public; rather, they were presented to senior government officials or, in the case of artist's proofs, to the stamp's engraver, and a proof was retained in official archives.

The program made use of several innovations in proof production. Trial color proofs were printed with eight different color combinations on the same sheet. Collective deluxe proofs were printed with proofs of different stamps on the same sheet. Artist's proofs are embossed with attractive seals.

The program also provided technical information about stamp production that is of interest to specialists. Codes for the ink colors used were hand-written on trial color proof sheets. Proofs of the unfinished die, which show the progress of the engraving while the engraver is still working on it, were made for some artist's proofs. Proofs of a second die, used to print additional colors for engraved stamps produced using a six-color printing process, were printed for artist's proofs and some trial color proof sheets.

Article overview

This article is the first in a three-part introduction to the three most widely-produced types of modern proofs produced for stamps of France and French-speaking territories (referred to as French-area for brevity)—deluxe proofs (this part), artist's proofs (part 2) and trial color proofs (part 3)—though I will also briefly discuss other types of modern French-area proofs in this part. Because little has been written about modern French-area proofs, I have included for reference some technical details that go beyond an introduction and may be of interest mainly to readers already familiar with these proofs. Readers interested in an overview without technical details can easily skip the reference parts, which I have indicated as such.

A few brief comments on the organization of this article may be helpful. The introduction began with a description of the French-area proof production program so that readers appreciate how extensive and carefully planned it was compared to any other government's proof-

issuance program. We then turn from production to collection and discuss how proofs typically fit into a specialized collection. This is followed by a discussion of stamp design and production and the role proofs play in these, a description of the different types of modern French-area proofs, and comments on the somewhat unusual market for them. We conclude with a list of references.

I want to draw the reader's attention to three themes that recur frequently in these articles: the key role played by proofs in stamp design and production, stamps as a form of engraved art (with particular attention to the use of color and design), and why one might want to collect French-area proofs and how one might go about doing so.

I also want to appeal to readers to send images of artist's proofs and trial color proofs in their collections for inclusion on my website, which has the ambitious goal of showing all the different colors produced for artist's proofs and trial color proofs of TAAF and St. Pierre and Miquelon. More information on the website and a link is given in the section on references at the end of the article.

Proofs and proof collecting: an overview

The role of proofs in a specialized stamp collection

We begin by addressing a question that may occur to readers specializing in French-area stamps: "How do proofs fit into a specialized collection and why might a specialist want to collect them?" As discussed in more detail below, there are two main ways proofs fit into a specialized collection: as a printing of a stamp from the beginning of its production-and-use lifecycle and as a variety that differs from the issued stamp in format, color or both. One might want to collect them to add variety to a collection, to form an unusual collection of scarce yet reasonably-priced material or simply because they look nice.

We typically begin collecting stamps by collecting unused examples of issued stamps. We may then collect examples of their post-production use cancelled or on cover. We can also collect proofs, examples of a stamp printed at the beginning of its production-and-use lifecycle, before the stamp was mass-produced in issued form.

As we specialize, we may also collect examples of physical variations in issued stamps that occur during the production process. These include normal variations such as differences in color shades, printing details, perforations, watermark, paper, gum, or overprint. Or we might go further and collect more extreme variations caused by a breakdown of the stamp-production process, such as missing colors, inverted centers, misplaced perforations and the like (sometimes called errors, freaks and oddities). Similarly, proofs may be viewed and collected as a variety of a stamp that differs from the issued stamp in format, color, printing details, or a combination of these. For a collector who specializes in a particular issue or simply finds it attractive, proofs provide an opportunity to collect additional varieties of the stamp.

The role of proofs in the stamp-production process

Stamp production is typically both an industrial process and a governmental function. As such, it follows a multi-step process of approval and record-keeping in which proofs play the central role. The first step in producing an engraved stamp is typically the choice of subject, usually by the stamp-issuing authority. A stamp designer, who is frequently also a stamp engraver, may be commissioned to design the stamp and is usually asked to submit a drawing (*maquette*) of the proposed stamp design for approval by the issuing authority (Figure 4).



Figure 4. An artist's drawing (*maquette*) on a sheet measuring about 8.5 x 11.5 inches. The drawing is about four times the height and four times the width of the issued stamp.

In the case of engraved stamps (the main focus of these articles and the main printing method used to print modern French-area stamps until fairly recently), once the stamp design is approved, the engraver is given a die (*poignon*), or soft block of steel, on which he or she will engrave the stamp. Once the engraver completes work on the die, it is returned to the stamp-issuing authority, which usually prints at least one test print or proof (*épreuve*) of the die for inspection purposes and as a record of the die for official archives. The reason a proof is printed is that it is much easier to see any flaws in the die on a proof than on the die itself, and because proofs are much easier to store in accessible archives than more bulky dies. The proof may be annotated with technical details of ink and paper, as well as any changes to the die that are required, and may be signed and dated by the approving official.

The die hand-engraved by the engraver, often referred to as the master die, is hardened by heating to increase resistance to wear and then used to create the plate or cylinder that will be used to print the issued stamp. This is done in a two-step process. First, the master die is used to stamp an intermediate die in soft steel. This intermediate die is then hardened by heating and used to stamp multiple impressions of the die onto the printing plate or cylinder. The intermediate die is needed to ensure that the copies of the engraving on the plate or cylinder are identical to the master die and thus print the stamp in the correct orientation and with the appropriate portions of the die recessed to hold the ink that will be transferred to the printed stamp. This point can be a bit confusing and I will give a more detailed explanation of how this works in the discussion of artist's proofs in the second part of the article.

Once a plate or cylinder with multiple instances of the stamp has been produced, a proof from the plate or cylinder is usually also made before mass production begins. This may be done to inspect the plate or cylinder for defects (since imperfections can occur when it is produced from the intermediate die), to have a proof from the entire plate or cylinder that can be approved and retained in official records, or to test different color combinations of stamp to choose the most suitable colors for the issued stamp. This is called

a plate proof, and the term is used even when the proof and issued stamp are actually printed from a cylinder, which is the case with most of the modern French-area plate proofs we will be discussing.

Proof types, characteristics and uses

We will now briefly consider the principal types of proofs and their physical characteristics and uses.

Die proofs and plate proofs

The two main categories of proofs are die proofs and plate proofs. Die proofs are typically printed from the master die hand-engraved by the engraver, as with artist's proofs, but they are sometimes printed from specially-made secondary dies made from the master die, as is the case with deluxe proofs. Plate proofs such as trial color proofs are printed from the plate or cylinder used to print the issued stamp.

The impression of the stamp printed by the die and cylinder are usually identical except that the die prints a proof of a single copy of the stamp, usually surrounded by unprinted white space, whereas the cylinder typically prints sheets of 10 to 100 stamps separated by a 4mm margin between stamps to allow space for perforations.

Another difference between die proofs and plate proofs is that die proofs may have a shallow indentation in the paper, called a die impression, around the stamp (Figure 5). This is caused by a process similar to embossing as well as by compression of the fairly soft paper used for some die proofs during the high-pressure printing needed to ensure that the ink in the recesses of the die is drawn out of the recesses and deposited on the paper. Die impressions occur on artist's proofs and on deluxe proofs printed before 1957.

Die impressions are perhaps more important as a design element of die proofs than as a production detail, though they do show the size of the face of the die. The die impression visually emphasizes that the proof has been made directly from the die and also creates a framing effect similar to that of a mat around a painting or fine-art engraving. Die proofs without the die impression have a more



Figure 5. A pre-1957 collective deluxe proof with a small die impression around each stamp. The die impression on artist's proofs is much larger (see Figure 2).

streamlined, modern look, which is one reason die impressions do not appear on later deluxe proofs.

The paper used for die proofs is usually considerably thicker than the paper used for plate proofs and the issued stamp - typically one and a half to four times as thick - and is sometimes referred to as "card" or "cardboard." Thicker paper helps preserve the structural integrity of the die proof, which may be ten times the size of a stamp, so that it does not bend or crease during handling, and gives the proof a nicer and more luxurious feel. French-area artist's proofs are printed on paper used for fine-art engravings.

Die proofs are usually printed on un gummed paper since they are not intended to be affixed to a letter or parcel. Two exceptions are perforated deluxe proofs printed from 1946 to 1959 and gummed French deluxe proofs produced from 1992 to 1998. Plate proofs are often gummed if they are printed on the type of thin, hard paper used to print stamps (as with trial color proofs), otherwise not.

Die proofs are almost always imperforate and plate proofs usually are. Perforations are unnecessary and distracting since proofs are intended for checking the quality of the die or cylinder or for collecting, not to be separated and placed on a letter or parcel. However, if the proof is intended to check or show the stamp as it will be printed, the proofs may be perforated. If such a

proof is in the issued colors, it may be indistinguishable from the issued stamp. Occasionally proofs are made to test perforations, and these may be made with or without a stamp. Perforated deluxe proofs are the only perforated modern French-area proofs.

Die proofs come in more varieties (other than color) than plate proofs. They may vary in size and type of paper, can be printed from the unfinished die while the engraver is still working on it, and may combine proofs of several different stamps on the same sheet.

There are die and plate proofs of some stamps printed using methods other than engraving, such as deluxe proofs of heliogravure stamps, though the overwhelming majority of modern French-area proofs are engraved.

Die proofs are usually printed in much smaller quantities than plate proofs if you count each stamp on a sheet of plate proofs separately. However, the number of *full sheets* of trial color proofs of a stamp is roughly the same as the number of artist's proofs produced. The total number of individual trial color proofs is very roughly one and a half to three times the number of deluxe proofs of a stamp.

While some philatelists collect both die proofs and plate proofs, they typically appeal to different types of collectors. We noted that proofs can be collected as a printing of a stamp at the beginning of its production-and-use lifecycle or as a variety of the issued stamp in a different color or format. Die proofs in the form of artist's proofs may appeal most strongly to collectors with a particular interest in the stamp-production process, as well as in stamp design and stamps as engraved art. Die proofs in the form of deluxe proofs (which are in the same colors as the issued stamp but in a different format) and plate proofs in the form of trial color proofs (which are in the same format as issued stamps but in different colors) may appeal more to collectors interested in varieties of a stamp.

Proof color

The ink colors used to print a proof are the second most important, and perhaps most interesting

and complex, characteristic of a proof after its type (die proof or plate proof). We distinguish between proofs printed in the same colors as the issued stamp (issued colors) and proofs printed in other colors (unissued colors). For proofs in unissued colors, we further distinguish between mono-color and multicolor proofs.

Proof color is mainly determined by the purpose of the proof. Proofs intended for inspecting the die or serving as a record of the state of the die are usually printed in a single dark color—frequently black, occasionally another dark color such as dark brown or dark blue—to maximize contrast between the ink and the paper (and thus make it easier to evaluate the design and detect imperfections) and to avoid distractions from multiple colors.

Artist's proofs, an example of which is retained in official archives, are usually printed in black and 2-5 other mono-colors. Proofs intended to create a record or presentation copy of the issued stamp, such as deluxe proofs, are usually printed in issued colors and sometimes also in black. Trial color proofs, made to test alternative colors, are usually printed in various single colors for mono-color stamps and in various combinations of multiple colors for multi-color stamps. French-area trial color plate proofs are also printed in the single colors that are combined in the multi-color proofs.

Archival and presentation proofs

We can distinguish between archival proofs, which are printed for use during the stamp production process to inspect the quality of the die or cylinder, test colors, record approvals, and provide a record for retention in official archives, and presentation proofs, which are intended for distribution outside official archives - either by sale to the public or distribution to government officials.

Archival proofs are typically printed in smaller quantities than presentation proofs sold to the public and, to a lesser extent, to presentation proofs given to government officials. Archival proofs are unavailable to collectors if retained in archives but, as we shall see, some were superfluous to official needs and eventually sold

to the public. Specialist proof collectors usually collect archival proofs when publicly-available and presentation proofs when printed in limited quantities, as is the case with artist's proofs and collective deluxe proofs issued in quantities of 8-28 and, to a somewhat lesser extent, trial color sheets (printed in quantities of around 30 sheets which yield around 300 to 750 individual proofs but only 30 copies of a particular color combination). Ordinary deluxe proof sheets are of less interest to specialists and do not appear as frequently in exhibits.

Modern French-area artist's proofs and trial color proofs are hybrid or dual-use because copies were retained in archives and other copies presented to government officials. This is unusual in the world of proofs.

Anatomy of a proof

It may be helpful, for reference, to systematically describe in one place the physical characteristics of a proof. This will serve as background to the more detailed discussions of particular types of proofs.

Proof production begins with a small sheet of blank paper cut from a larger sheet or roll. Four types of alterations may be made to the sheet before the proof appears in its final form. The first three are adding an image or lettering by either printing, stamping, or hand writing. The fourth is alteration to the paper itself.

1. *Printing*: The image of the stamp is printed on the paper from the die or cylinder. On deluxe proofs there is an inscription with the printer's name and, for French gummed deluxe proofs issued between 1992 and 1998, the stamp's subject.

2. *Stamping*: On trial color proofs, the date printed, the printing process, and the sheet number are stamped on the sheet. For certain archival proofs, boilerplate such as *bon à tirer* (ready to print) is hand-stamped on the proof to indicate the type of approval.

3. *Handwriting*: Trial color proofs are usually annotated in pencil with ink color codes. Artist's proofs are signed by the engraver and occasionally annotated with additional information about the

state of the die or quantity printed. Some proofs are signed by the approving official or annotated with corrections to be made in the die or ink colors.

4. *Paper alterations*: The pressure from the die during printing may leave a die impression on the paper, as with artist's proofs and with deluxe proofs produced before 1956. The paper may be embossed with a seal, as with artist's proofs printed after 1958. Control punches were made on deluxe proofs produced before 1968. Some artist's proofs have watermarks or deckle edges and some early collective deluxe proofs have scalloped edges. The paper used for trial color proofs and some deluxe proofs issued after 1991 is gummed.

Imperforate stamps

In addition to proofs, the French postal authorities printed imperforate sheets of most engraved stamps, as well as many stamps printed by other methods, from the 1940s through the 1990s. I mention these in this article, even though they are not proofs, for two reasons: they are, like proofs, a variety of the issued stamp and they would be identical to gummed plate proofs printed in the issued colors.

Aesthetically, the absence of perforations between stamps in imperforate sheets gives the sheets a more uniform, cleaner look and is reminiscent of classical stamps produced before the introduction of perforations. Imperforate French-area stamps are priced in some catalogs and are collected as singles, margin singles, blocks or, occasionally, full sheets. The quantities printed were somewhat higher than for trial color proofs, around 1000 (20-40 sheets depending on the number of stamps in the sheet) and around 2,000 for stamps printed in sheets of 100. These are much smaller than the quantities of perforated issued stamps printed, typically by a factor of 50 to more than 1,000. The imperforate four-stamp mini-sheets of Andorra are an interesting format of imperforate stamps.

Deluxe proofs

Overview

Deluxe proofs are the most common and most popular French-area proofs. They are die proofs printed in the stamp's issued colors and were produced

from 1923 to 1998 in limited quantities for presentation to senior government officials rather than for sale to the public. Their chief attraction is perhaps that seeing a stamp imperforate and surrounded by a large margin of white space (which is like a mat around a painting) helps us view a stamp as a miniature work of art and forget that it is also a utilitarian industrial object. Deluxe proofs are, in most cases, the only proof of modern non-engraved French-area stamps.

From a collector's viewpoint, there are two very different types of deluxe proofs, ordinary and collective. Ordinary deluxe proofs were printed in quantities of about 200-300 (probably towards the lower end of this range beginning in the 1960s) with a proof of each stamp printed separately on its own small sheet. Collective deluxe proofs (Figure 6) are proofs of a set of stamps printed together on a single sheet. They were printed in much smaller quantities of 18-25 (about one-tenth the quantity of ordinary deluxe proofs) and are considerably more challenging to collect and more expensive. Even the quantity of an ordinary deluxe proof is less than 1% of the quantity of the issued stamp, which was usually printed in tens of thousands (millions for some French stamps).



Figure 6. A typical collective deluxe proof from the period 1967-98 with the most common configuration - two horizontal stamps side by side.

The name deluxe proof (*épreuve de luxe*) is rather odd since the proofs are no more luxurious than other French-area proofs, such as artist's proofs. However, the name does emphasize that they are a limited, deluxe edition of the issued stamp with

their larger size and thicker paper. Perhaps the word “deluxe” was also intended as a bit of marketing to reinforce for the government official to whom they were presented that they were receiving a luxury item and also as an additional description since most government officials were not stamp collectors and would not have known what a proof is.

Ordinary deluxe proofs

For reference, I will describe the physical characteristics of deluxe proofs and the considerable changes they underwent during the 75 years they were produced. We begin with paper, which has a significant impact on the look and feel of the proof because, unlike stamps, a large portion of a die proof is blank paper. Ordinary deluxe proofs (and also most collective proofs) were printed on small, white sheets of paper measuring about 158mm x 128mm (6.2 x 5 inches) until 1950 and 130mm x 100mm (5.1 x 3.9 inches) afterwards (a reduction in size of over 35%). The paper is rather thin by proof standards, roughly 0.15mm, or about 50% thicker than paper used for stamps or copy or writing paper. From the mid-1980s, paper about 0.22mm thick (almost 50% thicker) was used, resulting in a proof that is more robust during handling and has a better feel. A harder, smoother, coated paper was used for deluxe proofs of heliogravure stamps to ensure a better-quality impression (Figure 7).



Figure 7. A deluxe proof of a heliogravure stamp showing the large, bright areas of color typical of stamps printed using this method.

Deluxe proofs issued before 1950, when the size of the proofs was decreased, typically had a rather unsightly semi-transparent protective glassine overlay glued to the front of the proof at the top (Figure 8). Until 1957, deluxe proofs were printed with a small die impression (typically 55mm x 48mm or 48mm by 32mm) around the stamp (Figure 9); afterwards, they were printed flush, which gives the proofs a more streamlined, modern look (see Figures 1 and 6). In 1967, the three control punches at the bottom of the proofs (sometimes referred to as two diamonds with a half-moon in between) were removed and the proofs achieved their final modern look see (Figure 1). From 1992 to 1998, deluxe proofs of France were printed on thin, coated, gummed paper (Figure 10), although the pre-1992 type of ungummed deluxe proofs continued to be produced for some territories, such as TAAF, through 1998.

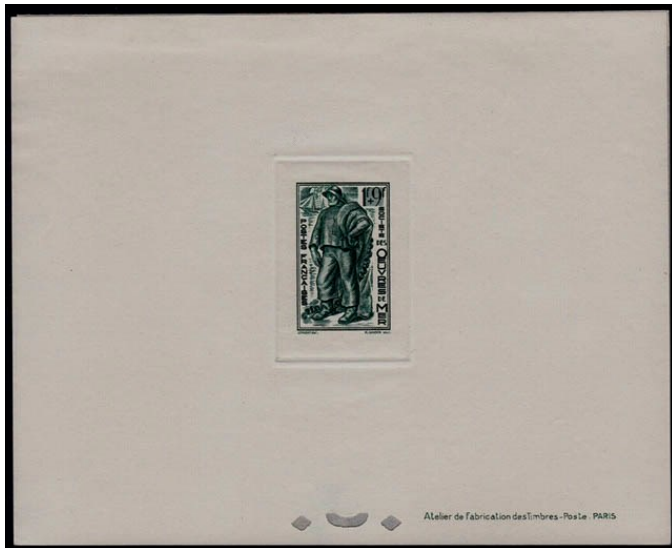


Figure 8. The glassine overlay that appears on most pre-1950 deluxe proofs can be seen over the punch holes, which are not entirely black from the background, as they are in Figure 9.

Unlike most other French-area proofs, deluxe proofs bear a printer's inscription at the bottom right. This originally read "Atelier de Fabrication des Timbres-Poste - Paris" but changed over the years to reflect renaming or relocation of the French government printers. In 1963 the words "Atelier de Fabrication" were replaced by "Imprimerie" and the inscription was all upper case. In 1971 the word "Paris" was replaced by "France" with variations in the punctuation around the word.



Figure 9. A typical pre-1957 deluxe proof showing a die impression and the diamonds-around-two-half-moons control punches used until 1967.

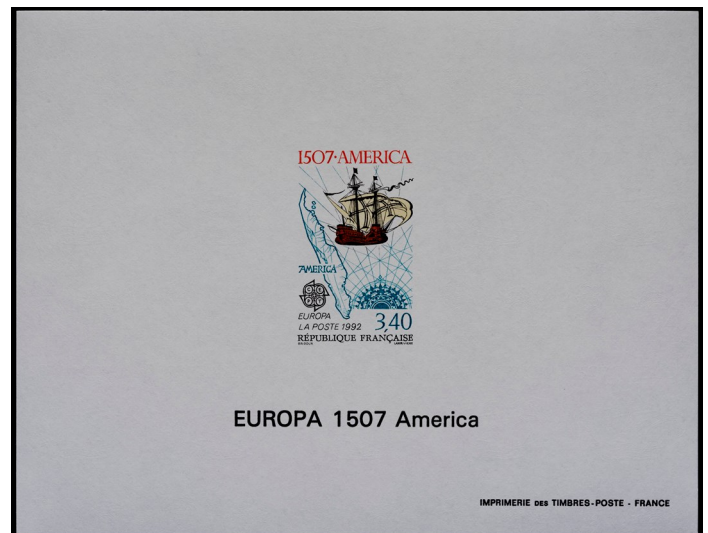


Figure 10. A typical gummed deluxe proof produced mainly for French stamps from 1992-98.

The inscription on deluxe proofs is a good example of the care put into designing French-area proofs. Without it, the stamp would be surrounded by a large expanse of white space and the proof would look unattractively plain. The color used for the inscription matches one of the colors used to print the stamp, the idea (frequently used in art, graphic and interior design, and fashion) being to "pick up" the color in a nearby object. The inscription also makes it easier to center the stamp slightly high on the sheet to follow the composition "rule" that a subject should generally not be placed exactly in the center; the stamp is typically centered 8-10mm high on the sheet but almost midway between the top of the inscription and the top of the proof.

An interesting variation in deluxe proofs is the addition of a circular embossed control seal on many deluxe proofs of TAAF, St. Pierre and other territories from about 1941 to 1957 (Figure 11). The seal usually reads “RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE MINISTÈRE DES COLONIES” until about 1949 and then “RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE MINISTÈRE DE LA FRANCE D’OUTRE-MER.” This provides a good example of refinements made in the design of modern French—area proofs. The seal is unattractively large—roughly the same size as the stamp - which causes it to compete with the stamp for the viewer’s attention and creates an unbalanced look. This was presumably the reason why it was discontinued. But the idea of using a seal was implemented two years later when a smaller seal was introduced on artist’s proofs and that seal was further refined, over a period of twenty-five years, to become an important element in the design of artist’s proofs.



Figure 11. A deluxe proof with a seal in the bottom left corner.

It is possible that some deluxe proofs (and trial color proofs) were sold by the postal authorities directly to the major specialist dealers, rather than being given to government officials who, not being stamp collectors and having little interest in the proofs, often also sold them to the dealers. That this was the case is suggested by rather cryptic language in volume 1 of the Yvert & Tellier catalog *Timbres de France*, which states (in French) that the proofs were “officially reserved for senior government and postal service employees” (emphasis in original), suggesting

that unofficial practice was different. This may shed light on the operation of the proof program and possibly on the reason why deluxe proofs were discontinued: senior government officials’ interest in receiving the proofs may have proved too limited to justify the expense of continuing the program.

Deluxe proofs were replaced by small-format mono-color proofs in a rather odd elongated shape produced in quantities of several thousand and sold to the public rather than presented to government officials (Figure 12). These are not considered deluxe proofs.



Figure 12. A typical example of the proofs that replaced deluxe proofs and were sold to the public in quantities of several thousand.

Collective deluxe proofs

Printing die proofs of an entire set of stamps on a single sheet as a collective deluxe proof is both unusual and innovative. It is not clear why these were produced in addition to ordinary deluxe proofs. One can speculate, based on the extremely small quantities (18-25 for each proof) produced, that they were originally intended for presentation to the most senior government officials. The effect of printing the proofs of a set of stamps on a single sheet is to focus the viewer’s attention on the set as a whole rather than on each stamp individually. This makes it easier to see the common thematic and design elements of the set.

The most numerous sets printed as collective proofs are the French Europa (Figure 13), landscape, notables, and Red Cross series, the *timbres de service* for the Council of Europe and UNESCO, the Europa series from Andorra and Monaco, and definitive series such as the French Marianne and the Andorra *écu primitif des valées*. Collective proofs of over 250 different French

series were printed. The number for other Francophone territories is smaller (around 50 each for TAAF and St. Pierre and Miquelon). Most collective proofs are the same size as ordinary deluxe proofs but a larger sheet is used to accommodate a set with more than two horizontal or three vertical stamps.



Figure 13. A French Europa collective deluxe proof showing the typical side-by-side configuration for a set of two vertical stamps.

For reference, I will describe how stamps are arranged on collective deluxe proof sheets. This can be a challenging design issue when the stamps do not all have the same orientation (i.e. the set contains both horizontal and vertical stamps) or a set with a large number of stamps needs to be fitted on a collective proof sheet.

Most collective proofs contain a set with a pair of stamps. These fit on a standard-size deluxe proof sheet if the stamps are placed side by side, which is the usual arrangement. This produces a somewhat unbalanced look, however, when one stamp is vertical and the other is horizontal (Figure 14). Sets of three vertical stamps and (usually) two oversized (48mm x 36mm) stamps are usually printed on a standard-size deluxe proof sheet.

The French government printers experimented with various arrangements to accommodate larger sets that would not fit well on the standard-size deluxe proof sheets. At first sheet size was simply enlarged to accommodate the larger number of stamps, resulting in some very large



Figure 14. This two-stamp arrangement looks unbalanced, but the postal administration could not come up with a better arrangement to fit them on a standard-size deluxe proof sheet.

(and impressive) pre-1955 collective proof sheets with up to twelve stamps, mainly for France (Figure 15). For a few years afterwards, the size of collective deluxe sheets was reduced but the stamps continued to be spaced far apart (as had been necessary previously to leave space between the die impressions surrounding the stamps), which required splitting sets of six stamps onto two collective proof sheets.



Figure 15. A collective deluxe proof with 10 Journée du Timbre stamps issued over the 10 years 1944-53. Most collective deluxe proofs include only stamps in a set issued in the same year.

Eventually the stamps were placed closer together (typically the same 4mm distance used on sheets of issued stamps) and more stamps could be fitted onto a single deluxe proof sheet. Sets of three horizontal stamps, four or five vertical stamps, or a combination of one horizontal and two or three vertical stamps could be accommodated on a single sheet by simply making the sheet longer. This was occasionally also done for sets of two oversized stamps. Sets of four oversized stamps or six horizontal stamps were placed in two rows and the height of the sheet was increased to accommodate this (Figure 16). Smaller definitive stamps such as the French Marianne series could be fit on a single sheet of 15 stamps arranged in three rows of five (Figure 17).



Figure 16. A set of six stamps from one of the French famous people series on a single long deluxe proof sheet measuring 160mm x 100mm.



Figure 17. An impressive-looking collective deluxe proof with 15 values of French Marianne definitives overprinted for St. Pierre and Miquelon.

Deluxe proofs were also made for souvenir sheets (Figure 18) and stamps printed se-tenant (Figure 19). These may look like collective proofs, but (with the exception of some gummed collective proofs of se-tenant French stamps printed during the period 1992-1998) they are ordinary deluxe proofs printed in the larger quantities for those proofs.

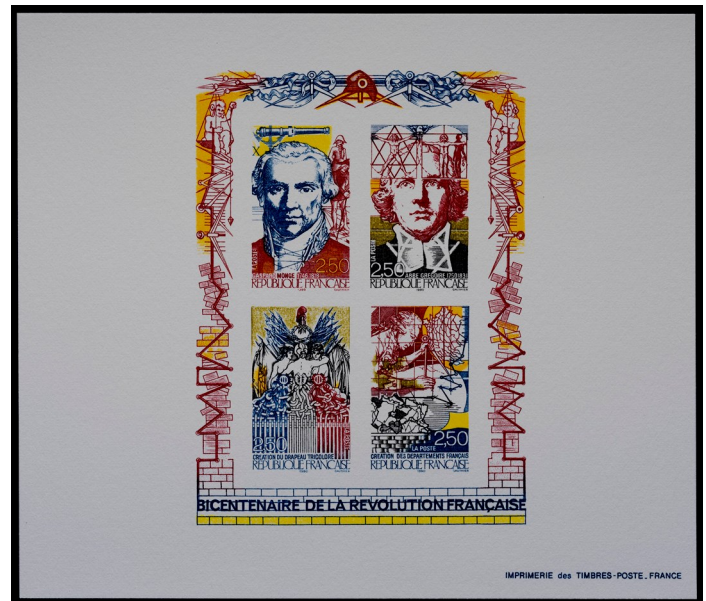


Figure 18. A deluxe proof of a souvenir sheet.

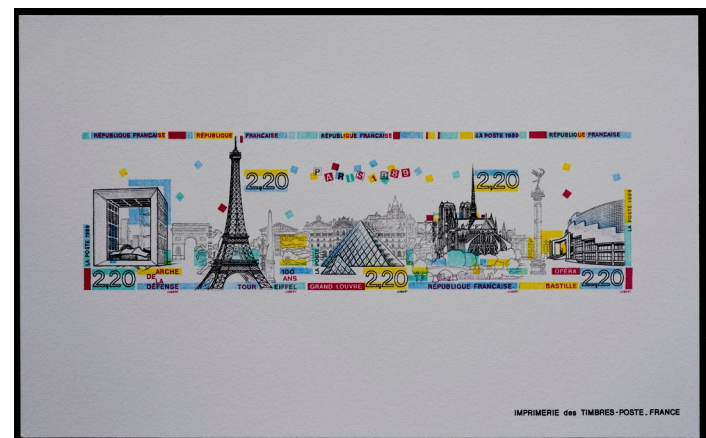


Figure 19. A deluxe proof of five stamps printed se-tenant.

Gummed deluxe proofs

We now turn to two brief experiments with gummed deluxe proofs, first in perforated collective form (Figure 20) and then, about 30 years later, in imperforate ordinary (see Figure 10) and collective form. Gummed and perforated collective deluxe proofs were produced for the thirteen years between 1946 and 1959. They were

printed in addition to the normal un gummed collective proofs of the same series and frequently, but not always, in the same arrangement of stamps on the sheet. The quantities printed (generally 12-22) are similar to, or slightly less, than for collective deluxe proofs. They are sometimes treated as varieties of the issued stamps printed in special sheets since they are printed in issued colors and perforated. (They are often called *blocs spéciaux* (special sheets) which includes the term *bloc* used for souvenir sheets.) However, their similarity to collective deluxe proofs in terms of format, production, quantities printed, and distribution suggests that they are more appropriately treated as proofs.



Figure 20. A perforated and gummed collective deluxe sheet.

Gummed imperforate deluxe proofs replaced ordinary and collective deluxe proofs of stamps of France and a few other territories such as St. Pierre and Miquelon beginning in 1992. The reason for this may have been that the stamp-like hard, coated paper used for these proofs was more suitable for high-quality printing of non-engraved stamps, which were becoming more common. These proofs were discontinued in 1998, when the production of all deluxe proofs was discontinued. The quantity printed is thought to be slightly less than for ordinary un gummed deluxe proofs. The proofs were also produced for heliogravure stamps and some of the gummed collective proofs of series printed in heliogravure are quite impressive (Figure 21).



Figure 21. A gummed collective deluxe proof for a set printed by heliogravure.

Other types of modern French-area proofs

There are several types of proofs of modern French-area stamps in addition to deluxe proofs, artist's proofs and trial color proofs. Most were printed before 1960 and none were produced for as long or for as many different stamps as the three main types of proofs. Some were intended for archival use but reached the market because they were viewed as superfluous to archival needs. Some were proofs of stamps produced by private security printers. The three most common are trial color die (as opposed to plate) proofs, inspection proofs, and atelier proofs.

Trial color die proofs

Trial color proofs were produced as die proofs for a brief period from about 1949 to 1956, when production of trial color plate proofs began. These die proofs are mono-color (like the issued stamps) and were produced in two different formats.

Color proofs of stamps produced by the French government printers (Figure 22) were printed on thick white paper measuring about 140mm x 110mm (5.5 x 4.3 inches) with a small die impression and the diamonds-surrounding-half-moon control punch. The proofs were generally issued in 8-10 different colors and around 5-10 copies of each color were produced (a total of 40-100 color die proofs of each stamp). They were also produced for stamps printed by methods other than engraving (Figure 23).

These proofs have a color code for the ink color followed by a code for the ink manufacturer

written in pencil at the bottom right corner of the proof. The numbers are typically four-digit and run in seven series from the 1100s to the 1700s with 1100s for different shades of blue, 1200s for oranges, 1300s for greens, 1400s for reds, 1500s for violets, 1600s for blacks and grays, and 1700s for browns. The codes for the ink manufacturers are Lx for Lorilleux, La for Lafranc, and B for Brancher. We will say much more about color codes in part 3.



Figure 22. A trial color die proof from the period 1949-56 with a die impression, cut-outs, and hand-written color code.



Figure 23. A trial color die proof of a non-engraved stamp.

Color proofs of stamps produced by private security printers (Figure 24) were printed on a sheet of paper that was cut down to approximately stamp size, affixed to a white card, and covered by a second card with a cut-out window to show the

proof. This is a rather elaborate and time-consuming process, but cut-down die proofs affixed to cards are known (though not common) for proofs of other countries.



Figure 24. A trial color die proof of a stamp printed by private printers. Note the window cut into the cardboard overlay. The proof is cut to about stamp size and affixed to a card underneath.

Inspection proofs

Inspection proofs (Figure 25) were printed for a brief period, from 1957 to 1964, to check the quality of the die. They were printed on sheets of thin paper measuring 140mm x 110mm (5.5 x 4.3 inches). The paper has the two-diamonds-and-half-moon cut-outs and the impression of the die. They were printed in sepia (darkish brown) in quantities of 3-4 and are among the rarest of the modern French-area proofs.



Figure 25. An inspection proof with large die impression and control punches.

Workshop (*atelier*) proofs

A small number of artist's proofs continued to be privately printed in the engraver's workshop (*atelier* in French) after production of artist's proofs was taken over by the government printers in 1959 (Figure 26). This occurred mainly after 1999, when the government restricted the number of officially-produced artist's proofs to eight from the previous 18-28. These proofs are often called *atelier* proofs. They are usually signed (like artist's proofs) but have *épreuve d'état* (stage proof) or similar wording written on them in pencil (presumably to qualify as an exception to the requirement that artist's proofs be printed solely by the government and no longer by the engravers). They appear to be proofs of the finished design. These proofs are produced in very limited quantities in a variety of sizes and papers and do not have the embossed seals of officially-produced artist's proofs. We will say more about these in part 2.

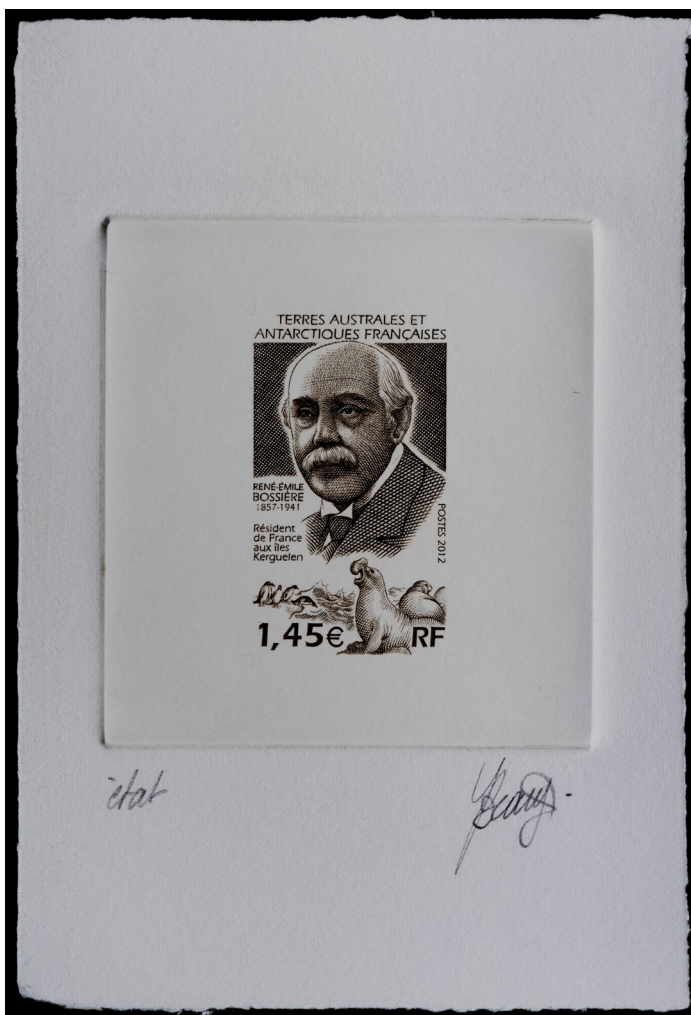


Figure 26. An *atelier* (workshop) proof privately printed and signed by the engraver, Yves Beaujard, and marked "état" (state or stage).

Timeline of French-Area Proofs

The following timeline of significant dates relating to the production of French-area proofs may assist the reader in understanding how the program for French-area proofs developed over time and how certain types of proofs replaced other types. The timeline shows that the French-area proof-issuance program expanded in 1956, when production of trial color plate proofs began, and then contracted in 1983, when they were discontinued, and again in 1998-99, when deluxe proofs were discontinued and the quantity of artist's proofs printed was reduced by more than two-thirds. There was also a trend toward standardization of size and ink colors, stricter control of production, and modernization and improved aesthetics from 1956 to around 1985 that included elimination of the die impressions and control punches in deluxe proofs and, for artist's proofs, bringing production in-house and introducing and refining embossed seals.

- 1923 deluxe proofs first printed
- 1956 trial color plate proofs first printed; die impression no longer appears on deluxe proofs
- 1959 government printer takes over printing of artist's proofs and adds embossed seal
- 1967 control punches no longer appear on deluxe proofs
- 1983 trial color proofs discontinued (except Monaco)
- 1992 deluxe proofs for France printed on thin gummed paper
- 1998 deluxe proofs discontinued
- 1999 artist's proofs quantities reduced to 8 but engravers permitted to print stage proofs

Market, pricing, and collecting

Proofs differ from issued stamps not just in format and color, but also in how they reach the market and how the market prices them. The former is an interesting story, the latter an interesting collecting opportunity.

Newly issued stamps usually reach collectors in a straightforward way: purchase directly from the issuing authority or from a dealer. Some proofs, notably US proofs of the late 19th century, were sold directly to the public. Proofs in archives of some private security printers such as the Ameri-

can Bank Note Co., Bradbury Wilkinson, and Courvoisier, were sold to raise cash, sometimes during liquidation of the company. Postal administrations and government archives or museums occasionally sell proofs in their collection to raise money to acquire new philatelic material or for other purposes.

The situation for French-area proofs is somewhat different because most were presented to senior government officials or (in the case of artist's proofs) to the engraver and were not sold directly by the government to the public. They were typically bought up by a few specialist dealers, particularly the American dealer Souren Serebrakian through the mid-1980s and then by a French dealer through the mid-1990s. A large part of these two dealers' stocks were sold at auction or privately beginning in 2003, as was the large collection of an American collector. In addition, a large dealer stock of trial color proof sheets was sold over the past few years. These three stocks and the collection contained over a hundred thousand French-area proofs and are the source of many French-area proofs on the market today. As a result, there is currently a much larger selection of French-area proofs available at lower prices than was the case before 2000.

Most French-area proofs sell somewhere in the low to mid double digits with two exceptions. Many individual trial color proofs and some deluxe proofs sell in the single digits. Some collective deluxe proofs, trial color proof sheets and a few artist's proofs reach into the low triple digits. I will provide more detailed comments on pricing of artist's proofs and trial color proofs in the next two parts of this article but will leave it to the reader to work out a fair price for deluxe proofs from catalogue prices and the large number offered for sale online.

Until about 15 years ago, modern French-area proofs were sold mainly at high prices by a small number of specialist dealers to topical collectors. This has been changing more recently with the dispersal of the three major stocks, the death or retirement of many specialist dealers, and the sale of stamps by internet dealers, particularly on eBay. French-area proofs are now more regularly sold at reasonable prices online and at auction. However, some dealers offer (though rarely sell)

French-area proofs at very high prices and it should be recognized that these prices do not accurately reflect market prices. One legacy of pricing that remains is that prices of French-area are strongly influenced by the popularity of a proof's topic. Prices for proofs of some of the most popular topics are typically much (sometimes several times) higher than for proofs of little topical interest.

References

Prices for deluxe proofs and imperforate stamps of France are listed in Yvert et Tellier, *Timbres de France*, and Spink Maury, *Catalogue de Timbres de France*. Prices for deluxe proofs and imperforate stamps of Andorra, Monaco, St. Pierre and Miquelon, and TAAF are listed in Arthur Maury, *Principautés & Terres polaires* (2010-11) and for Wallis and Futuna, New Caledonia, and French Polynesia and some other territories in Maury Cérés & Dallay, *Catalogue des Timbres des DOM-TOM* (2009). Prices for all types of proofs for St. Pierre and Miquelon are listed in Jean-Jacques Tillard, *Épreuves, essais, non-dentelés de Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon*, which also provides useful background information on proofs of St. Pierre stamps, including some of the older proofs not covered in these articles. A collector should, of course, work out a reasonable selling price by applying an appropriate, usually large, discount to these prices.

Yvert et Tellier published, as a supplement to its 2008 catalogue, a 32-page booklet, *Livret de l'Expert: Les timbres gravés, gravures et graveurs*, which describes and illustrates some types of French-area proofs. L.N. Williams's *Fundamentals of Philately* contains useful information on proofs and the stamp-production process. Information on printed references relating to artist's proofs and trial color proofs appears in parts 2 and 3, where those proofs are discussed.

The main sources of information about French-area proofs are online. The website (www.dieproofs.it) of Giorgio Leccese, one of the leading specialists in modern French-area proofs, contains extensive research on all types of modern French-area proofs and images of more than 100,000 French-area proofs drawn from his own collection and from images of proofs posted online

on eBay, auction sites, dealer sites, and other sites.

My own website, www.stampproofs.com, provides detailed coverage of artist's proofs of TAAF, St. Pierre and Miquelon, Andorra, the French Pacific territories, and several topics such as French Europe and art, ships, and birds, as well as trial color proofs of TAAF and St. Pierre and Miquelon. It

has over 5,000 high-resolution photos arranged with different color proofs of the same stamp on the same page to facilitate comparison, as well as a list of proof colors for TAAF and St. Pierre and other photos and research. Any images of proofs not already pictured on the website that readers can provide would be greatly appreciated. Readers can contact me at info@stampproofs.com with questions about proofs or to send images.

FREE FRENCH SEMI-POSTALS USED IN MARTINIQUE

Richard M. Stevens

The stamps I am referring to here are the first six (B1-B6) of the eight semi-postal stamps listed under "French Colonies" in the Scott Catalog and similarly listed in other catalogs. To the best of my knowledge B7 and B8 are not known with a Martinique postmark.

This article was particularly prompted by the listing on eBay shown in Figure 1. This image was captured in January 2020. However, the offering has appeared on eBay numerous times. It should soon become obvious why the cover has been left unsold, having had a three-figure asking price.

These stamps were delivered to the Comité Français de la Libération Nationale in fall 1943¹. Their high surtaxes make it obvious that they were essentially charity labels. However they purported to have a postal value and were accepted at their postal value in Martinique at least as early as March 1944. I can find no claim that they were ever sold by the post office, in Martinique, or elsewhere that they were accepted to pay postage.

By far the most common covers with these stamps bear one each of these stamps, have been mailed and censored in Martinique, registered airmail to foreign destinations² and properly backstamped on arrival. In Table I, I have listed those in my collection, and a sampling of similar covers copied

from internet offerings, as well as the cover of Figure 1.

Figure 2 shows the earliest. It was sent by J.W. Wegimont to Scott Stamp and Coin Company in New York. It is backstamped in San Juan Porto Rico, Miami, and New York. A U.S. censor tape, probably from San Juan, has fallen off from the left side. At the lower left, mostly covered by the stain from the U.S. censor tape, is an unusual Martinique censor marking typically found on covers from Monsieur Wegimont. Collectors of Martinique may recognize J.W. Wegimont as a frequent sender of philatelically inspired covers from Martinique. Moreover, from indications on other covers, I believe he was chief censor on Martinique under the Free French regime. This would explain the presence of multiple censor handstamps on his covers which are not found on other covers which underwent Martinique censorship. Considering his obvious connection with most of these covers, perhaps Monsieur Wegimont was a (the?) distributor of these stamps in Martinique. As further evidence of M. Wegimont's activities, while writing this in June 2020, I noted on eBay another similar cover from him to Scott Stamp & Coin Co., but mailed on 3/13/44 from Pointe-a-Pitre, Guadeloupe³.

In Table II, I have listed the other covers in my collection with one or more of these stamps – a varied bunch.



Figure 1. Cover as offered on eBay.



Figure 2. Cover to Scott Stamp & Coin Co,



Figure 3. Registered airmail cover to Chile.

Figure 4 is the most legitimate-appearing of these covers. It bears two of the semi-postal stamps with a total postal value of 6.50 Francs, together with a 2.50 Franc regular issue, to make 9 Francs. Assuming that it weighed 5-10 grams, this is the correct postage (4 Francs basic foreign rate plus airmail charge of 2.50 Francs for each 5 grams⁴).

It has been censored at Martinique and Trinidad and backstamped on arrival in Trinidad. But I doubt it was regularly mailed. In addition to the typical “7” censor mark, there are two more French censor marks that I associate with Wegimont covers. In addition there is the notation “2 stamps” on the front. I suspect this cover was prepared by Mrs. Thorne, and an appropriate contribution was made to the Free French cause. It was then given to an intermediary, who noted that payment had been received for two stamps. Then it was passed to M. Wegimont, who supplied the stamps, applied his censor hand stamps, and turned it over to the post office.

sent to Ralph, at his request, There is no sign of a heavy enclosure, so the 20 Franc stamp already overpaid the registered postage of 8 Francs plus 4.50 Francs per 5 grams⁴. Like the covers in Table I, it properly passed through the mails, with appropriate censor markings and back stamps.



Figure 4, Front & back of airmail cover to Trinidad.

Figure 5 is addressed to Ralph Holtzizer, well known as a specialist in the stamps and postal history of Martinique. Considering the notation “No 4” at upper right, it is probably one of several



Figure 5, Front & back of cover to Ralph Holtzizer.

Figure 6 is another of M. Wegimont’s creations. Although he forgot to apply his censor markings, and there is no Argentine arrival mark. It has proper British censor markings, applied en route at Trinidad, and, I believe, passed regularly through the mail. Including the 1.50 Francs of the Free French stamp, the postage totals 27 Francs, correct for 5-10 grams: the basic foreign registered rate was 8 Francs and the airmail charge was 9.50 Francs for each 5 grams⁴.

Figure 7 might be genuine, or it may be more or less fake. I have shown the back, with a proper Martinique censor marking. The addressee’s name is not familiar from other covers. I have listed it among the more genuine covers, but it may not belong there. The 9 Franc stamp vastly overpays the local postage of 3 Francs.

Figures 8 and 9 are two covers from a frequently encountered correspondence from A. Vieules to



Figure 6. Front & back of airmail cover to Argentina.

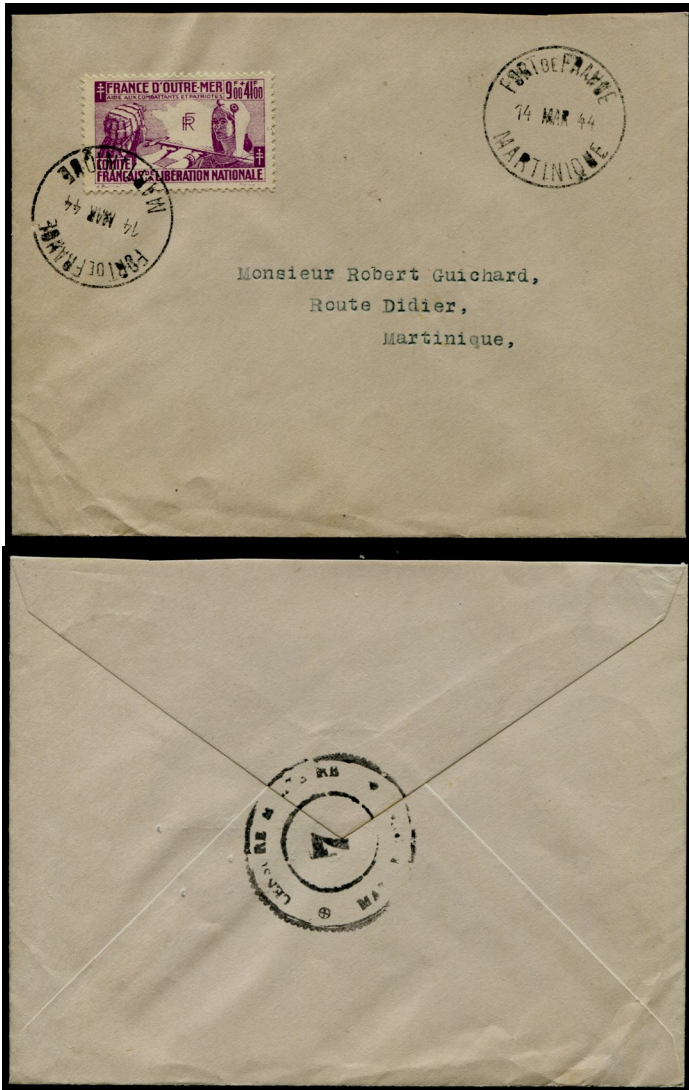


Figure 7. Front & back of local censored cover.

Roy Orton, much, but not all, of which appears philatelically inspired. Another cover with nine Free French stamps, from the same mailing as Figure 9 (registered number 269 vs 271) sold on eBay on 9/23/2014. Figure 8 does not look as philatelically contrived, but it does not pass analysis. The lack of censor markings or backstamps is understandable: censorship was ending by August 1945, and a receiving stamp was required only for registered mail. The postal value of the stamps was 5 Francs, less than the 8.50 Franc airmail rate in 1945. Just the surface rate was 10 Francs in 1946. The regular stamps on the cover total 4 Francs, which was the proper rate for sea mail in 1945, but there is nothing to indicate it was not intended as airmail. For Figure 9, the U.S. back stamps prove it passed through the mail. The postal value of the stamps totals 32 Francs, which does not match 10 Francs plus 6 Francs per 5 grams⁵. I suspect the Free French stamps were sent to A. Vieules by Roy Urton, for use on covers mailed back to him.



Figure 8. Airmail cover to Roy N. Urton



Figure 9. Registered Airmail cover to Urton.

The last two covers in Table II, I believe, are definitely faked. The stamps are genuine. The postmarks, if genuine, are backdated. Neither cover has any censor markings or backstamps. I have included a scan of the front of the strange cover addressed to Ralph Holtsizer, with no city or state. The back has a return address of Simon

Cottrell, a frequent correspondent and cover supplier to Ralph Holsizer. It may have been prepared by Simon and given to Ralph as an example of the scarce Fonds-Lahaye postmark. The last cover is, at best, a cover taken to the Trinité post office, the stamps cancelled with a postmark with a defective date, and “delivered” there, with or without its pencil-written address. More likely all fake but the stamps.



Figure 10. Fake or favor cover with backdated Fonds Lahaye postmark.

As can be seen above, covers with these six stamps, although attention-attracting, are mostly contrived for stamp collectors, and generally available in today’s market place. In past years they have generally sold for about \$40 apiece sometimes less, some times more⁶.

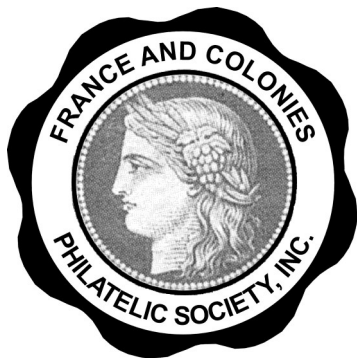


Table I: Registered Airmail Covers with B1-B6

Date	Destina-	Sender	Source	Notes
3/2/44	Scott Stamp & Coin Co. New York, N.Y.	J.W. We-gimont	Stevens	Figure 2
3/7/44	L. Tankel, 100 Nassau St. New York, N.Y.	I.K.D.	eBay	
3/9/44	Scott Stamp & Coin Co. New York, N.Y.	Erased	Stevens	
3/17/44	Mme Ray-monde Dufeutrel Washington, D.C.	Lieut. Dufeutrel	Stevens	
3/19/44	John H. Engel 127 Nassau St., N.Y.C.		eBay	
3/28/44	Monsieur Daccarett Fort de France		eBay	Figure 1
4/11/44	Elmer R. Long Harrisburg, Pa.	J.W. We-gimont	Stevens	
4/15/44	Luis Dac-carett S. Santiago, Chile	J.K. Dac-carett	Stevens	Figure 3 Note 1
4/25/44	Carlos Dac-carett Bucaramanga, Colum-bia	Kh. Odeh	Stevens	

1. With 10 Franc stamp added to cover airmail postage of 30 Francs for 5-10 grams airmail to Chile.

Table II, Other Covers—Postmarked Fort de France unless otherwise Noted

	F.F. Stamps	Other Stamps (Scott #s)	Destination	Sender	Source	
3/14/44	B2		Robert Guichard Route Didier, Mart.	Blank	Stevens	Mart Censor Fig, 7
4/5/44	B3-B6	186, 187	John H. Engel 127 Nassau St., N.Y.C.	Blank	eBay 2010	Regist Airmail
7/21/44	B4	168,169(3) 186(4) 187(4)	Circulo Philatelico De Liniers Buenos Aires, Arg.	J.W. Wegimont	Stevens	Regist Airmail Fig. 6
9/28/44	B1,B6	168	Capt. H.A. Thorne Port of Spain, Trinidad	Mrs. H.A. Thom- as	Stevens	Airmail Fig. 4
1/15/45	B3-B6	172	Ralph Holsizer Philadelphia, Pa.	Blank	Stevens	Regist. Airmail Fig. 5
8/7/45	B3(2)	191(2)	Roy N. Urton Col Springs, Colo	A. Vieules	Stevens	Airmail Fig.8
8/21/46	B1,B4 B2(2) B3(2)	181,183	Roy N. Urton Col Springs, Colo	Vieules	Stevens	Regist Airmail Fig. 9
2/25/44	B1-B6		Ralph Holsizer	Simon Cottrell	Stevens	Note 1 Fig, 10
5/?/?	B1-B6		Jean Guillaume Trinité	Blank	Stevens	Note 2

Note 1: With postmarks of Fonds-Lahay probably backdated,

Note 2: With postmarks of Trinité probably backdated.

END NOTES

1. Dally: Timbres des DOM-TOM 2006-2007, p. 228 & repeated elsewhere.
2. The cover in Figure 1, although marked for airmail, is addressed to Fort de France, and was presumably delivered locally. Another full set cover dated 32 March 1944., with the same censor marking, but addressed locally, and without registry or airmail markings, is currently (June 2020) for sale on the Delcampe website for 40 euros.
3. This cover sold on eBay on 6/12/2020 for \$18.56 including shipping.

4. Picirilli, R.E.: Postal and Airmail Rates in France & Colonies 1920-1945. France & Colonies Philatelic Society of Great Britain (2011), pp 184-189,
5. There are numerous covers from 1946 in my collection rated 16 Francs or 22 Francs, presumably for 5 grams or 10 grams.
6. Figure 2 sold for \$23 in 1993. Figure 6 sold for \$26 in 2010, The cover to John H. Engel sold for 39 euros in 2010. The cover similar to Figure 9 sold for \$75 in 2014. Figure 8 sold for \$18 in 2016. I paid \$76 for Figure 4 in 2011.

More on Axis Diplomates' Mail in WW II

Louis Fiset

Richard Stevens' article in the last issue of the *France and Colonies Philatelist* caught my attention because of a long standing interest in mail of Axis diplomats, their staffs, and families awaiting repatriation from the U.S. in World War II. I'll leave it to others to resolve the airmail rate, but I can provide some background on the fate of the French legation.

With the occupation of Vichy France by German armies in November 1942 the State Department quickly ordered all Vichy envoys in the U.S. rounded up and detained. French diplomats posted to the U.S. included Ambassador Gaston Henry-Haye, four attachés, consular officials, and their staffs and families from 28 cities throughout the country. The group, totaling 94, was taken to Washington, D.C., then led by automobile caravan to the Hotel Hershey, at Hershey Pennsylvania, a first-class accommodation leased by the State Department for this purpose. The entourage reached its destination on November 17, 1942, where they were scheduled to remain pending their repatriation. Situated not far from Washington, D.C., the hotel was secluded and easily guarded.

Unlike the Axis contingents who remained loyal to their governments, most of the Vichy officials soon declared allegiance to the Free French government in exile and were allowed to seek protected asylum in the U.S. Only Ambassador Henry-Haye, his family, and closest staff remained behind.

Having dwindled to 18, such a small contingent at the Hershey facility proved impractical. Thus, on October 1, 1943 the Vichy loyalists were transferred to Cascades Inn, at Hot Springs, Virginia. They remained there four and a half months until their repatriation on the third diplomatic exchange voyage of M.S. *Gripsholm* (first transat-

lantic exchange), which left New York Harbor on February 15, 1944.

In the case of Stevens' cover from Martinique to Ambassador Henry-Haye, I am able to make out a faint February 1944 date in the cancellation, although the day remains unreadable. Since the correspondence passed through Martinique censorship, and the repatriates would have departed Cascades Inn some days prior to repatriation from New York, these factors may have precluded the letter reaching the addressee prior to his departure. This may explain the large red pencil obliteration of the address. Were he still in the country, the letter would have been forwarded to him. In this case, it probably never got beyond Washington, D.C.

Most mail of the detained Axis and Vichy diplomatic corps bears evidence of Office of Censorship examination. This item appears to be an exception. The purple "X__" may have communicated the status of the addressee to examiners who then let it pass, although the true meaning of this mark continues to remain a mystery. Or it may have been opened secretly without evidence left behind by special examiners in Washington D.C.

Other mail involving detained Vichy diplomatic corps members has survived, all of which in my experience bears overt censorship markings. The cover in Figure 1 was addressed to the Consul General of France at Chicago and postmarked Detroit, March 24, 1943. At this time the consular staff was still at the Hershey Hotel. The correspondence was forwarded to the Chicago censor station where it was opened, examined, then returned to the sender. Something within the contents may have precluded final delivery of the letter.

Figure 2 shows both sides of domestic correspondence purported to have originated with Ambassa-

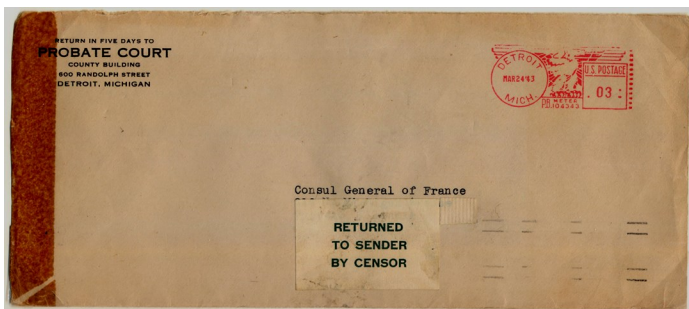


Figure 1

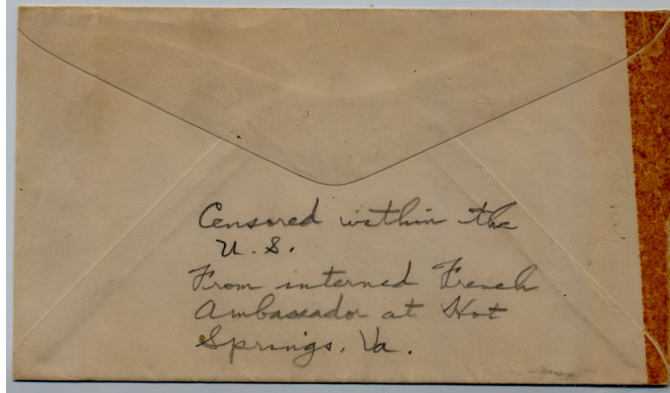
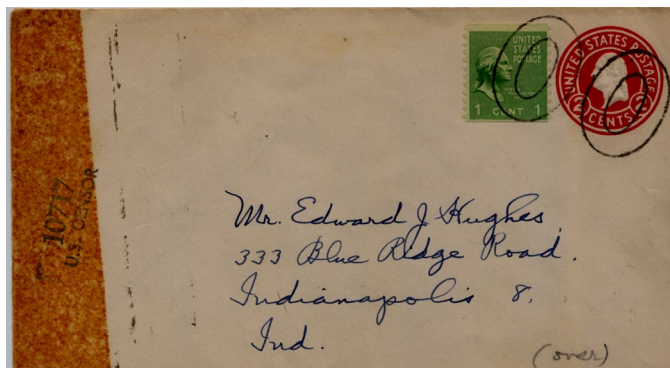


Figure 2

dor Henry-Haye at Hot Springs, Virginia, in the waning weeks of his detention. It was censored by Examiner 10717, who was assigned to the POW unit at the New York censor station.

The Martinique cover to the Vichy Ambassador provides evidence regarding the 15 month period of detention of French diplomats awaiting repatriation. It is a lovely item; I'd love to own one just like it!

REFERENCE

Louis Fiset. *Detained, Interned, Incarcerated: U.S. Enemy Noncombatant Mail in World War II*. (Collectors Club of Chicago, 2010), pp.127-138.

End of the Mail Fail Saga. 75 Year Old Dulac Stamps Again Accepted for Postage

Thomas Marra

We live in a time when the USPS is coming under increasing scrutiny leading up to the 2020 presidential election and it seems appropriate to discuss another potential mail handling misadventure. In the previous issue of the Philatelist, I discussed an example of the failure of the USPS to deliver a properly addressed registered letter sent to me from Paris.

The original franking seemed insufficient since it was partially composed of nearly worthless Marianne de Dulac stamps issued in 1945 and denominated in 40 old French francs (current value equal to €0.061). There were no postage due markings on the envelope. Clearly, there was a failure to recognize this apparent postal fraud by either the

French postal service or the USPS, and the letter was returned to the sender in France after a chaotic 3 month circuitous journey in the New York regional postal system. Left unanswered was the question of why the letter was never delivered and I conjectured that it might have something to do with the concurrent Covid-19 spike in New York that could have adversely affected postal workers.

After several attempts to contact the French stamp dealer to try again to send the item I originally purchased from him through the Delcampe website in late February, he finally sent the displayed registered letter with acknowledgement of receipt (AR) which left Paris on August 6 and was

received on August 20. Although the letter is franked with a contemporary €3.00 airmail stamp, it is again adorned with three 75 year old Dulac stamps denominated in anciens francs for a total of 40 francs.

Registered and avis de réception (AR) letter received 8/20/2020. Note use of 75 year old Marianne de Dulac stamps that were accepted for postage.

Let's do the math. This less than 20 gram letter has a basic overseas postage rate of €1.40. The appropriate overseas R2 registration fee (insured up to €1 50) is €6.90. The AR fee is an additional €1 .40, yielding a total tariff of €9.70. Converting the old franc denominated Dulac stamps into euro (equivalent to about 7 US cents) and added to the €3.00 contemporary airmail stamp yields a total of €3.061 . Of course, if the postal handlers or sorting machines mistook the 40 old francs for new francs, the total would be 100 times greater or €6.10 for a grand total of €9.10, and very close to my calculated (but estimated) total postage, registration and AR fee of €9.70. There should have been at least €6.00 of postage due which was clearly not detected by either the USPS or French PO. Of course, it is possible that the seller wished to create a pleasant philatelic franking using the

old Dulac stamps essentially as postal etiquettes and prepaid the remaining €6.70 tariff in cash at the post office counter. I will give him the benefit of the doubt since there are no postage due markings.

As I mentioned in my initial Philatelist article, I have Googled this topic and found a philatelic blog post that confirms that other stamp collectors have found evidence of some French stamp dealers using ancien franc denominated stamps on their mail in an apparent effort to defraud the post office. This could well be another such example, barring cash prepayment at the post office counter. In any event, after a nearly 6 month wait, I have been able to add another small piece to the puzzle of my French Colonies Eagle collection.



New Issues

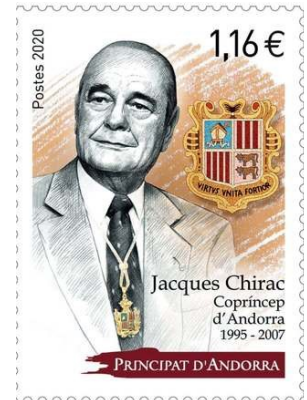
France

- ◇ 6 July 2020: Saint-Vaast-la-Hougue commemorative. €0.97.
- ◇ 6 July 2020: Saint Odile commemorative. €0.97.
- ◇ 13 July 2020: Mediterranean gastronomy. €1.40.
- ◇ 13 July 2020: Luis Mariano commemorative. €1.16.
- ◇ 20 July 2020: Bès Bébène Aveyron commemorative. €0.97.
- ◇ 20 July 2020: Treasures of Notre Dame. Sheetlet of 1 €1.40 stamp.
- ◇ 27 July 2020: 800th anniversary of the Cathedral at Amiens. €1.16.
- ◇ 27 July 2020: Crazy rabbits (cartoon). Booklet of 12 different nondenominated forever stamps valid for the green letter rate in France. €11.64.
- ◇ 31 August 2020: Lighthouses. Booklet of 12 different nondenominated forever stamps valid for the priority letter rate in France. €13.92.
- ◇ 7 September 2020: Crazy rabbits (cartoon). €0.97.
- ◇ 7 September 2020: La Roche sur Yon commemorative. €0.97.
- ◇ 14 September 2020: Everyday heroes during the pandemic. Booklet of 12 different nondenominated forever stamps valid for the green letter rate. €11.64.
- ◇ 21 September 2020: Dukes of Bourbon castle Montluçon. €1.16.
- ◇ 21 September 2020: Sports. Round sheetlet of 6 different designs €1.40 each. €8.40.
- ◇ 21 September 2020: Earth and men. Sheetlet of 4 different €0.97 stamps valid for the green letter rate in France. €3.88.
- ◇ 21 September 2020: French Heritage. Reprints of older French stamps in 5 different sheetlets with no postal value. €90.00.
- ◇ 26 September 2020: Fête du timbre - Peugeot 204 Cabriolet- Lettre prioritaire. Sheetlet of 6 €1.14 stamps. €6.96.
- ◇ 28 September 2020: Jacques Chirac commemorative. €0.97.



of General Education created. €1.94.

- ◇ 28 September 2020: Jacques Chirac commemorative. €1.16.



French Austral & Antarctic Terrs. (TAAF)

No new issues

French Polynesia

No new Issues

Monaco

- ◇ 25 June 2020: Historical sites of the Grimaldis. €2.00.
- ◇ 7 July 2020: The Monaco cat show. €0.97.
- ◇ 7 July 2020: Grimaldi strongholds—Torigni. €3.80.
- ◇ 4 August 2020: 50th anniversary of the Fort Antoine theater. €0.95.
- ◇ 5 September 2020: Visit of Prince to Terlizzi, Italy. €1.40.
- ◇ 14 September 2020: Inauguration of the New Place du Casino. €1.40.
- ◇ 14 September 2020: 300th Anniversary of the Birth of Prince Honoré III, 1720-1795. Two different €2.00 stamps.



Andorra

- ◇ 22 August 2020: Estany Esbalçat commemorative. €1.16.
- ◇ 12 September 2020: In 1962, the foundations of French education in the Principality were laid and the College

New Caledonia

- ◇ 17 July 2020: 50th anniversary of the New Caledonia Historical Society. 140F. €1.17.
- ◇ 18 July 2020: L'A330neo Kanuméra d'Aircalin. Single nondenominated forever stamp valid for the 20 gram overseas rate. €1.17.
- ◇ 18 July 2020: Pôle Espoirs Judo league. 140F. €1.17.
- ◇ 16 September 2020: %0 years of French (language). 210F. €1.76.



St. Pierre & Miquelon

- ◇ 1 August 2020: Old cars. Sheetlet of 4 different €1.16 stamps.
- ◇ 19 September 2020: Louis Quédinet commemorative. €1.16.



Wallis & Futuna

No new issues

Official Stamps

- ◇ 7 September 2020: Conseil de l'Europe Palace of the Rights of Man. €1.40.
- ◇ 7 September 2020: Conseil de l'Europe 70th anniversary of the European conference on the rights of man. €1.40.
- ◇ 14 September 2020: 75th anniversary of UNESCO. €1.40.



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Society News

Convention Schedule

May 2021 Rocky Mountain Stamp Show

June 2022 NAPEX

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None available at press time. Will update in January

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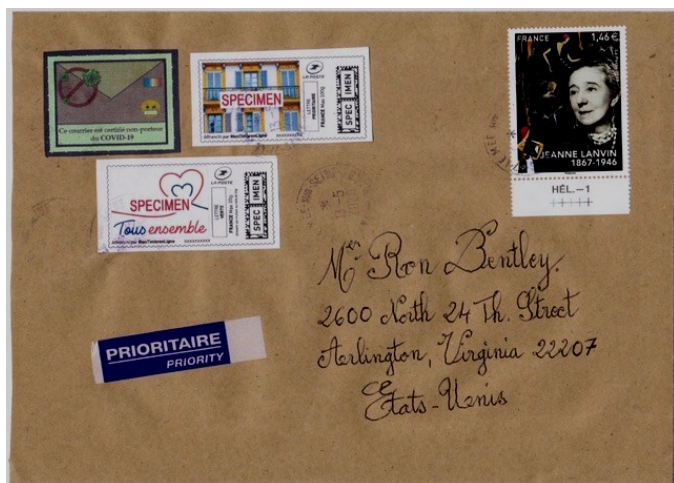
We Get Letters

Editor:

Per article by Tom Mara about Covid-19 influences on mail delivery, maybe his sender should have used a label like this on at the upper left.

BTW, I received a mailing from Germany on Bastille Day - it was posted on 23 May.

Ron Bentley



Editor:

There is a very busy communication going on about philately of all kind from collectors and dealers, on Instagram. I show as well some of my covers and stamps under the name "kaygaetjens" about Tahiti. My brother Gregor is "magentaphilately". Feldman Geneva and Behr etc. are also members.

The France and Colonies Society should be on Instagram as well and members should show some of their stuff. It is an easy and rewarding way to "exhibit" or to make oneself known as a philatelist/collector.

Have a look and let other members know. What do you think.

Best regards,
Kay Gaetjens

Editor:

Spink Maury Timbres de France 2020-21 on Amazon Kindle. This might be a topic for a review or

mention in the FCP. Apart from a few type problems at the beginning, the implementation is pretty good and the price is reasonable, particularly when you factor in shipping costs for the physical book. I still prefer physical catalogs unless I need to take them with me somewhere.

Richard Elliott

The Kindle Edition costs \$12.60 and is available at this site https://www.amazon.com/s?k=Spink+Maury&i=digital-text&ref=nb_sb_noss.

ED

Merci pour votre invitation au Zoom de mardi soir. Meme pendant cette periode difficile, les activitees restent intenses et je n'ai pas le temps de participer a tout ce que je souhaite. Donc, j'ai manque la presentation sur le Congo.

Je n'ai pas assez de temps pour m'interessar a de nouvelles collections. Je ne connais rien sur le Congo et sur les autres territoires d'Outre-Mer. Je me concentre sur les timbres classiques francais et je serai content de connaitre d'autres personnes qui s'y specialise dans la Nouvelle Angleterre. Je collectionne aussi les lettres postees depuis la France pour les US dans les annees 1800.

Les pieces d'argent ou d'or frappees a Bordeaux (ma ville natale) m'interessent aussi.... Elles commencent en 1460 et s'arretent en 1850 quand les timbres apparaissent!

Merci pour tous vos efforts et sachez que votre magazine rend bien des personnes heureuses de le recevoir,

Bonne fin de semaine,

Bernard Dubois

Many thanks
ED