FRANCE AND COLONIES PHILATELIC SOCIETY

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2024

3:30 PM

Auxiliary Markings and Labels to 1920

Why auxiliary markings (postal markings) matter

- Understanding auxiliary markings and labels help us to trace the route a particular piece of mail has followed.

- It tells us what the issues were and what steps were taken to overcome these issues.

- Understanding the origin of labels and markings tells us volumes about the challenges the postal service was experiencing.

- Understanding the changes that took place in the creation and printing of postal label and markings allows a window into the greater world of marcophily.

The origin of the auxiliary marking/ label

- German forerunners: Retour Labels:
  - Retour labels were well known in Bavaria, but also Thurn and Taxis and Wurttemberg.
  - Up to 1852 lacquer seals were used to close letters which had been opened to retrieve an address.
  - In 1852 the first printed circular paper seals were introduced by the 'Rebut' Commission of Hamburg.
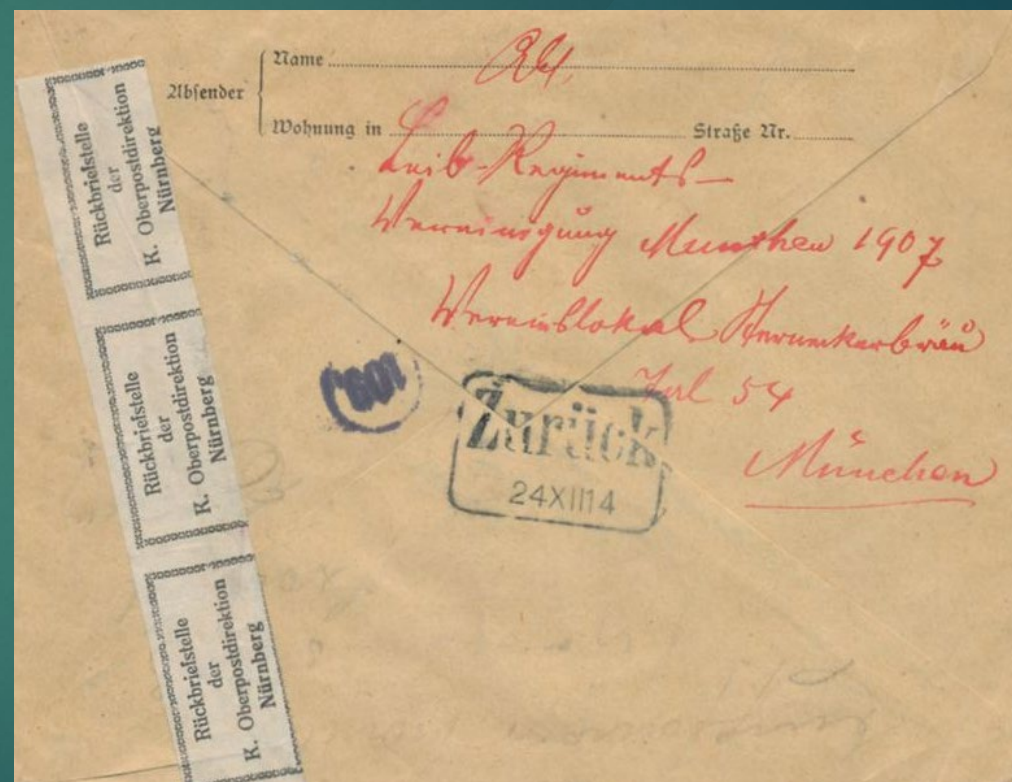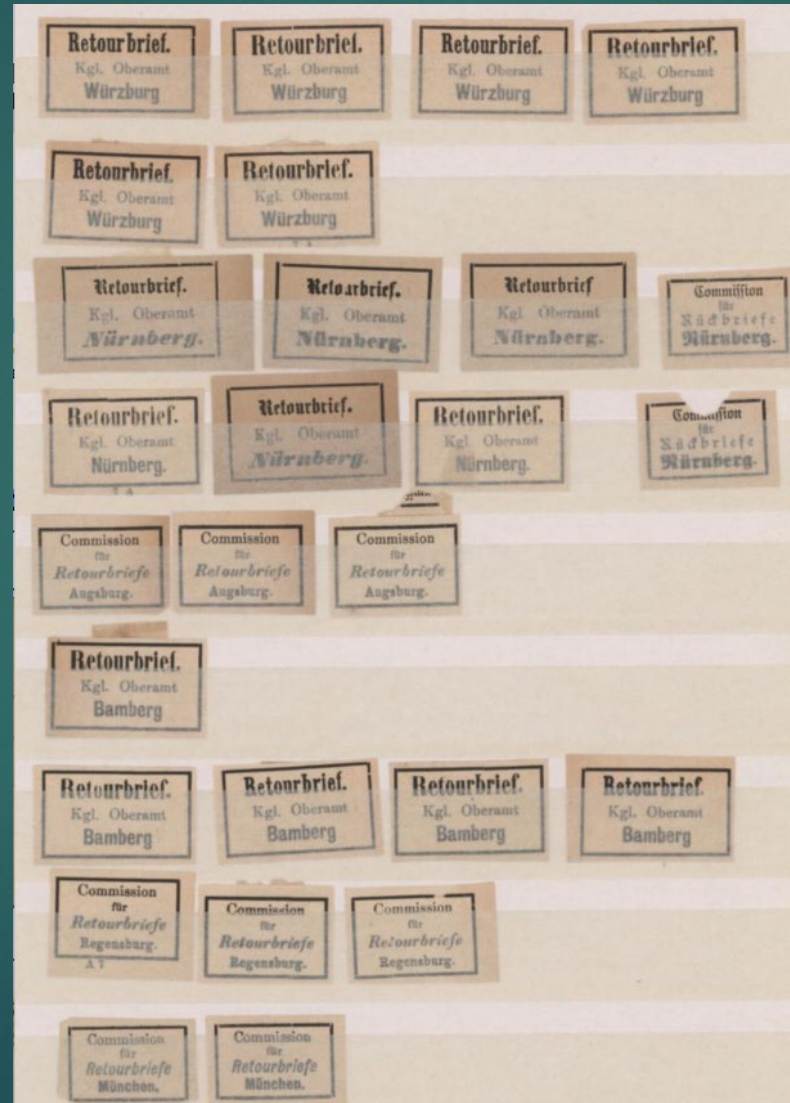
The origin of the auxiliary label

The origin of the auxiliary label

The origin of the auxiliary marking/ label

- The first generation of Bavarian Retourbriefe's were replace in 1869.

- The labels served until 1884.

The origin of the auxiliary marking/ label

▶ In 1871 a UPU directive mentioned that all returned letters should be opened to discern the name of the sender. These opened letters were to be stamped 'unbestellbar' (undeliverable) and sealed with a blue or black label.

▶ This process gave no reason for the return.

# The origin of the auxiliary marking/ label: French forerunners

- In July 1868, changes took place in French postal regulations. One result was the production of a round label printed in black. The postman was to write the reason for return in the centre of this label.

- When the sender's name appeared on the outside of letters that could not be delivered, they were to be returned to the office of origin to be restored to the sender.

- Previous to transmission they were to be stamped in red ink 'Retour à l'envoyeur'.

- At this point there is no mention of labels.
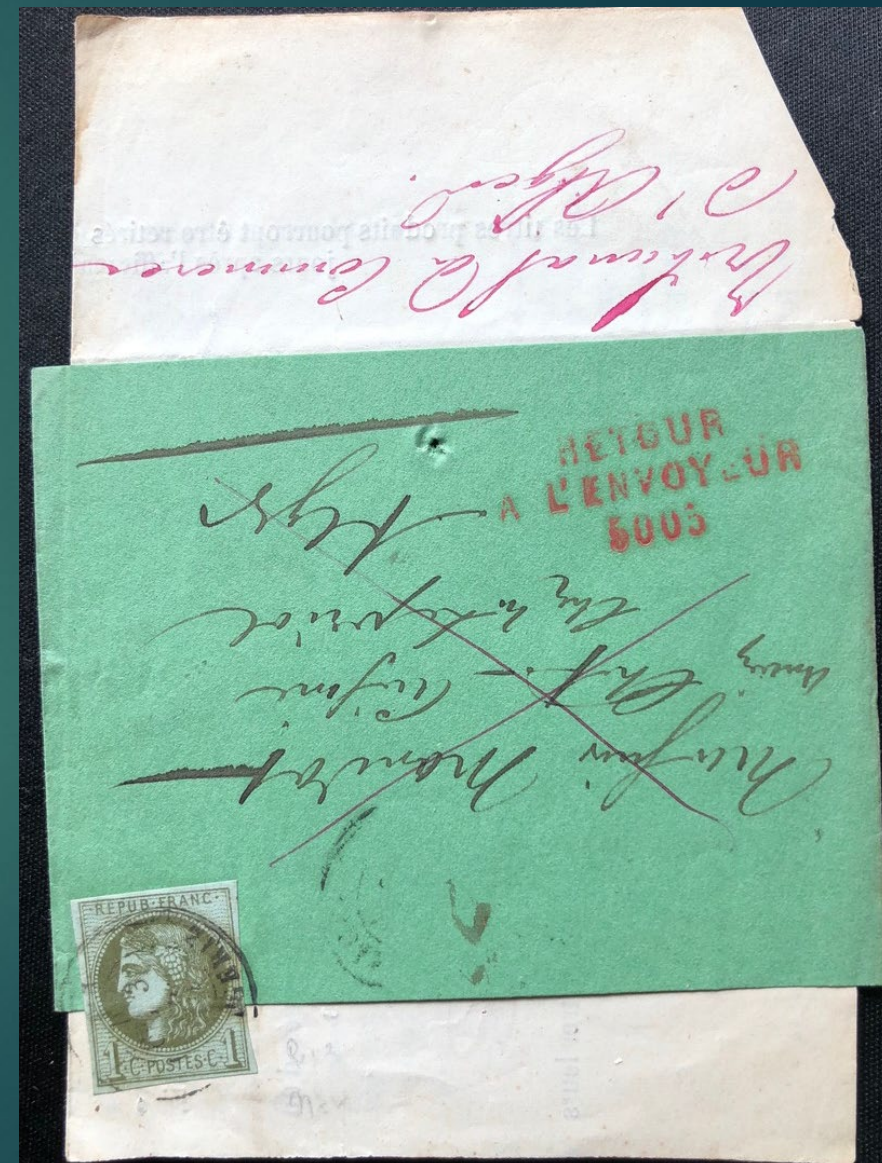
The UPU begins to consider the question

▶ At the second General Postal Union Congress in Paris, from May 2 to June 4, 1878, thirty-eight countries and colonies gathered to ratify the Convention of Paris, which would change the name of the organization from the General Postal Union to the Universal Postal Union. At the meeting a minor discussion was conducted concerned with the growing international nature of the postal service. This small exchange expressed concern over the proper handling of mail that moves from the purview of one country's administration to another.
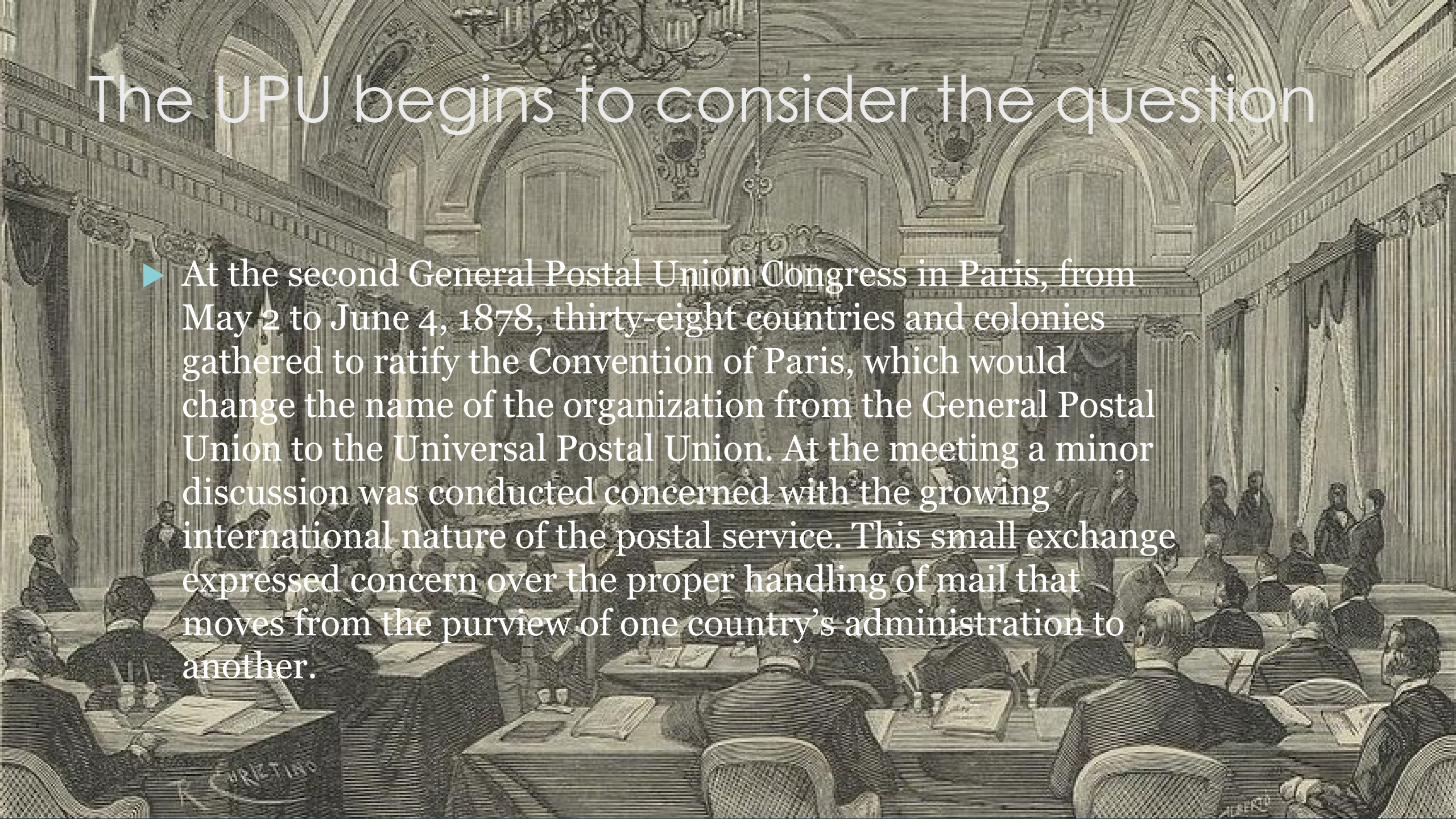
The UPU begins to consider the question

The subject of postal auxiliary labels did not appear until the end of the nineteenth century when it was first raised in terms of returned mail. The issue of properly and consistently identifying the reason for a piece of mail's return was first raised in connection with the Agreement of Paris. On April 1, 1887, the following clause took effect for members of the *L'union postale universal*:

'All letters and other items, which for one reason or another cannot be delivered to the Administration of a country of destination, must on the reverse, in French, explain the reason for non-delivery. This advice can be by means of a handstamp or by applying a sticker. If desired, a warning in the country's own language may be added.' (No. 10 in the GPU despatch of February 28, 1887).

The UPU begins to take up the question

- Dispatch No. 10 suggested that the primary vehicle for marking returned mail would now be the handstamp, but that where handstamps were not available, a sticker could be used as well. However, the inference is clear, that manuscript markings were causing increasing difficulty because they were hard to read or were imprecise in terms of the reasons given. It would be another four years before the decision to utilize postal labels for this purpose would be mandated.

The UPU decides the issue

- At the 1891 U.P.U Conference, held in Vienna from May 20 to July 4, the Congress delegates restated the policy that postal items must be returned to the sender when they were not deliverable, and that the reason be clearly stated:

- "The correspondence that is undeliverable must be returned with the reason for deliverability stated."

The UPU decides the issue

▶ A directive to this effect mandated that the use of the new labels on returned mail was to take effect on July 1, 1892, and would at first be applied only to international correspondence. The goal of the change was to transfer the responsibility for oversight to the frontier offices, which would be responsible for checking to making sure all proper protocols had been followed when declaring a letter undeliverable. This included checking to see that the proper address had been tried, and whether the mail in question could or should have been forwarded. The labels were designed to confirm that proper protocols had been followed.

N° 20.
⸺

Envois recommandés. — Cartes postales. — Rebuts.
⸺⸺⸺

Le 9 juillet 1892.

Les dispositions ci-après, empruntées à la réglementation du service international, seront également applicables aux envois du service intérieur, à partir de la réception du présent ordre :

1° Apposition de la griffe des bureaux, petit modèle, sur les étiquettes-numéros à coller sur les envois recommandés (*Recueil des Instructions du service international, Instruction, première partie, art.* 8, § 2) ;

2° Faculté d'indiquer l'adresse du destinataire d'une carte postale, au moyen d'une bande ou étiquette imprimée, collée sur la carte et ne dépassant pas 2 centimètres sur 5 centimètres (*Id., art.* 12, § 1) ; ⸺ *V.o.S. 16/3.94, n°7.* ⸺

3° Indication du motif de la mise en rebut, sur les envois de toute nature, au moyen des étiquettes nouvelles n°s 399 à 406 (*Ibid., art.*27).

Les changements à faire au titre II de l'Instruction générale, ensuite de ces modifications, seront annoncés ultérieurement. ⸺ *Notifié par table chronologique de 1892.* ⸺

Le Directeur général,

STASSIN.

The origin of the auxiliary marking/ label: French forerunners

- ▶ By 1881-1882 labels were beginning to be produced. These labels were small imperf rectangles (25x12mm) with unboxed text in blue.

- ▶ Printing was in litho in sheets of 80 (5x16), comprising 10 variants in all.

- ▶ These were: *Inconnu; Refusé; Parti sans laisser d'adresse; Décédé; Parvenu sans adresse; adresse incomplete; non reclamé* and *Rebuts*.

- ▶ Each sheet had eight examples of each sort (except *Refusé*, which had 16).

- ▶ *Rebuts* was used when it was necessary to direct the letter to the Returned Letter Office.

The origin of the auxiliary marking/ label: French forerunners

► In 1885 these labels were replaced by a boxed version (28x16 mm or 31x18 mm) still imperf, and printed in litho in blue with the text in upper case.

► All of these labels, and subsequent French types, appear to have been printed at the *Imprimerie Nationale* in Paris.

► However, no references were given when this information was originally printed, and researchers have, to date, been unable to substantiate these claims.

► Use of these blue labels is not known before 1900 and not at the same time as the later black labels. They are therefore extremely rare.
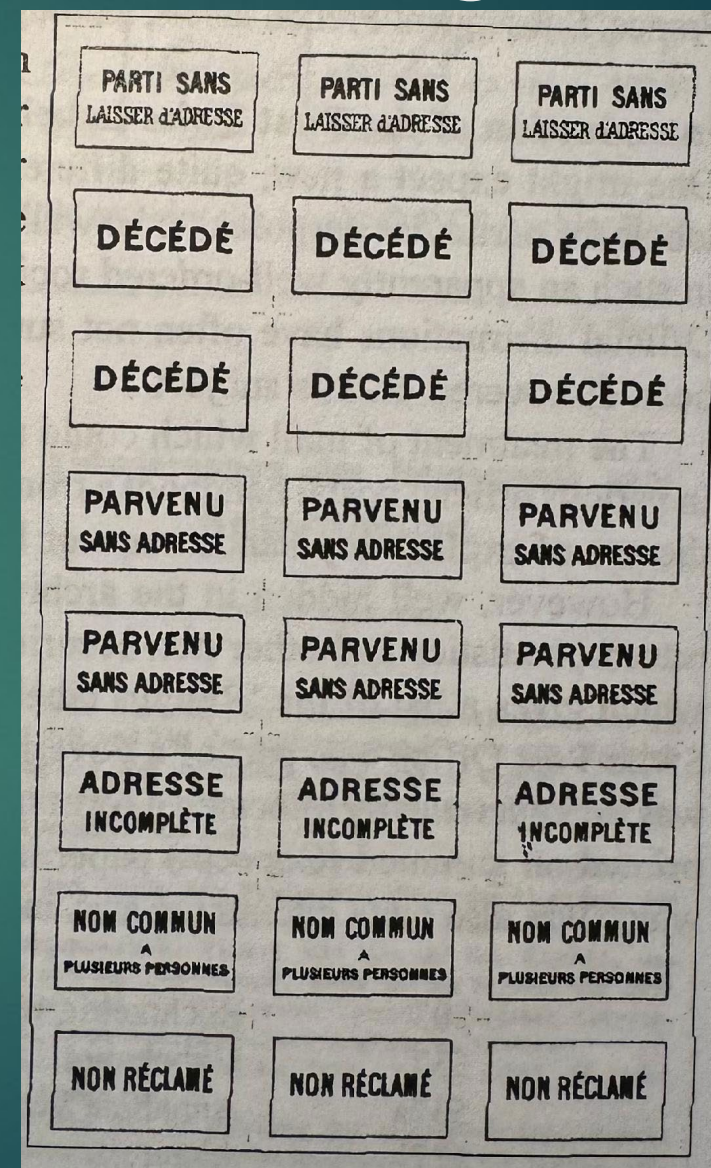
The UPU gets in the act

► If this unsubstantiated information is in fact correct, the inspiration for the use of these labels can be found in Germany, because the German suggestion to the UPU includes much of the same French wording found in the later French labels.

► However, it would appear the original that initial idea and wording originated in France and was later presented by Heinrich Von Stephen to the UPU.

► The German labels would have substantially reduced the size of the text to accommodate the need for German and French terms.

► Subsequent French labels, although similar, followed the pattern agreed upon by the UPU in 1887.

Post-1892 French UPU return labels

- How it worked: Upon discerning an issue with a select piece of mail, the postman would notate the reason for non-delivery on the reverse of the envelope.

- Upon return to the Post Office, a decision was made as to how many attempts would be made to redeliver the piece.

- Once it became clear it could not be delivered, as label or handstamp was placed on the reverse confirming the reason for non-delivery.

An example

Post-1892 French UPU return labels
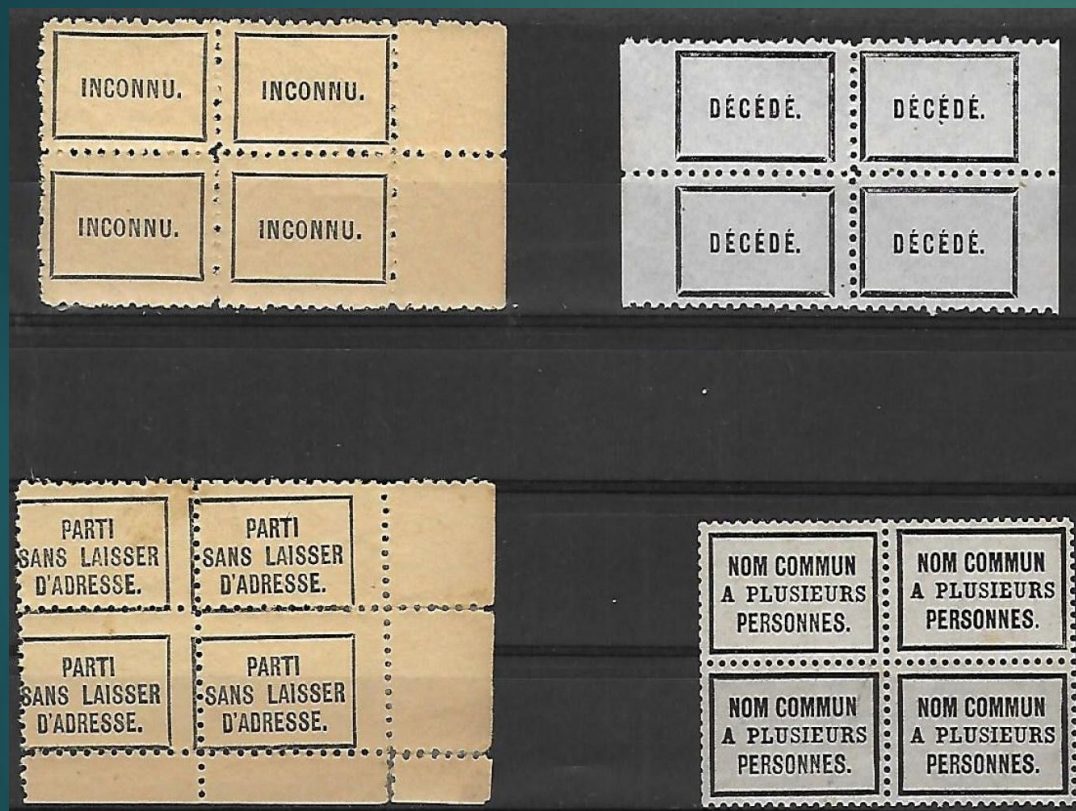
Retour à l'envoyeur labels and markings

- 1866

Retour à l'envoyeur labels and markings

- 1867

Retour à l'envoyeur labels and markings

- 1868

Retour à l'envoyeur labels and markings

- 1875

Retour à l'envoyeur labels and markings

- 1888

Retour à l'envoyeur labels and markings

- 1894

Retour à l'envoyeur labels and markings

- 1896

Retour à l'envoyeur labels and markings

- 1899
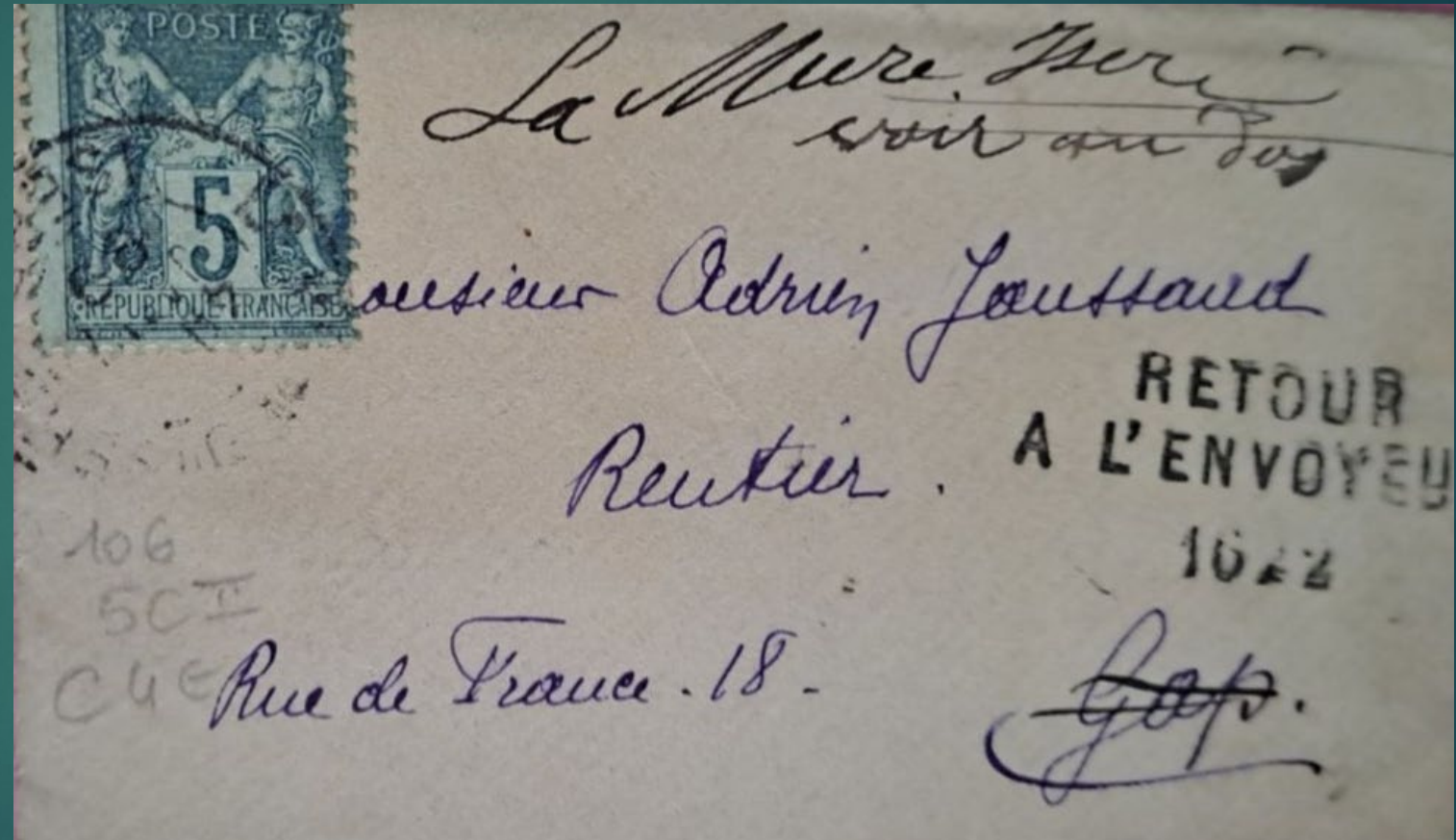
Retour à l'envoyeur labels and markings

▶ 1901

Retour à l'envoyeur labels and markings

- 1904

Retour à l'envoyeur labels and markings

- 1907

Retour à l'envoyeur labels and markings

- 1917

Retour à l'envoyeur labels and markings

- 1921
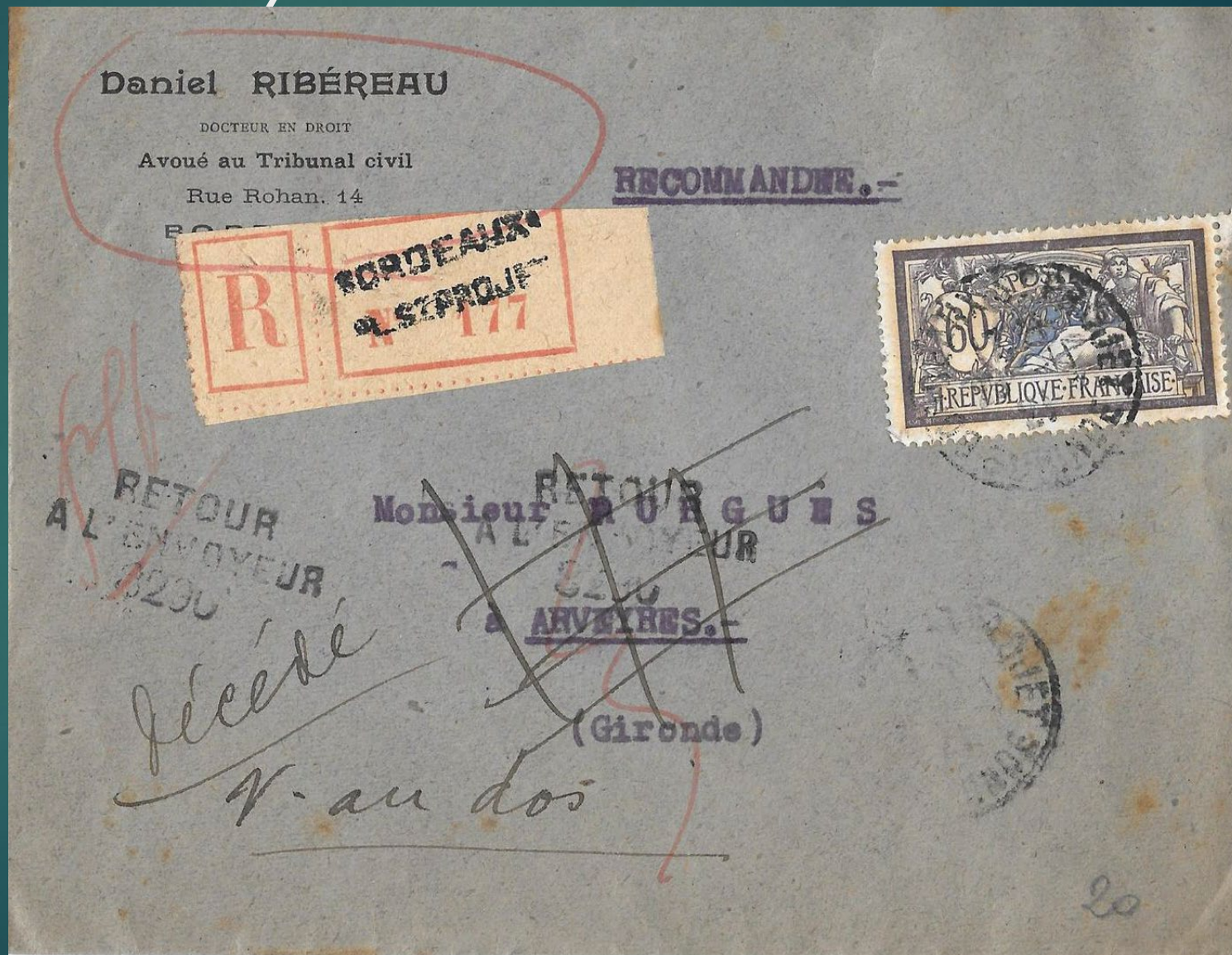
Retour à l'envoyeur labels and markings

- 1922
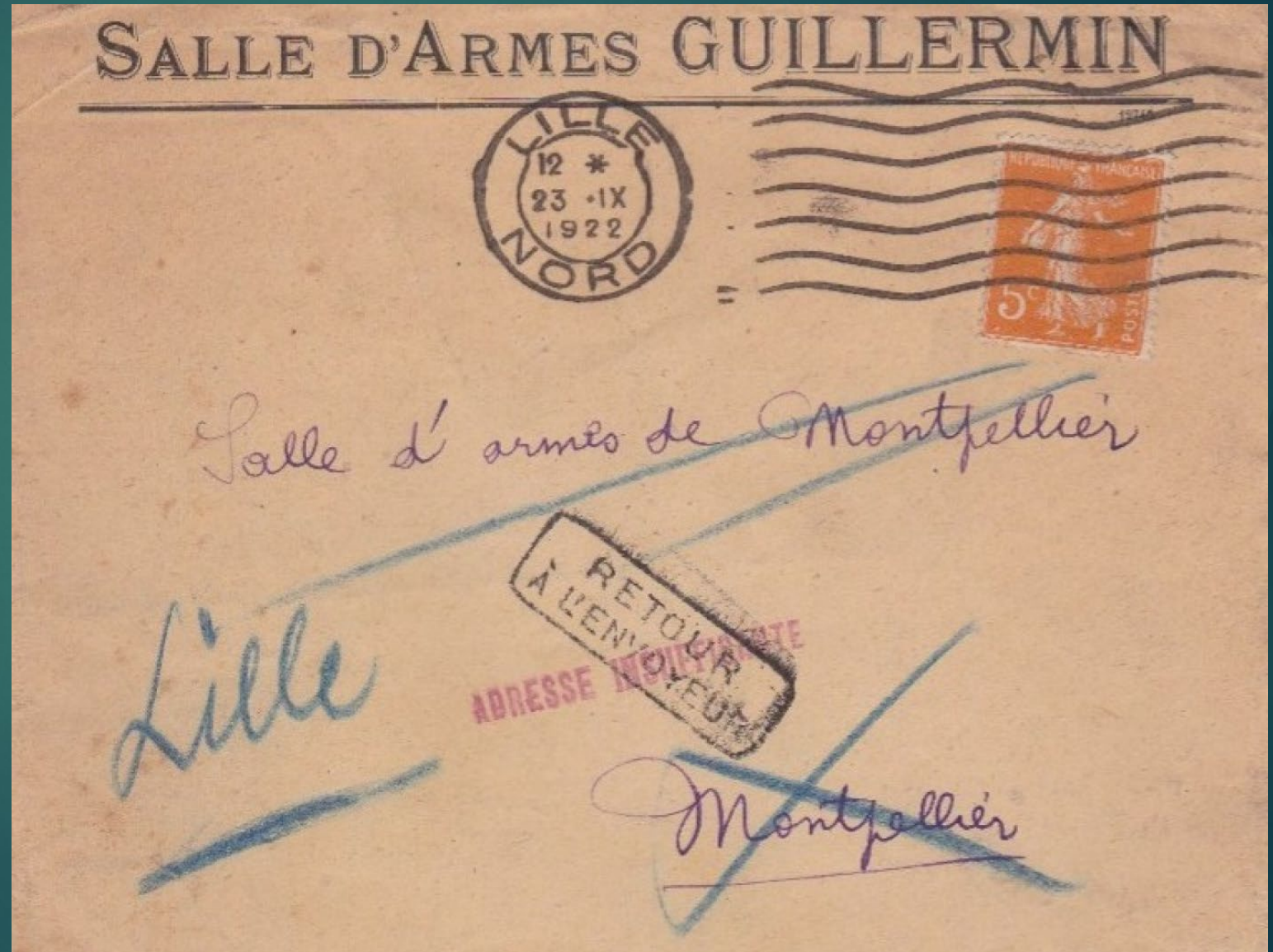
Retour à l'envoyeur labels and markings

► 1932

Retour à l'enveyeur labels and marking

- 1939
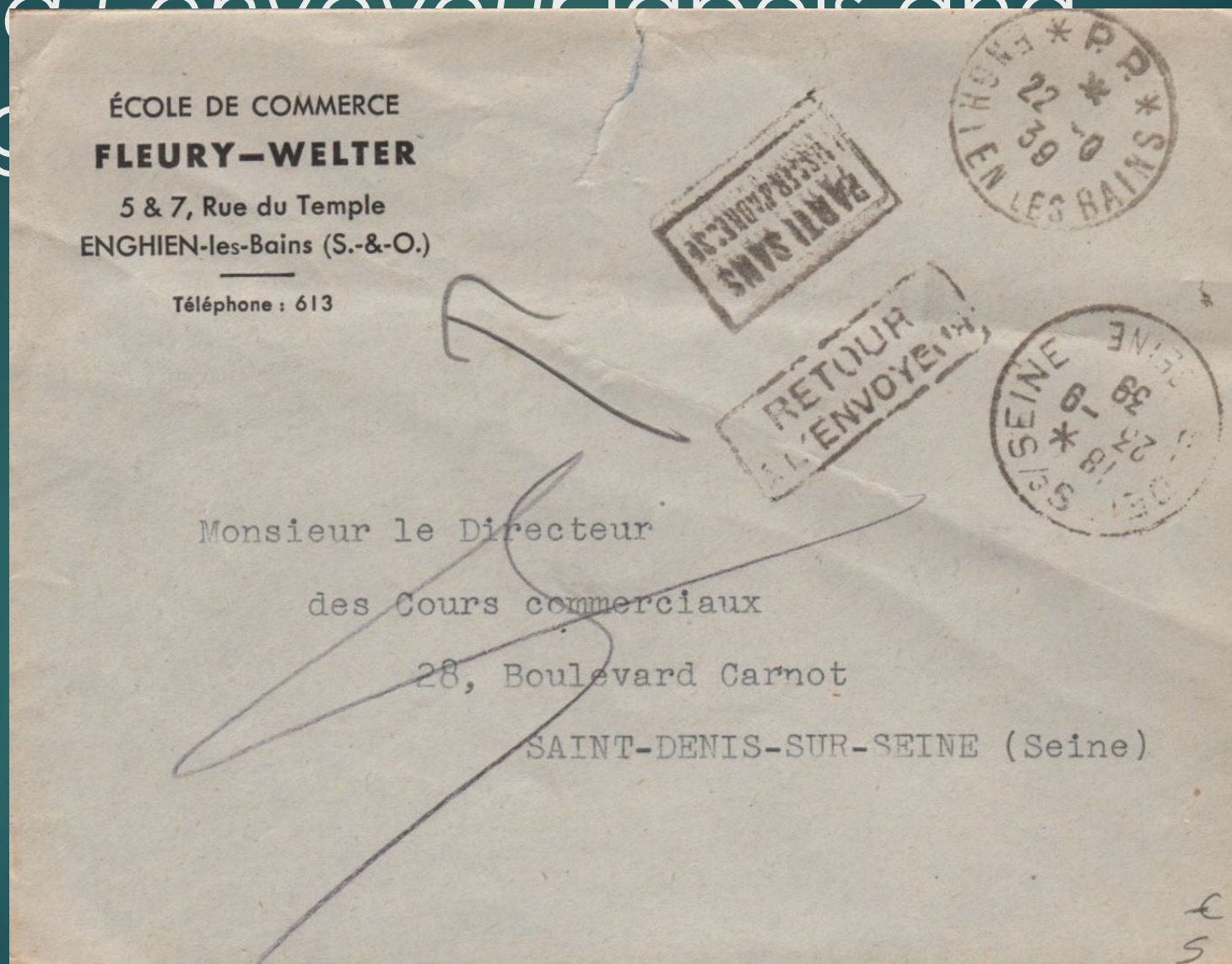
Parti sans laisser d'adresse

- 1825
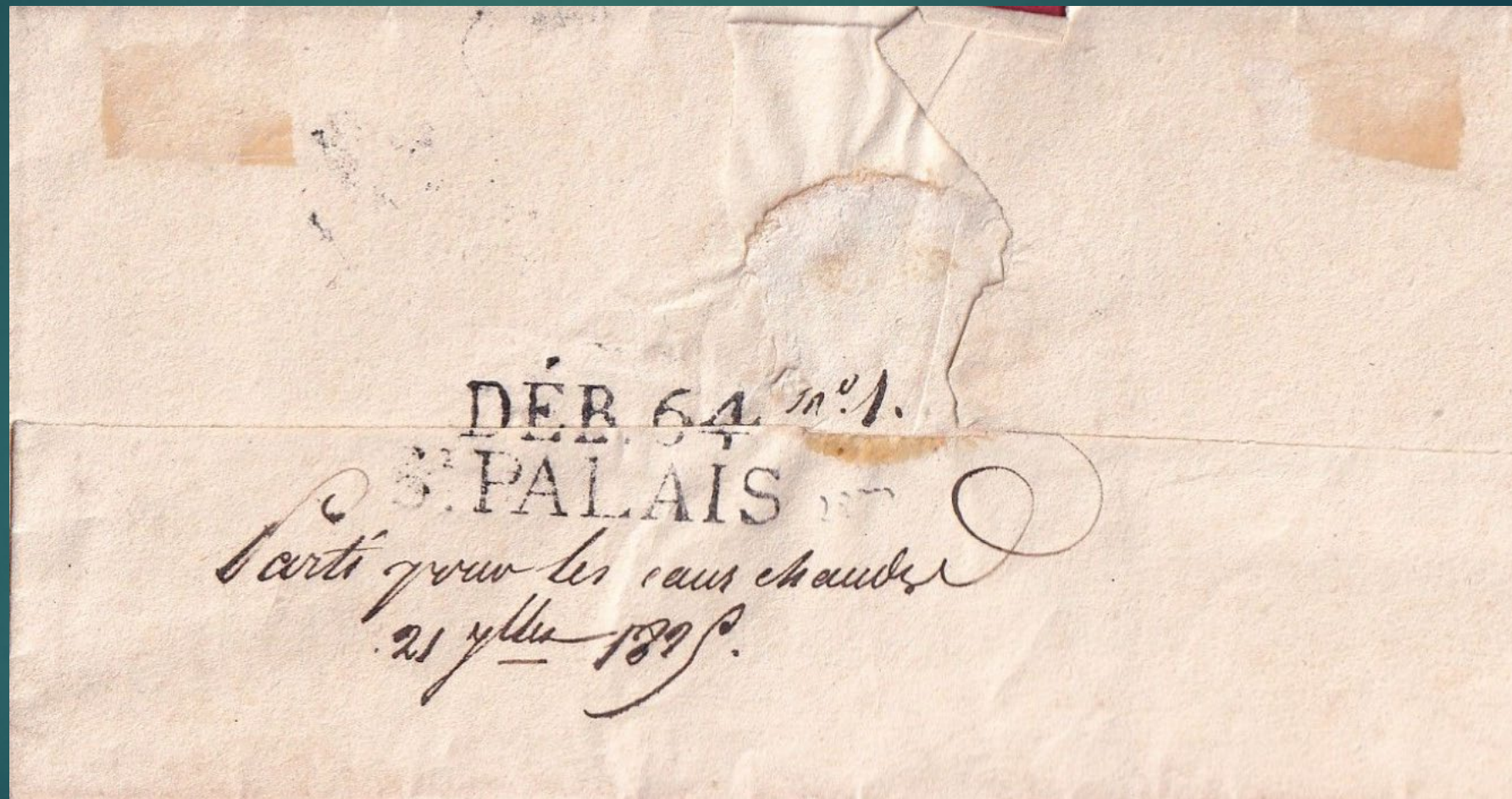
Parti sans laisser d'adresse

- 1870
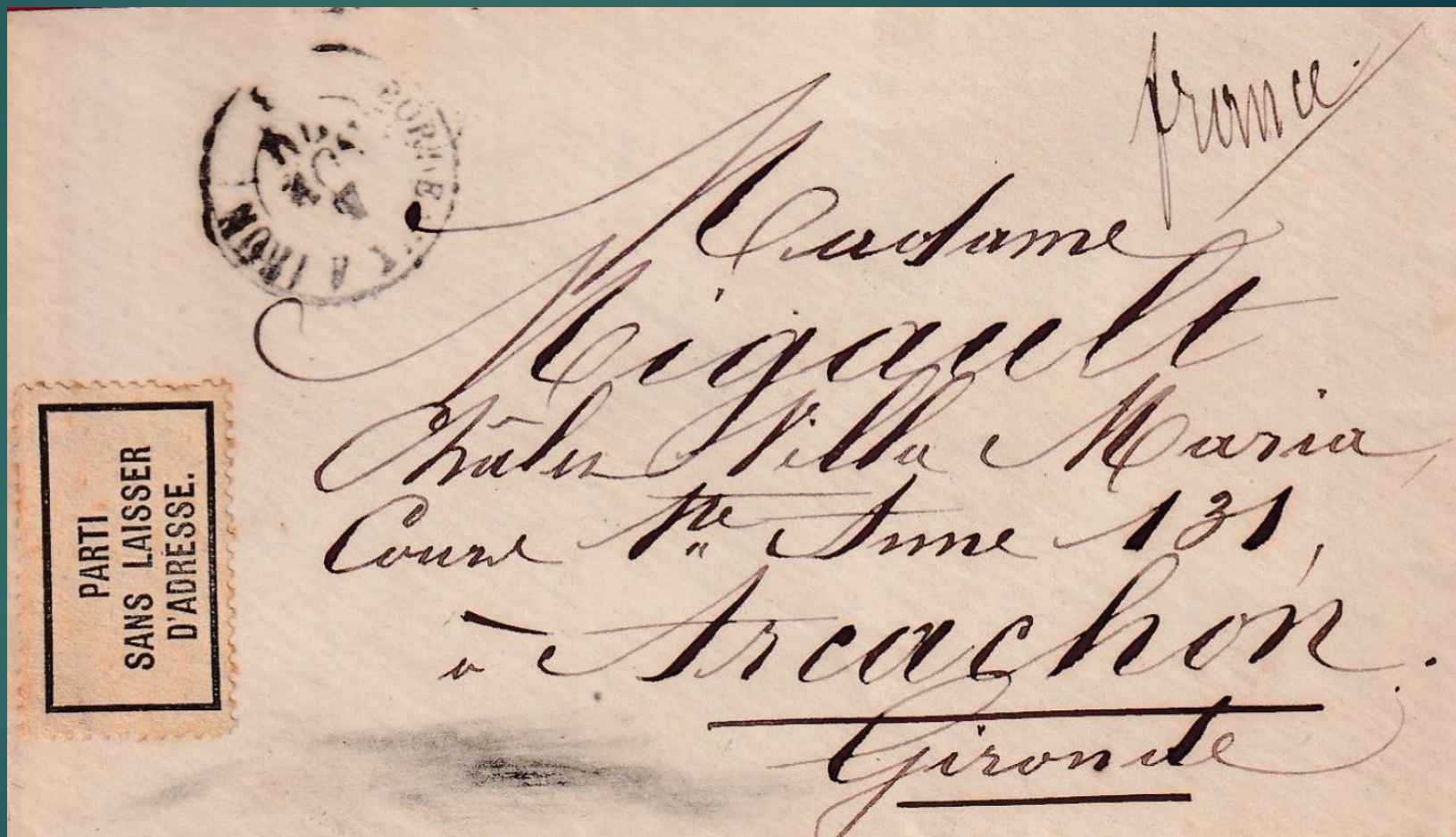
Parti sans laisser d'adresse

- 1892

Parti sans laisser d'adresse

- 1893
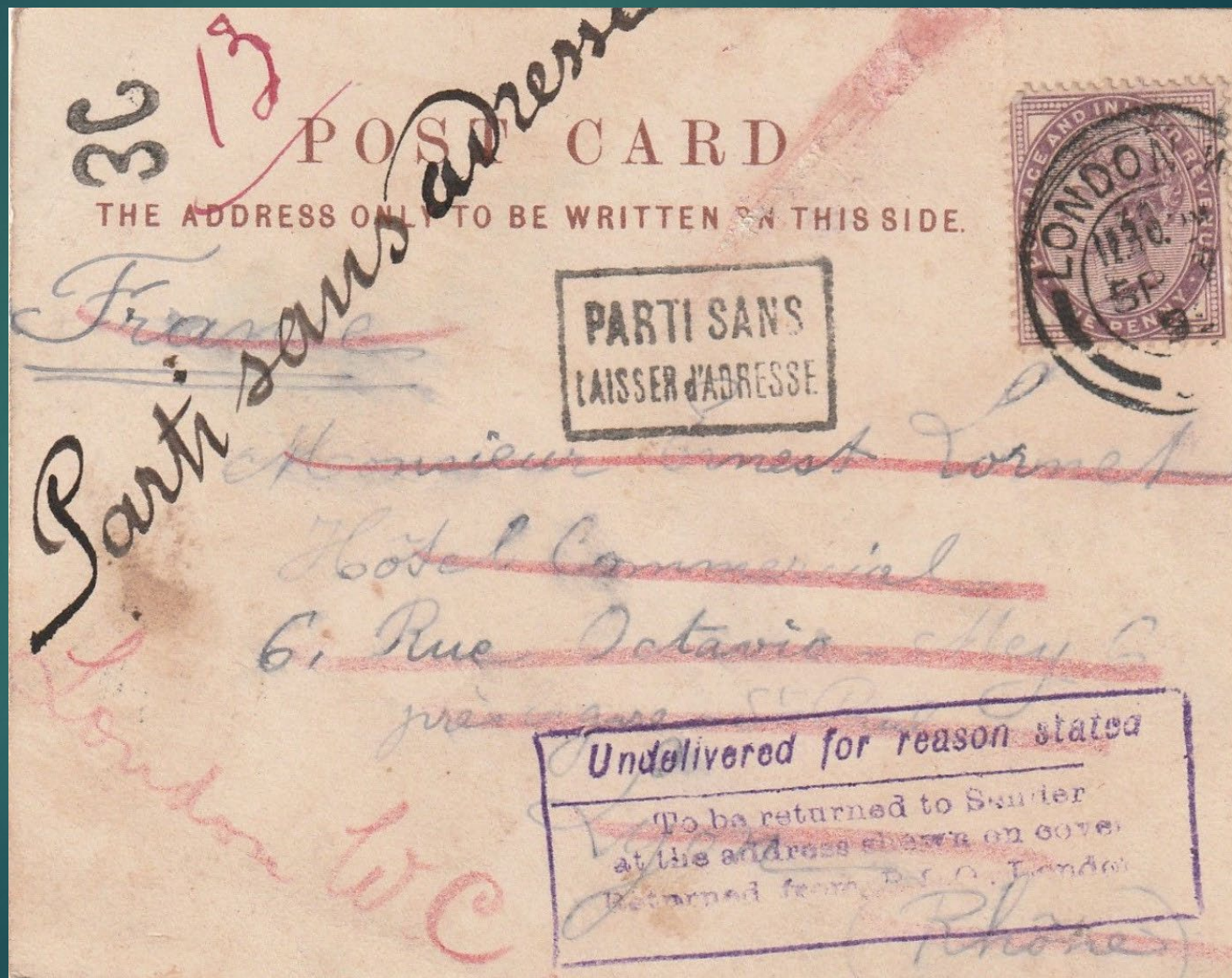
Parti sans laisser d'adresse

- 1895

Parti sans laisser d'adresse

- 1904

Parti sans laisser d'adresse

- 1904

Parti sans laisser d'adresse

- 1906

Parti sans laisser d'adresse

- 1913

Parti sans laisser d'adresse

- 1926
- Continues into the 1950s

Inconnu

- 1827 – The earliest recorded use

Inconnu

- 1869

Inconnu

- 1887

Inconnu

- 1892

Inconnu

- 1896
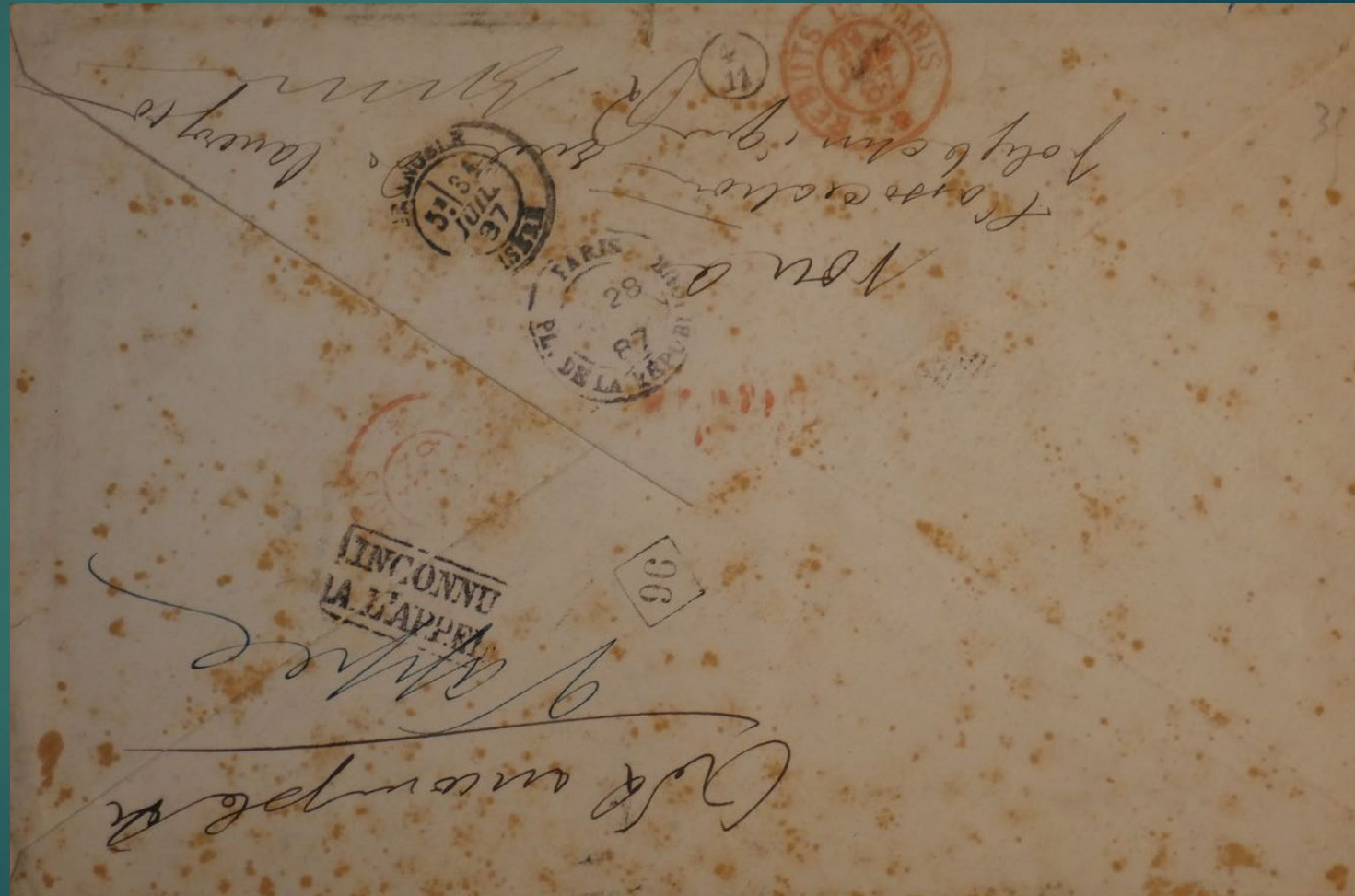
Inconnu

▶ 1898

Inconnu

- 1904
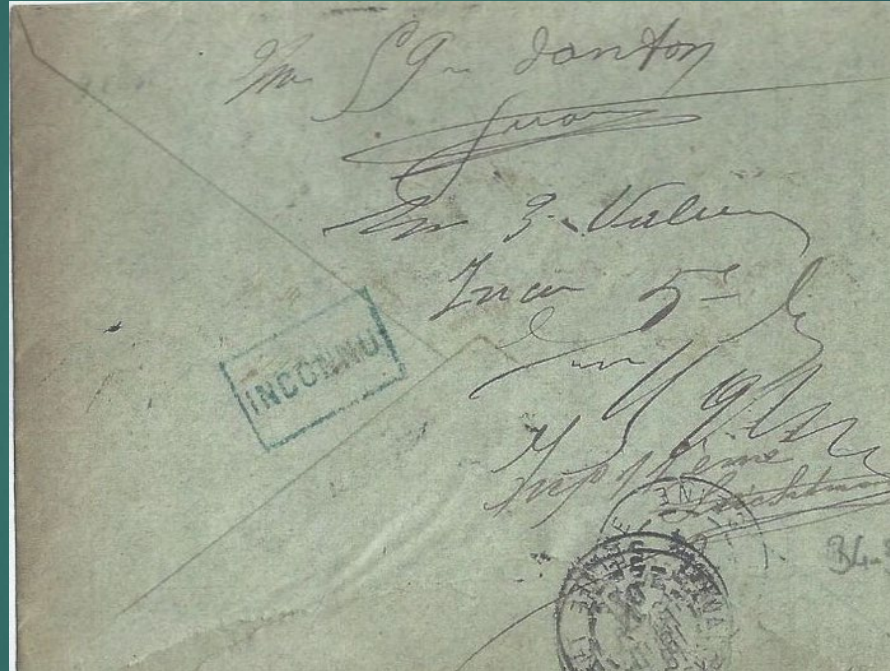
Incon

▶ 1922

Inconnu

- 1922 – A rare marking

Inconnu

- 1938
- Used into the 1950s

Décédé

- 1845
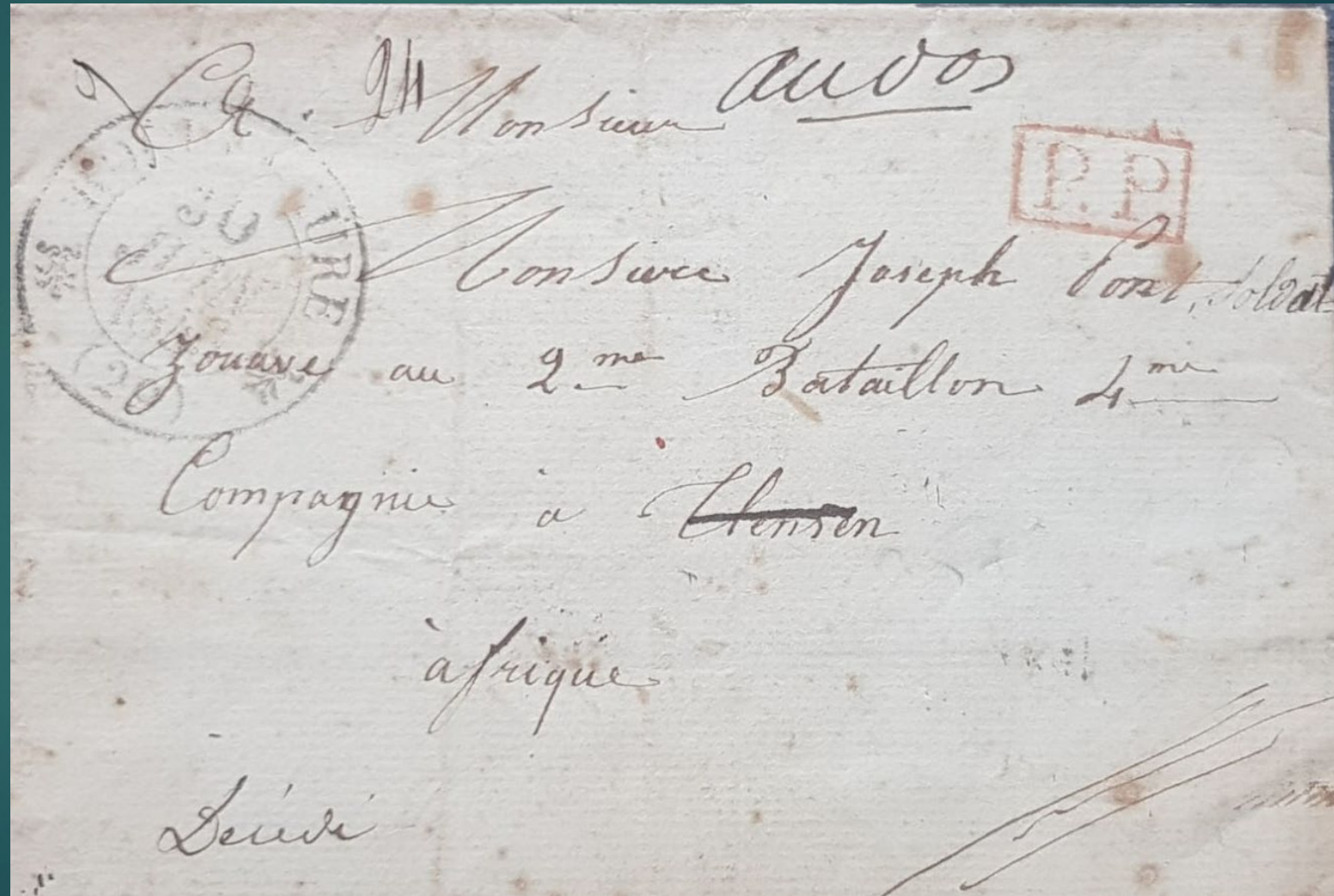
Décédé

- 1880

Décédé

- 1884

Décédé

- 1894
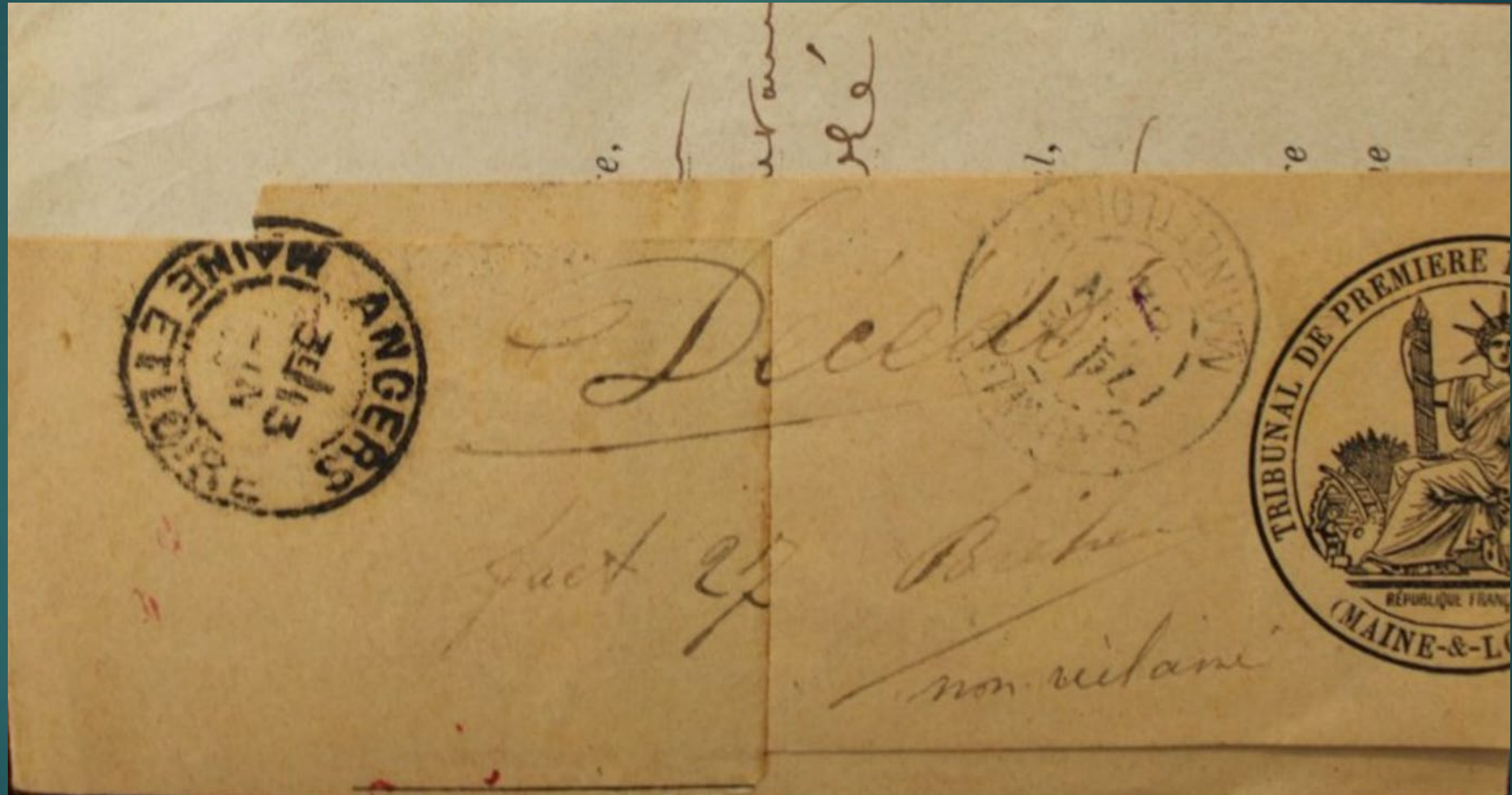
Décédé

Décédé

- 1892

1894
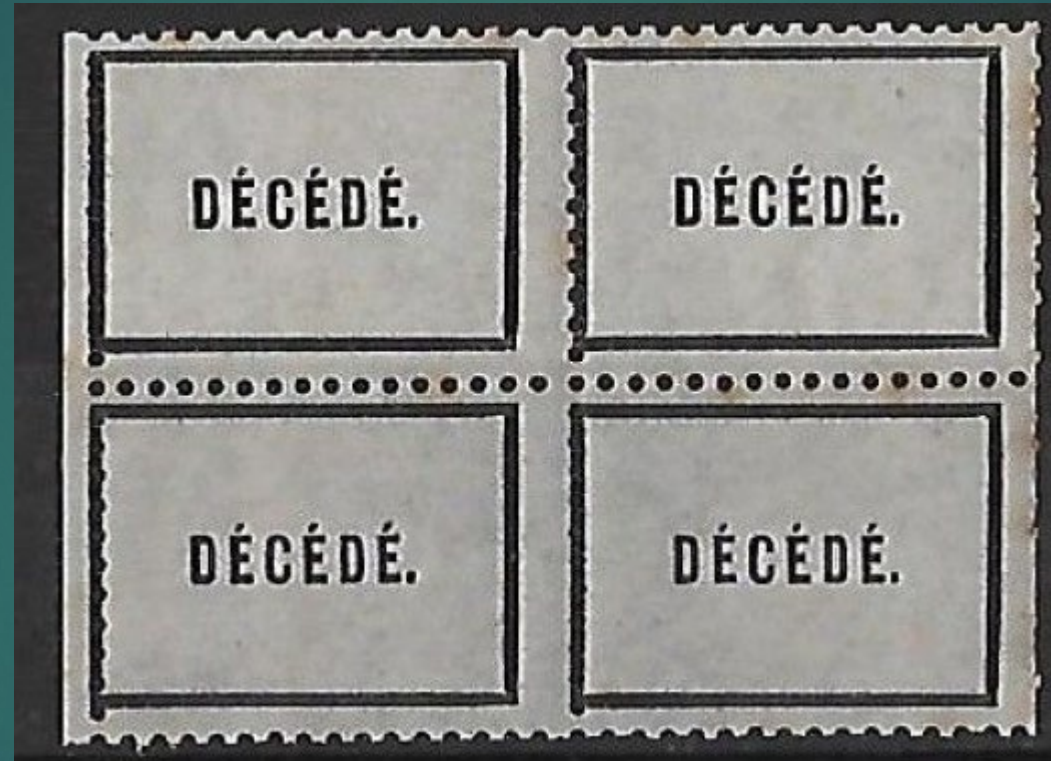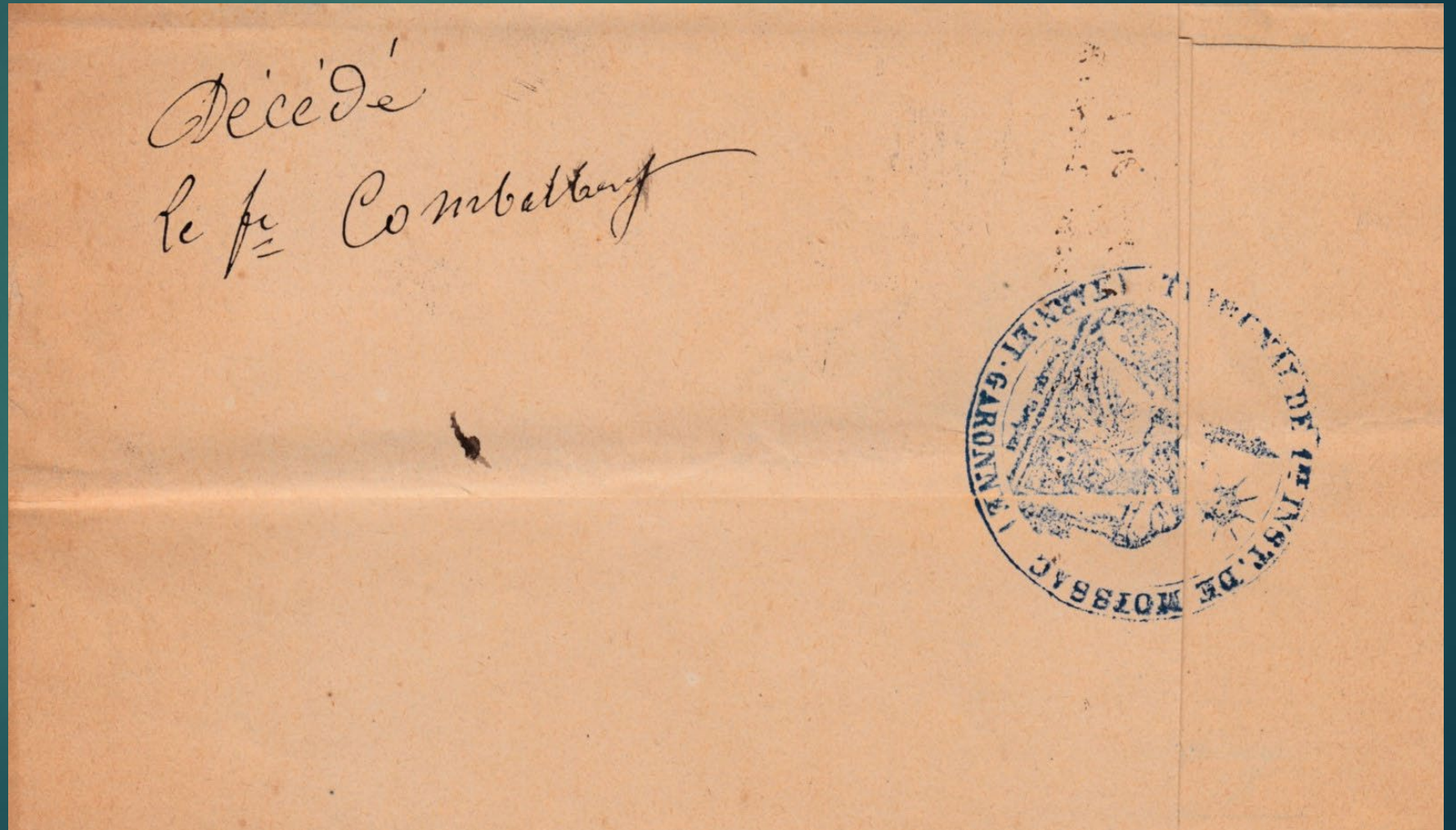
Décédé

- 1895

Décédé

- 1899

Décédé

- 1901

Décédé

- 1901

Décédé

- 1902

Décédé

- 1912
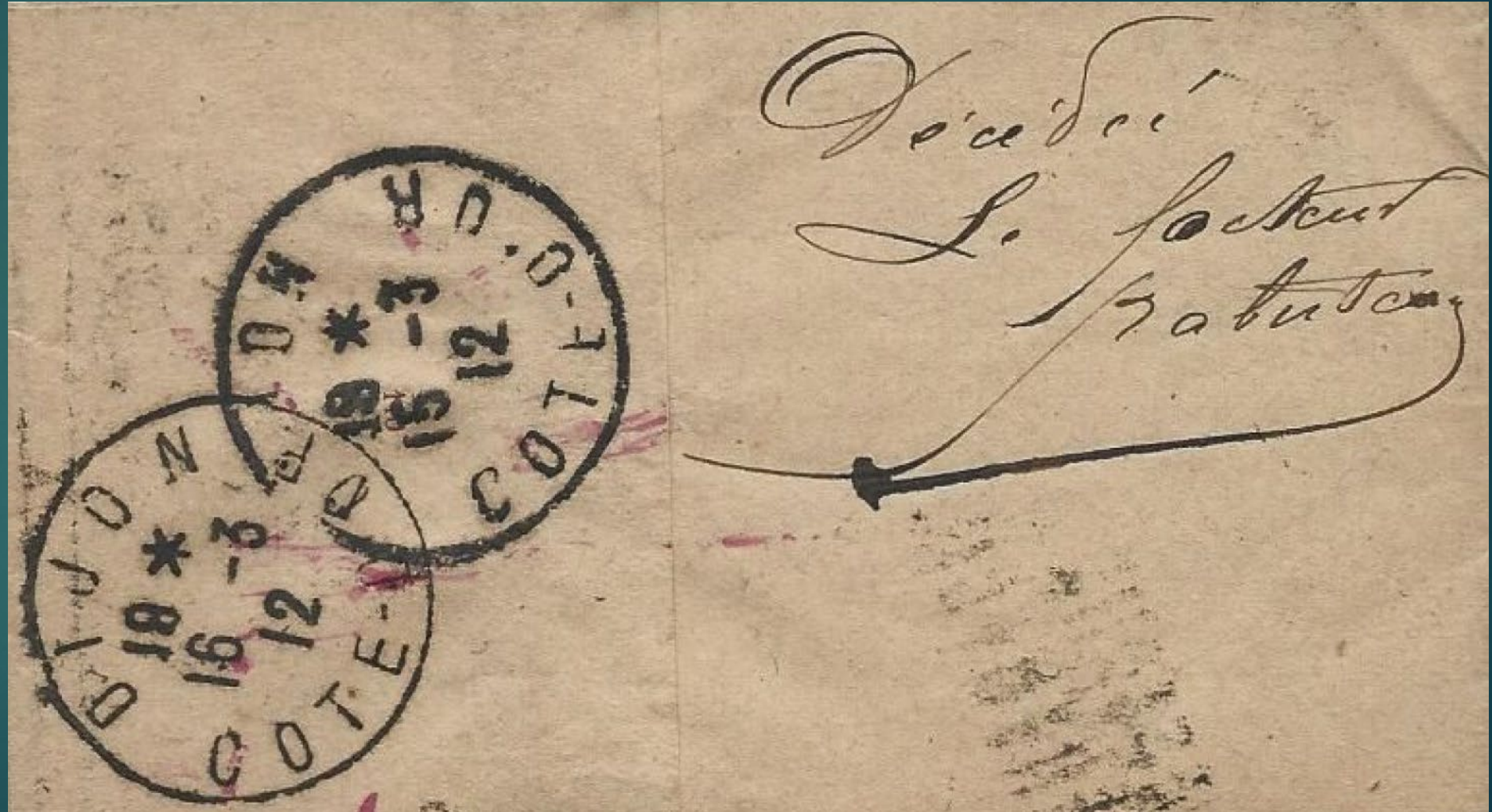
Décécé

- 1917

Décédé

- 1927
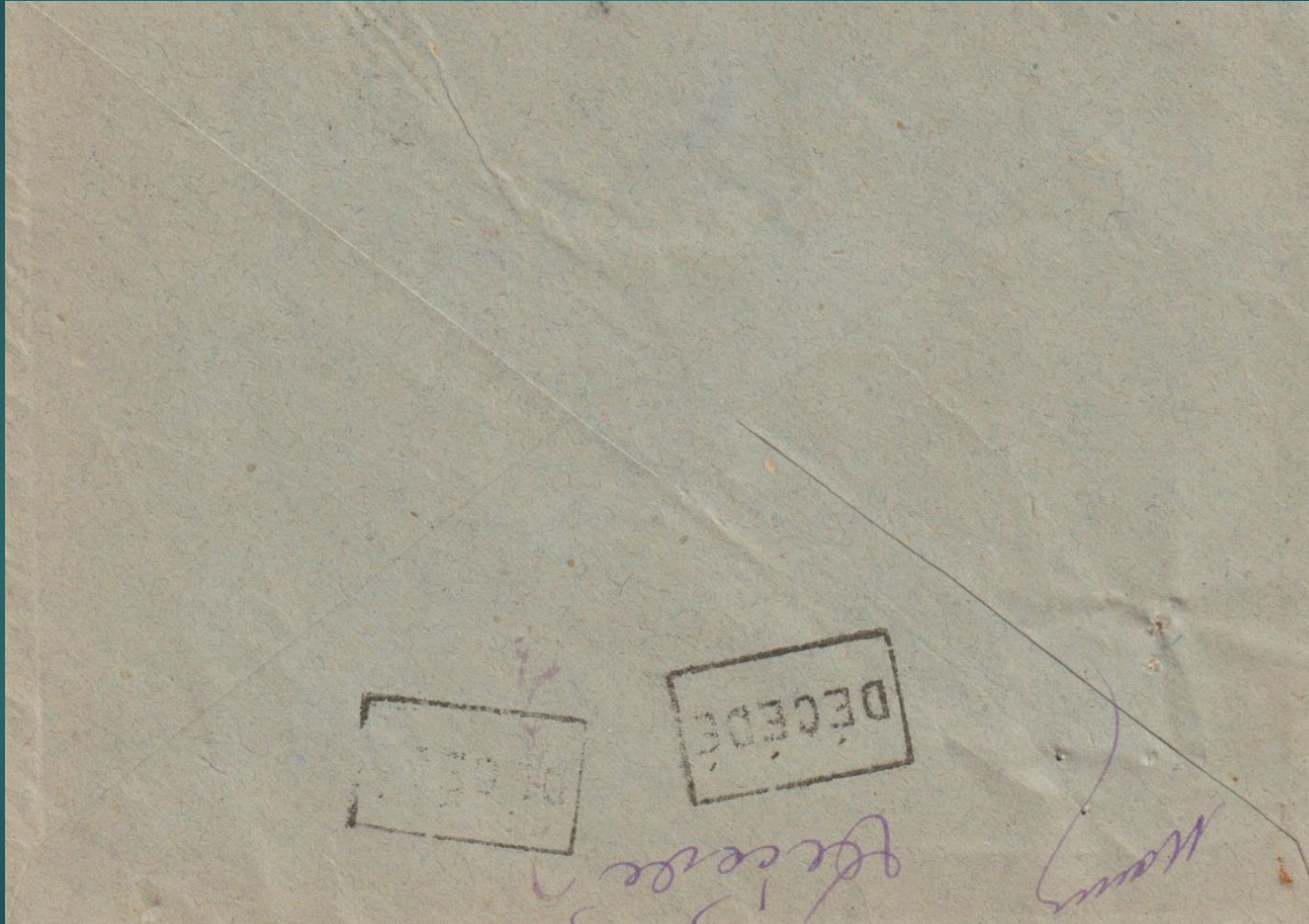
Décédé

- 1921
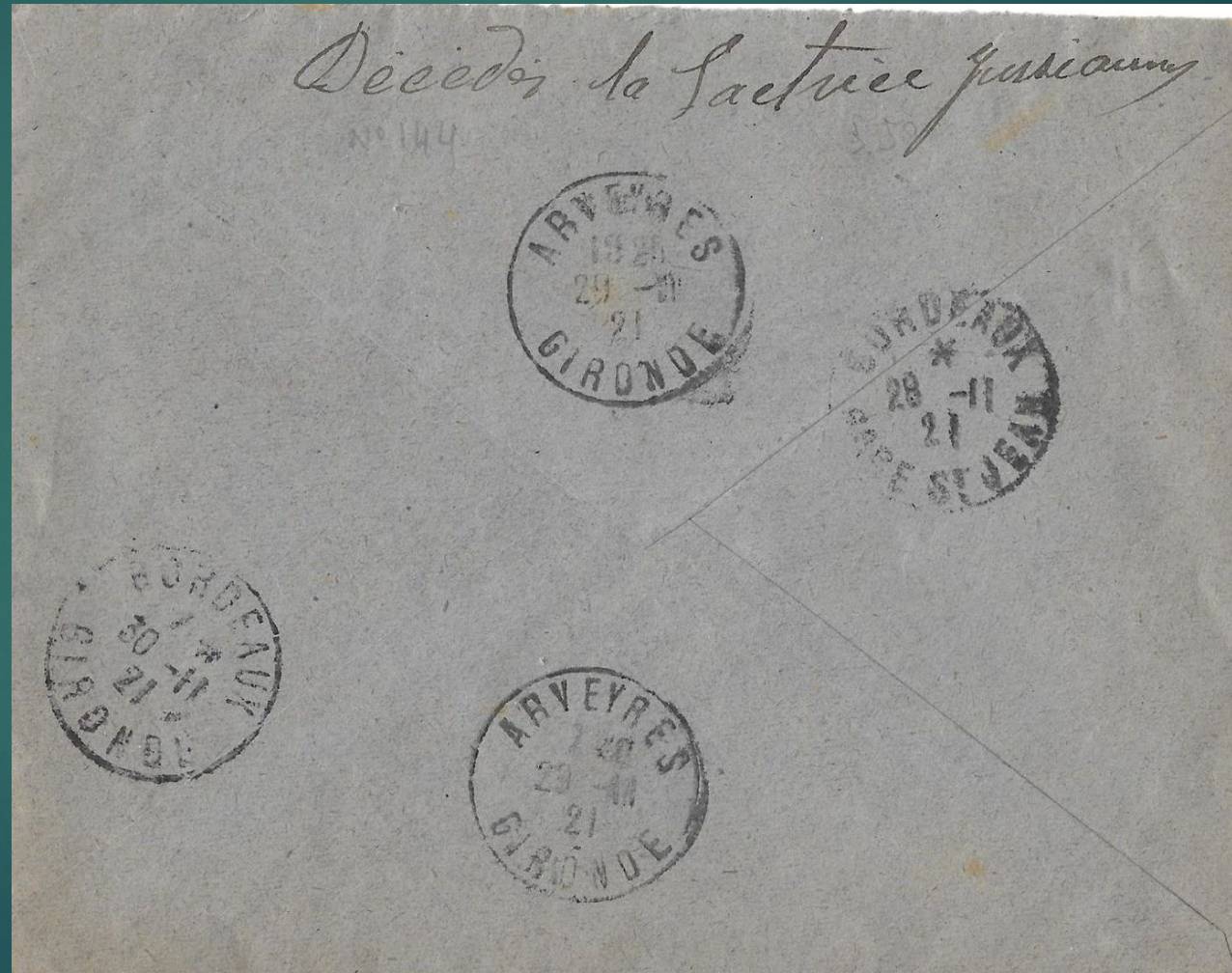
Décédé

- 1942

- One of the rarer of the original UPU return markings
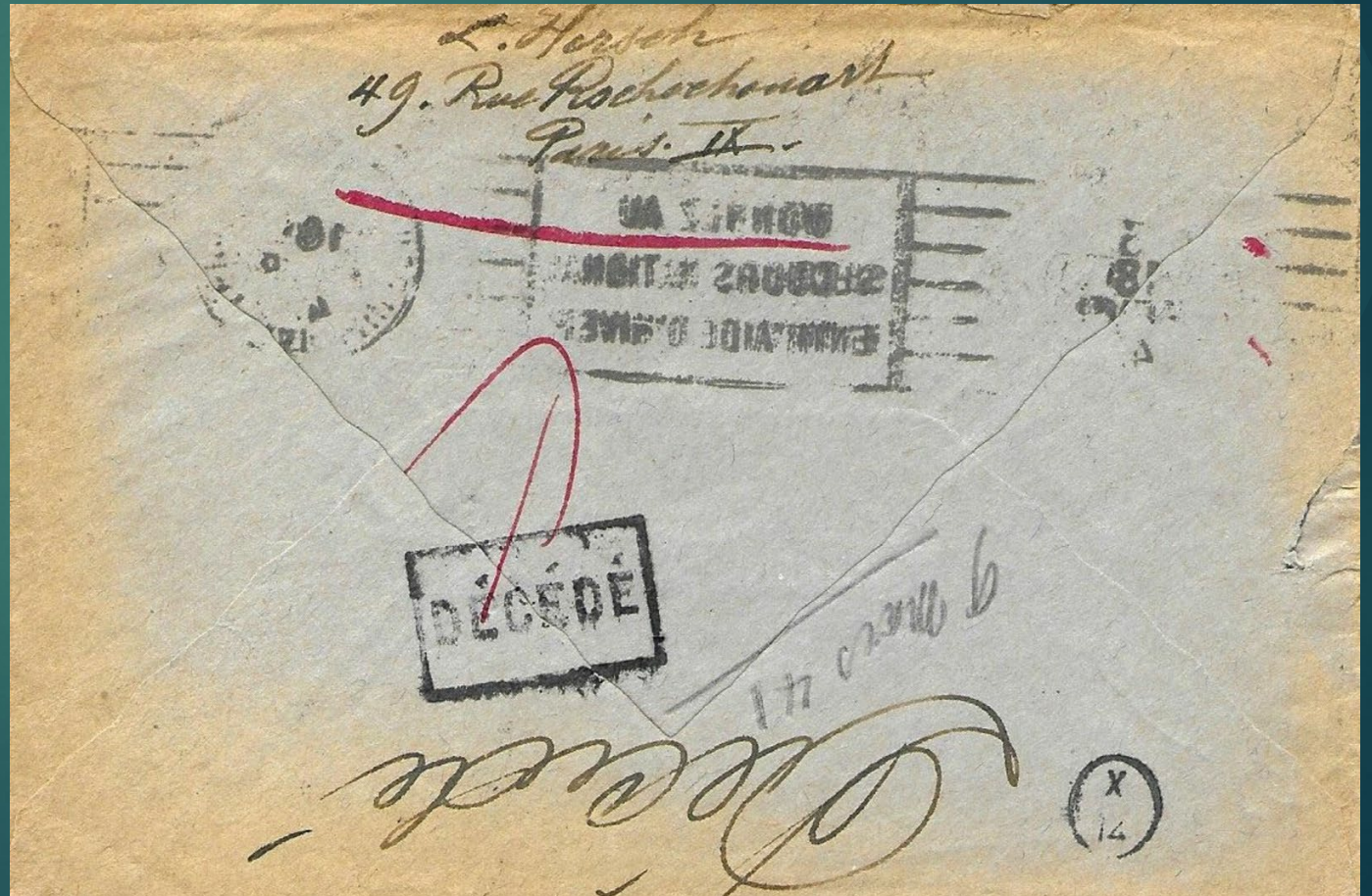
Refusé

- Even the handstamp is quite difficult to find.

- 1951
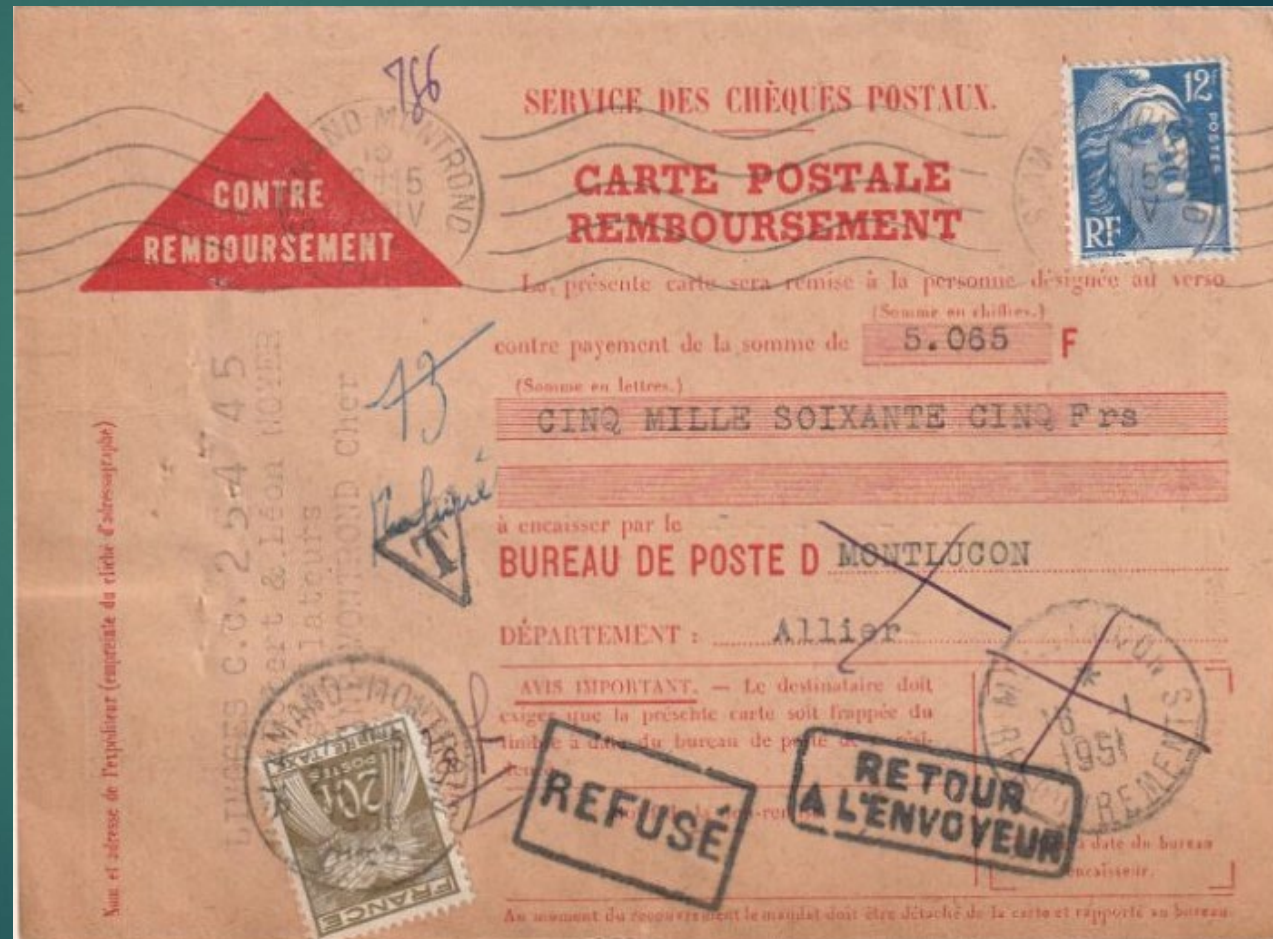
Non réclamé

- In spite of the evidence that labels existed from the first printing, I have never seen one used on cover.

Non réclamé

- 1924
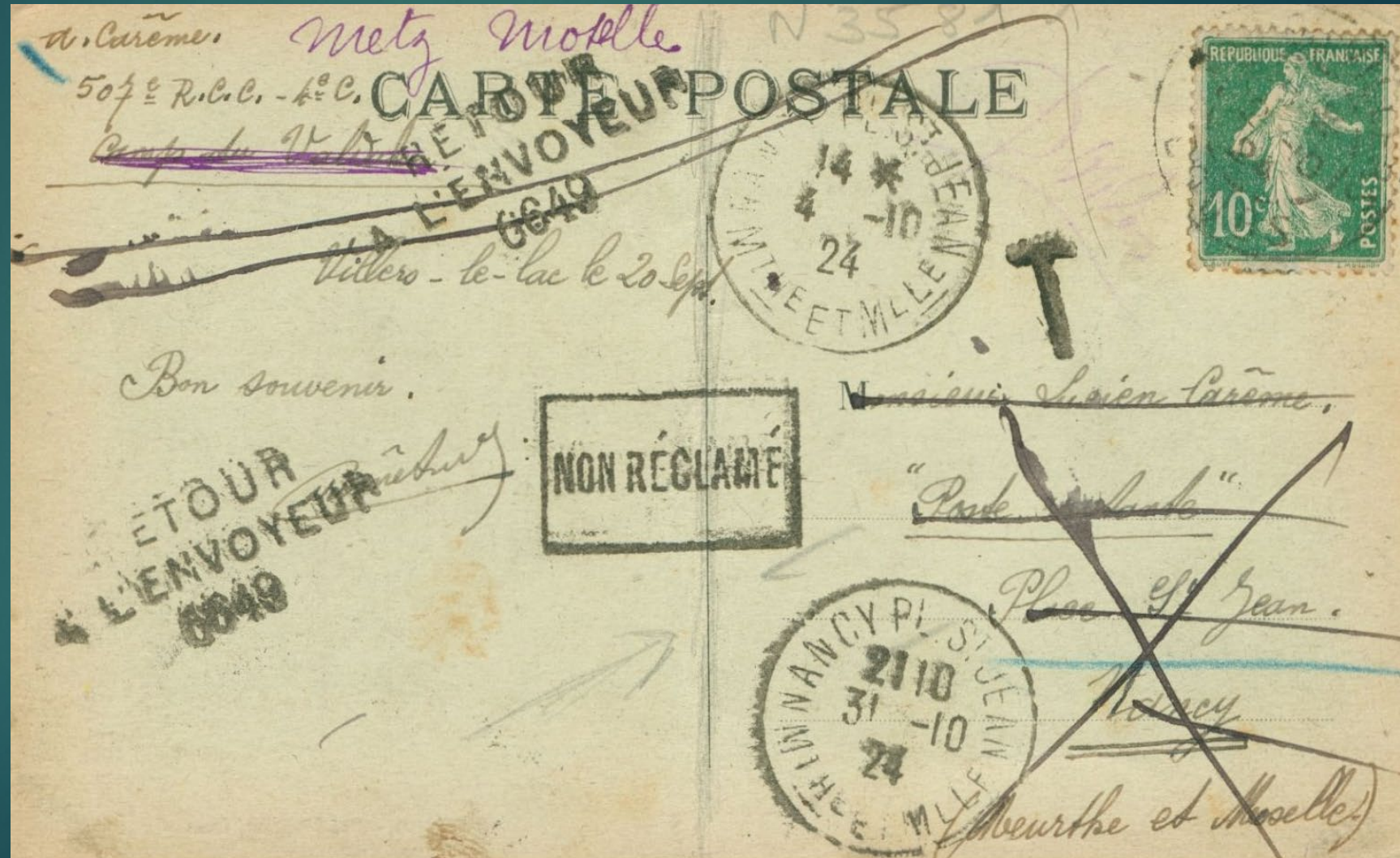
Non réclamé

- 1927
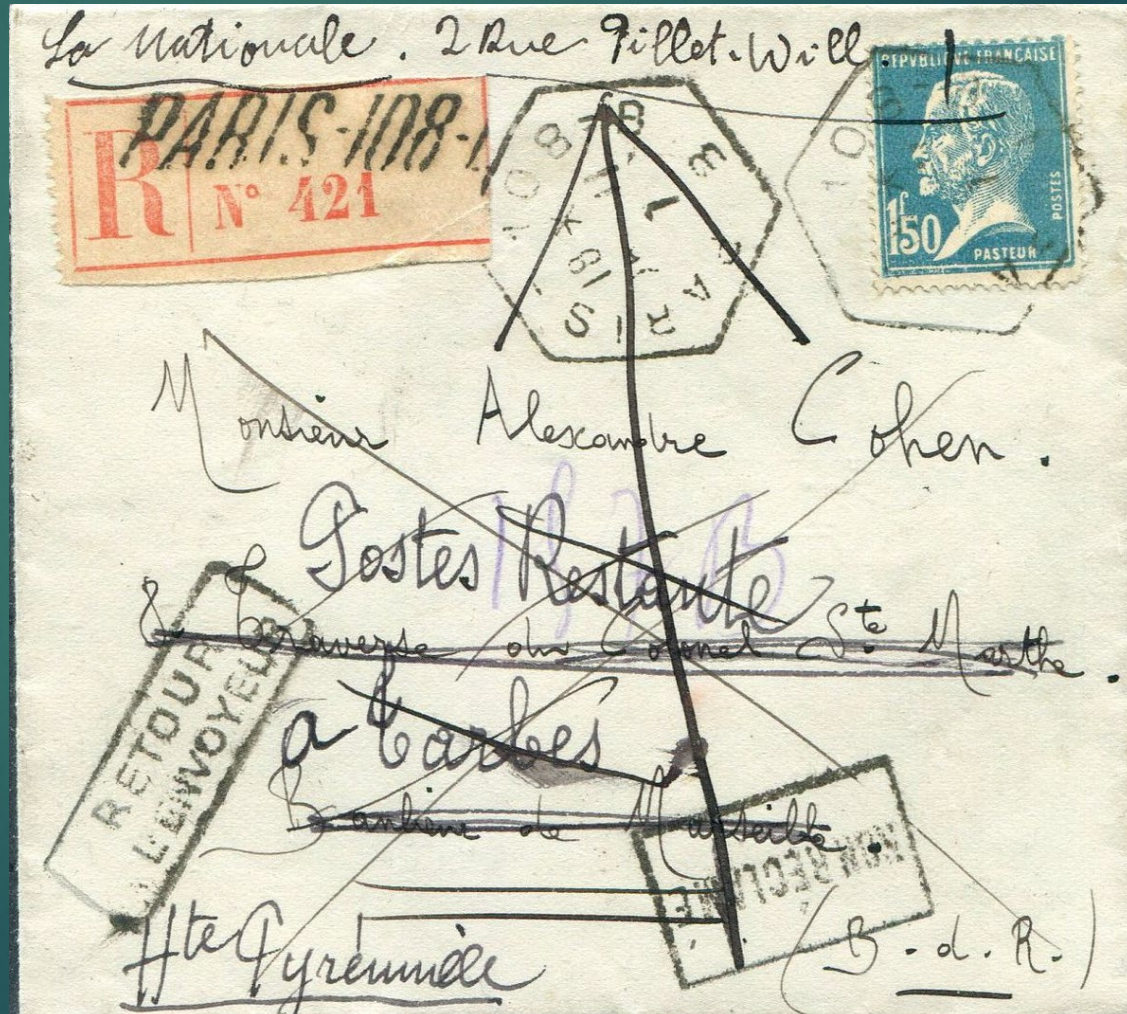
Non réclamé
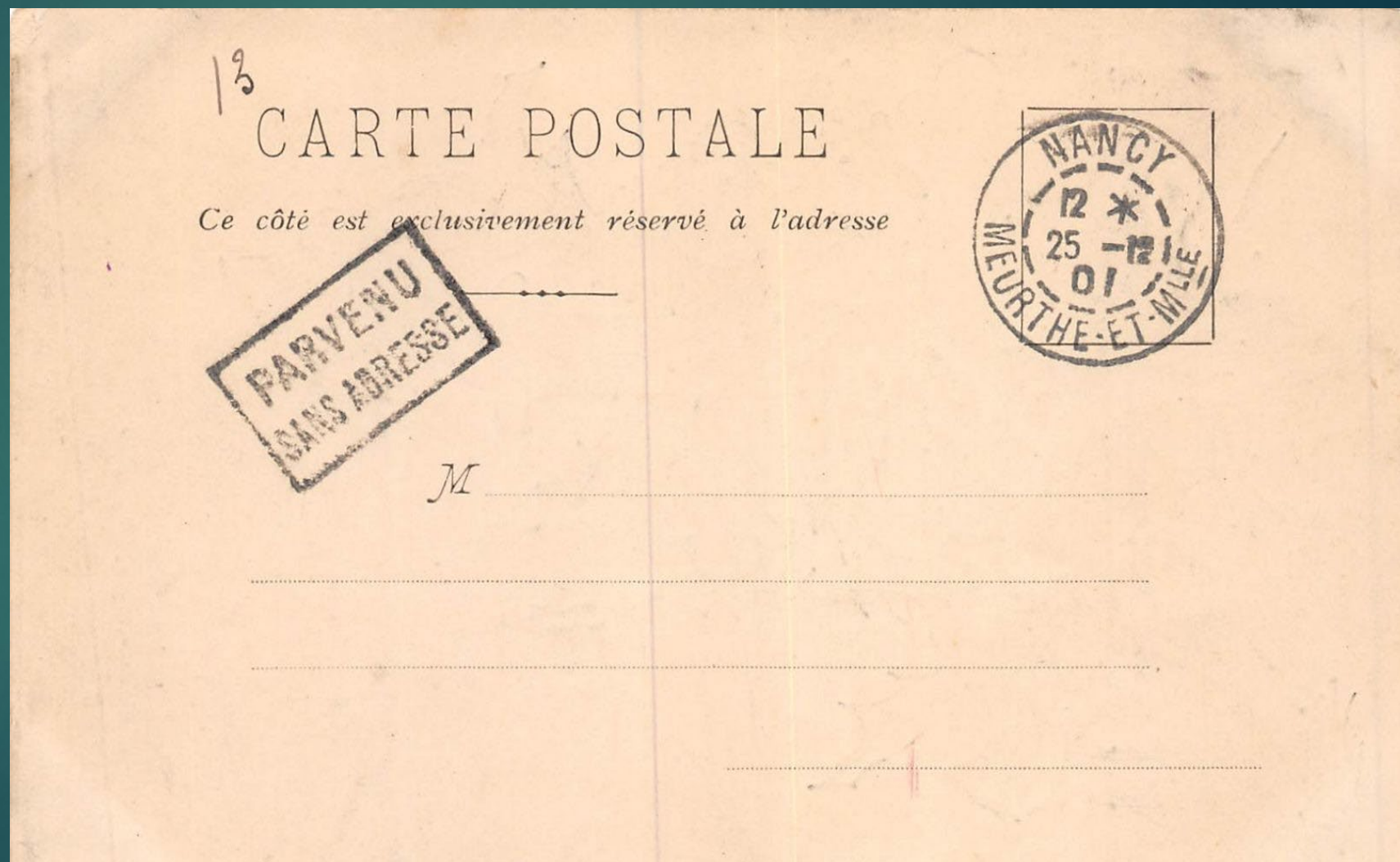
- 1928
- Vichy to Tunisia

Parvenu sans adresse

Parvenu sans adresse

- 1868

Parvenu sans adresse

- 1901

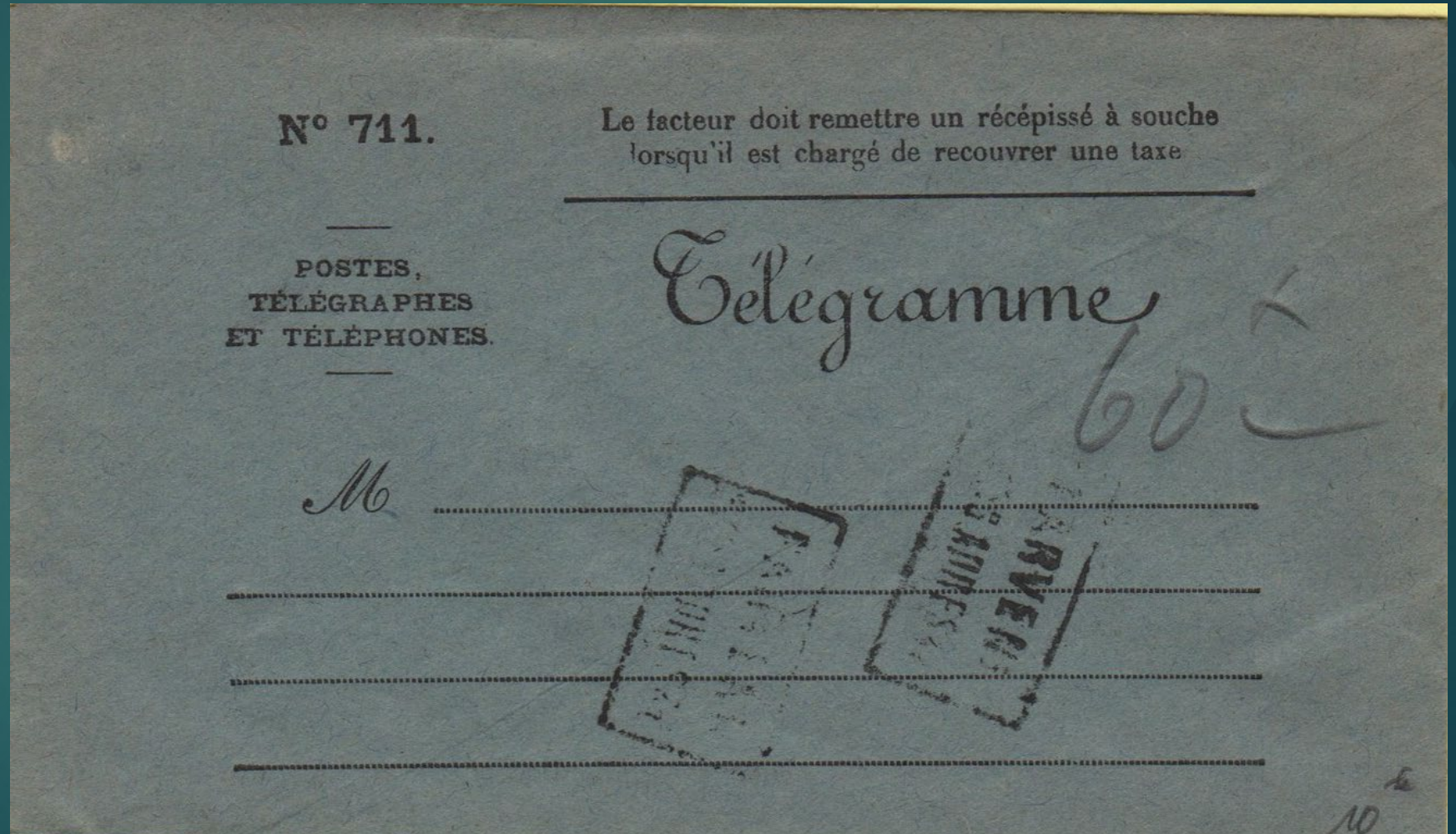# *Parvenu sans adresse*

- 1903

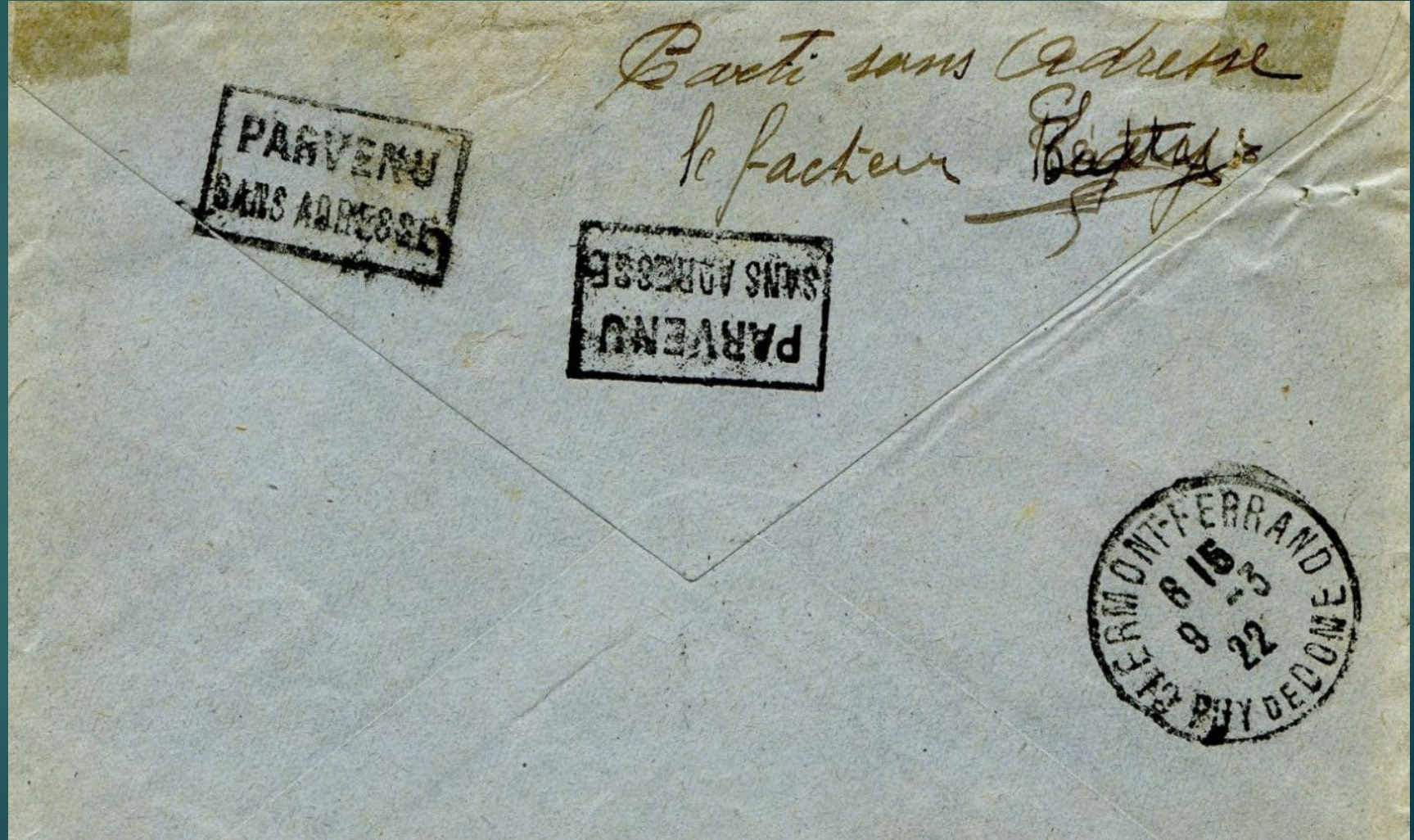# Parvenu sans adresse

- 1911

Parvenu sans adresse

- 1920

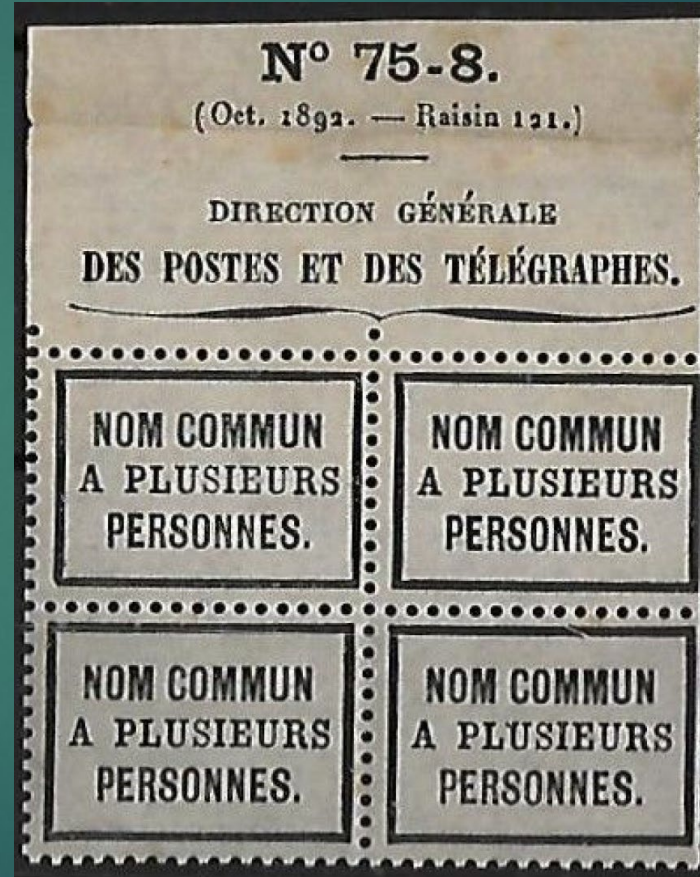# Parvenu sans adresse

- 1922

Parvenu sans adresse

- 1938

Some of the rarer labels/ markings

▶In many cases, the rarity of these labels/ markings may result from being used less than other labels.

Nom commun à plusieurs personnes

- 19c uses of the label are very rare

Nom commun à plusieurs personnes

▶ Early evidence suggests the existence of a longer and narrower two-line marking.
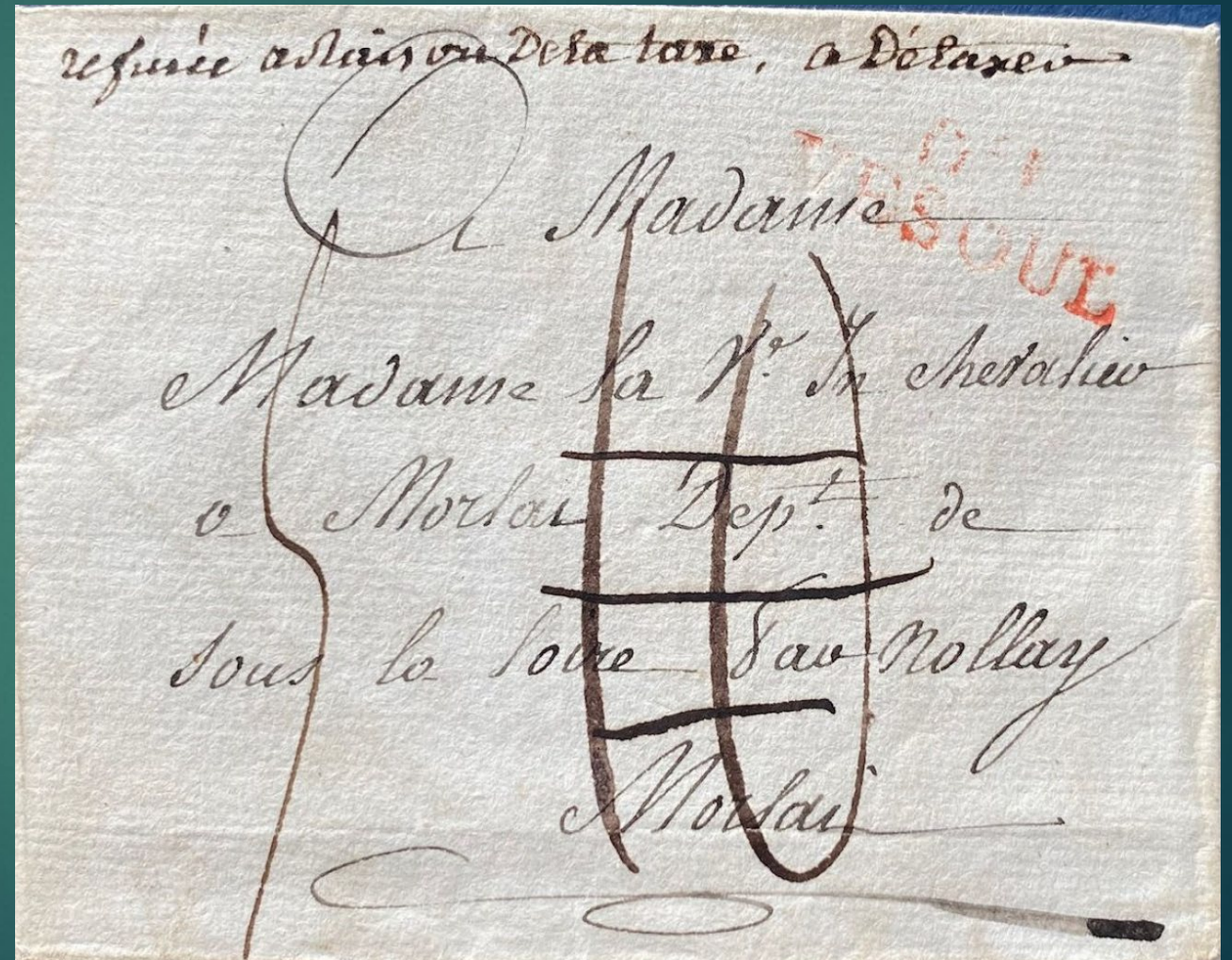
Nom commun à plusieurs personnes

- 1909

Refusé

- 1812
- 'refused due to tax' tax-free'
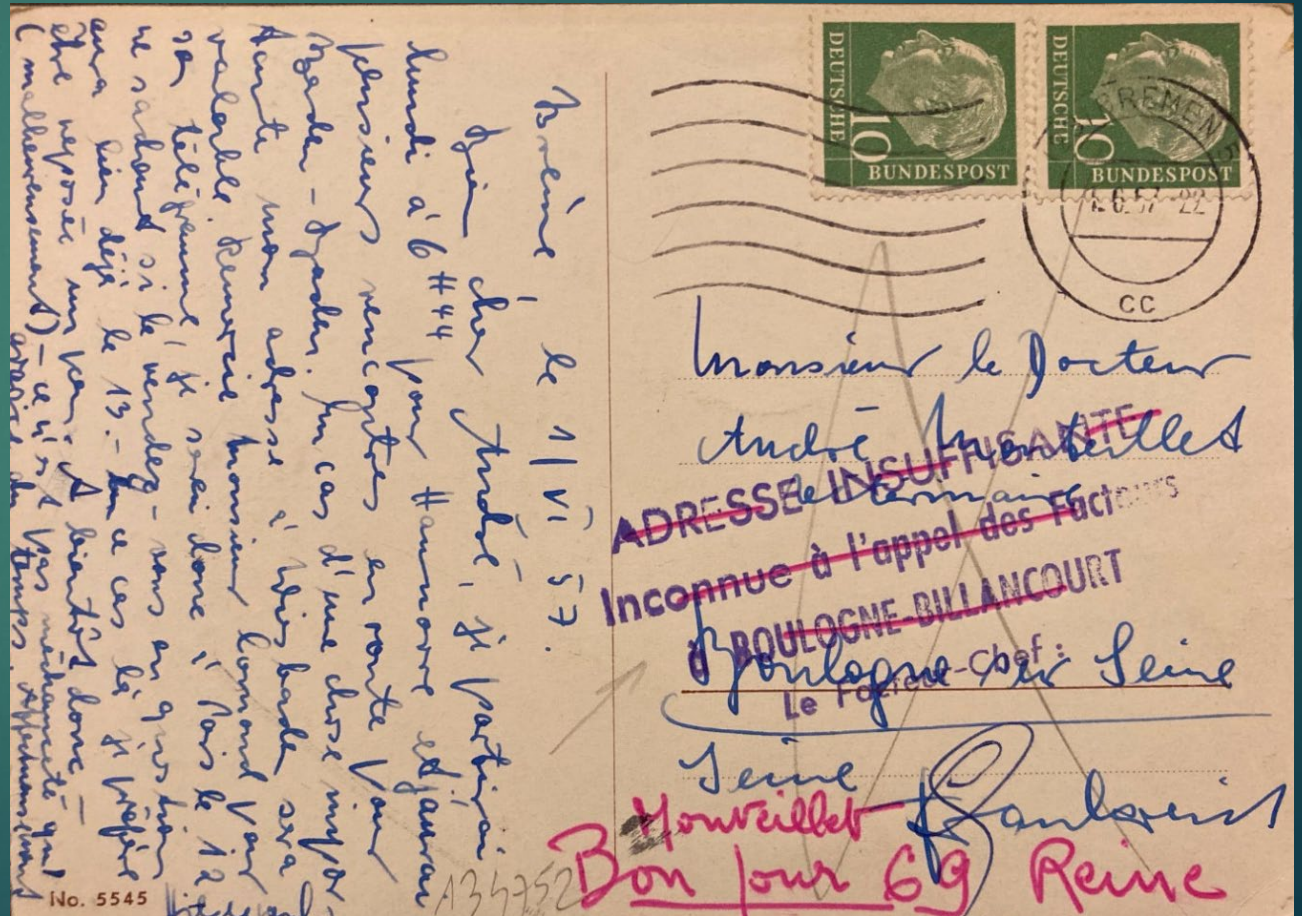- 'Tax 10 refused, tax-free... then tax 5 corrected.'

Refusé

▶ This is one of the later additions to AM catalogue. It appears that it was never used extensively as a label, but only as a handstamp.

▶ 1927

Adresse insuffisante

- No evidence exists for use of the label before 1900
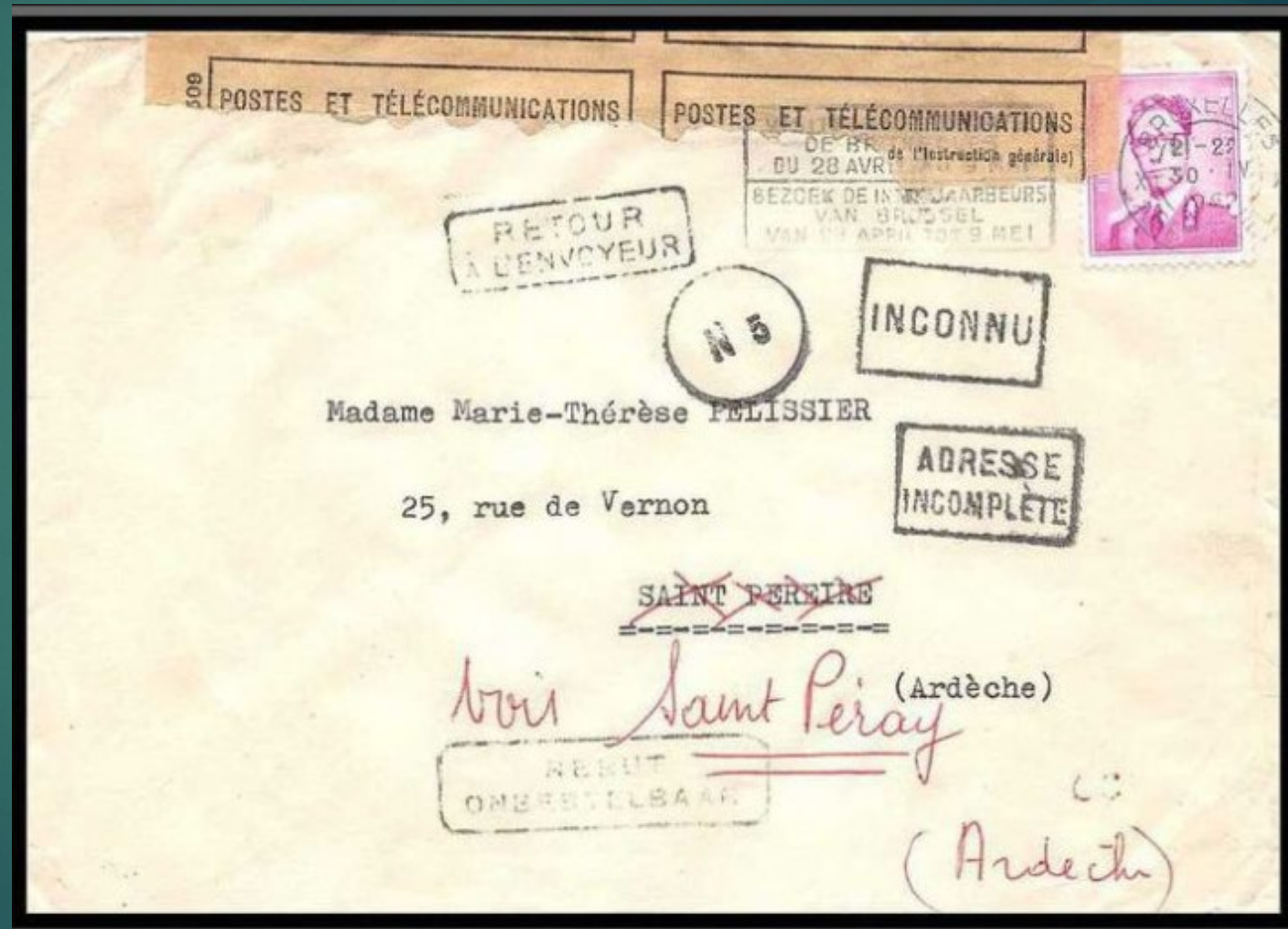
- I have never seen a copy of this label

Instead….

- *Adresse incomplete*
- *1849*

Adresse incomplete- 1962

Thank you!

GREGGREDNER@ROGERS.COM

Refus

- 1927