

# Algerian Postal History to 1876

This exhibit tells the story of Algeria's mail service from the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century to March 31, 1876. Beginning when mail was carried privately, the exhibit shows the evolution of postal services to the sophisticated system operating by 1876. Algeria was considered part of the *Metropole*; therefore civilian mail service was administered as part of the French postal system.

The story line encompasses:

• The period prior to the French invasion of North Africa	Up to June 1830	Frame 1
• French military mail service	1830-1835	Frames 1 and 2
• Civilian mail service before small numeral cancels were introduced	1835-1852	Frame 2
• Small numeral cancel period	1852-1862	Frames 3 to 5
• Large numeral cancel period	1863 to March 31, 1876	Frames 5 to 8
• <i>Convoyeur</i> (railroad) markings	Late 1860s to March 31, 1876	Frames 8 and 9
• Maritime markings	1830s to March 31, 1876	Frames 9 and 10

The end of the exhibit, March 31, 1876, corresponds to the retirement of large numeral cancels. This date also coincides with France issuing its Sage design stamps. These changes marked the end of the classical era of French – and Algerian – philately.

Typical of a postal history exhibit, there is a variety of rates and postal services. There are different types of post office – *recettes*, the rough equivalent of a U.S. first class post office, *distributions*, about the same as a second class U.S. office, and others. For a time the postal service disinfected mail from Algeria in an effort to reduce the transmission of cholera, yellow fever and other communicable diseases. Mail with slits, holes, vinegar stains and postal markings to show disinfection are all part of this exhibit. There are also examples of registered (*recommandation*) mail and other special services.

As with many stories, the tale cannot be fully told in a straight line. There are occasional “interludes” to show items that are outside the main story line but still important in showing how the mail system worked. Another divergence illustrates the effect of the Franco-Prussian War on postal services.

So let's get started. It's 1731, more than 275 years ago, and the Turks have ruled the Barbary Coast for about 300 years. Pirates based in Alger (Algiers) operate with impunity in the Mediterranean Sea. Mail crosses by ship, usually in care of the captain, and there isn't much of it. Of course, even less survives. However, a Scotsman has written a letter to a businessman in Edinburgh, and his letter survives to this day.

As the story unfolds, please watch for the occasional small dot that indicates a key item.



## Before the French Invasion

## Ship letters

Very little mail survives from before 1830. Other than two Spanish post offices, there was no official mail service available in Algeria. Letters were entrusted to ship captains for delivery to a postal system nearer to the recipient or perhaps to a final destination.



Alger to Edinburgh, Scotland, June 16, 1731

No postal markings.

Commercial letter discussing trading proposals.



## Before the French Invasion

## Ship letters

The Turks had occupied North Africa from Morocco to Tunisia for about 400 years. While known mostly for their piracy, they also established commercial relationships after demanding tribute in return for not raiding shipping. Local Turkish magistrates were titled "Bey."

*Je vous prie de m'en donner avis. Je  
meu n'est encore aux Luccious de Deuf. Mille que je compte  
de vous adresser par d'autre St. Je ne doute point de votre  
bonté persuadé que vous donneres vos ordres p<sup>r</sup> le bien de nos  
interet, & par le gard de l'amitié qui a toujours régné  
entre nous & que de mon côté je seray toujours tout ce qui  
dependra de moy pour vous en donner de preuves.*

*Salut*

*Oran Le 18. juin 1795.*

*Mohamed Bey D'Oran*



Oran to Marseille, France, June 18, 1795

Disinfected at Marseille but no postal markings.

Commercial letter to Bey Mohammed at l'agence d'Afrique at Marseille.



## Before the French Invasion

Beginning in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Spain operated a civilian postal service in several cities in North Africa, including two in the territory that became Algeria. The older marking was used in Oran; the second marking in Alger (Argel in Spanish).

## Spanish Post Offices



Oran to Barcelona,  
Spain, January 27, 1788

First postal marking used in  
Algeria.

Argel to Majorca, Spain,  
18 brumaire, an VIII  
(November 8, 1799)

Earliest of three known examples  
of ARGEL marking.

Letters rated in Spanish reales,  
postage collected from  
addressee.



Argel to Marseille,  
France, October 13,  
1807

Last of three known ARGEL  
markings. ESPAGNE PAR  
BAYONNE exchange mark  
between Spain and France.  
Fifteen décimes due from  
addressee.





## Before the French Invasion

A major concern for Mediterranean travelers was yellow fever, plague and other diseases. As early as 1564 the French had a consul in the court of the Turkish Bey to monitor and report on health matters and commercial affairs. The next three letters, carried as ship letters, were written by three different consuls, all addressed to the health administration in Marseille. None have any postal markings.

Alger to Marseille,  
France, 30 vendémiaire,  
an 13 (October 22, 1804)

Earliest known French  
administrative marking.

Letter sent in quadruplicate to  
ensure at least one arrived.  
Warns of yellow fever outbreak  
in Gibraltar, arrival of ships with  
sick passengers. Advises that  
Bey of Alger has not reacted to  
the outbreak.

From Consul Dubois-Thainville.



Alger to Marseille,  
France, October 11,  
1809

Letter warns of plague in  
Smyrna. No evidence of  
illness among passengers or  
crew during 70 day (!)  
crossing to Alger.

From Consul Ragueneau la  
Chainaye.



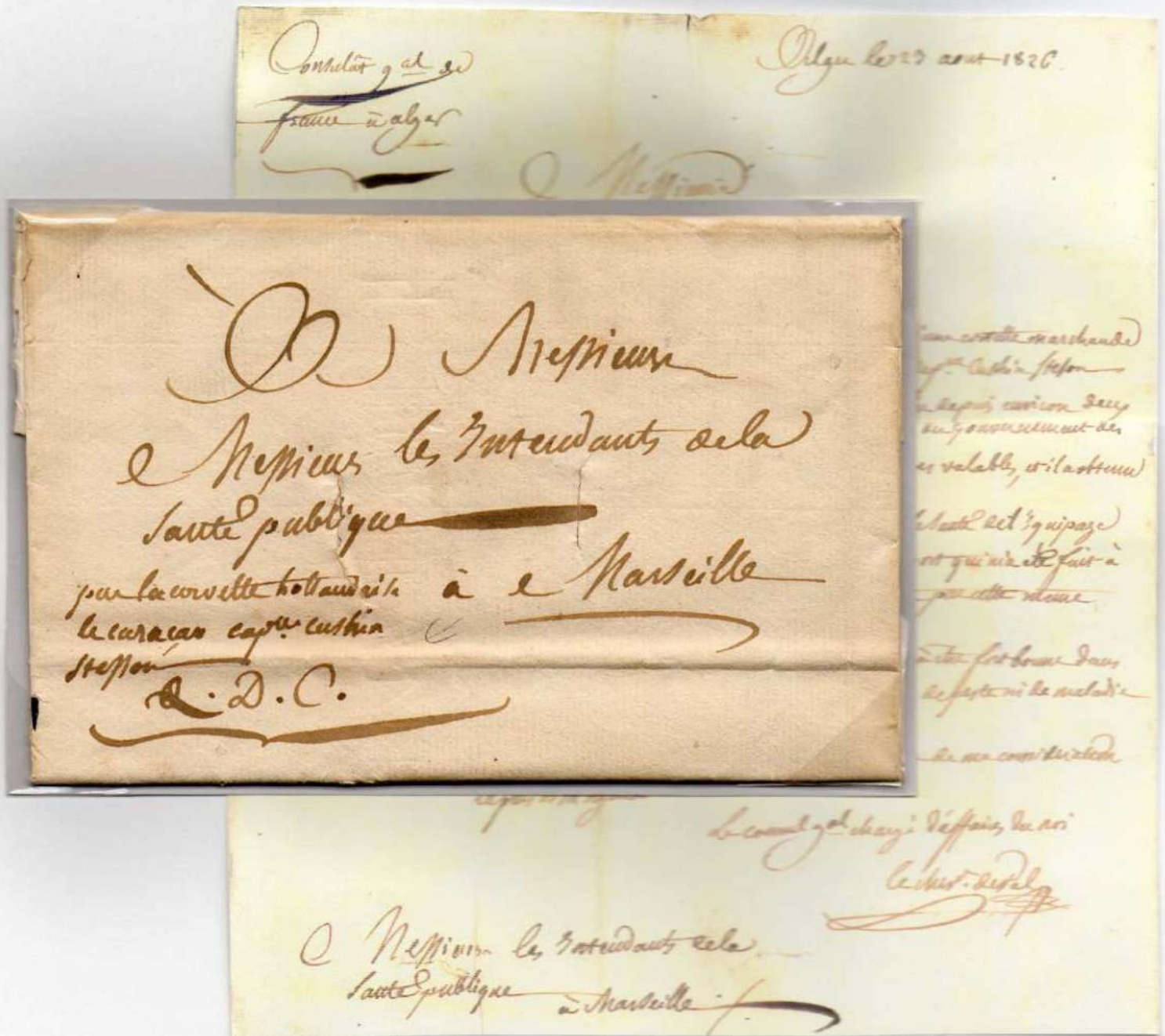
Front



## Before the French Invasion

After the French Revolution France asked Algeria to lend wheat and cash. Over time, the debt grew to at least 18 million francs. The French unilaterally reduced the debt to 7 million francs (without payment) in 1819. In 1827 the Turkish Dey of Alger, Hussein Pasha, and Duval, the French Consul, reached an impasse that ended with Hussein swatting Duval with a feather. France blockaded Alger for the next three years.

## Consular Mail



Alger to Marseille, France, August 27, 1826

Letter from Consul Duval to Sanitary Commission sent via Dutch corvette. No postal markings.

Ship had been seized by Barbary pirates. Duval advises that ship's papers are in order.

Contents reduced.



## The French Invasion

On June 14, 1830, the French landed about 34,000 troops at Sidi-Ferruch, just west of Alger. Within a few days the army had mail service and special markings. The principal cancels on military mail were three-line handstamps. These were assigned to five post offices, using letters "A" through "E" to distinguish the offices, as the French extended their occupation.

Camp du Sidi-Kalif to  
St. Germain-en-Laye,  
France, June 19,  
1830

First date of use, five  
days after disembarking.

Letter "A" assigned to  
Alger after July 5 capture.

Reverse – "BANLIEUE"  
(suburbs) and CDS transit  
marks, St. Germain  
receipt mark and rural  
carrier star mark.



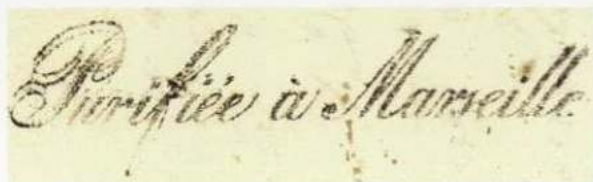
This camp was about 15 km west of Alger, ½ the distance from Sidi-Ferruch.



Bône to Paris,  
France, March 24,  
1833

Letter "B" used at  
Bône from 1832 to  
early 1836.

Ten décimes is letter  
rate up to 7-½ grams  
for letters traveling  
between 600 and 750  
km.



Reverse – Marseille disinfection mark, Type 1



## Military Mail Service

A second expedition left Toulon in 1833 and occupied Bougie, about 150 miles east of Alger, in October 1833. The Bey of Oran requested a French presence in January 1831, but the city was not officially claimed for France until August 17.

## Three-line cancels

Bougie to Le Beausset, France,  
March 18, 1835

"C" mark used at Bougie until July  
1836.



Two décimes is single rate (letters to 7½ grams) traveling less than 40 kilometers.

Camp near Alger to Paris,  
France, August 13, 1830

Reverse – CDS receipt mark.

Letter "D" used at Alger from  
August 5 to September 6, 1830,  
possibly later.

Rarest of the three-line cancels.



Oran to Grenoble, France,  
January 22, 1834

Letter "E" used at Oran from 1832 to  
1835. Type face is slightly smaller  
than other military cancels.



Six décimes is single letter rate for letters traveling 220 to 300 km.



## Military Mail Service

## Three-line cancels

While some markings appeared regularly in blue, at Alger only two such items are known.



Alger local letter, April 1, 1832

Only reported blue cachet.

Manuscript "2" décimes for single weight letters delivered within "Algeria." Intra-commune rate effective 1 Germinal, an VIII (March 22, 1800).



Alger to Aunot (Auneau), France, February 8, 1831

Only reported blue "10" handstamp from Algeria.

Metal handstamps often used in offices with high mail volume.



## Military Mail Service

Senders could prepay postage if they desired. To indicate prepayment the cancel included a fourth line "P.P." In addition, the postal clerk made a diagonal stroke or "X" across the face of the letter and rated the letter on the reverse. Four-line cancels are known with A, B, C and E, used from 1832 to 1835 ("C" to 1836).

## Four-line cancels

Alger to le Monastier, France,  
October 14, 1831



Fourth line "P.P." indicates postage was prepaid by sender.

Manuscript "25c" special prepaid rate for letters sent to soldiers effective February 9, 1810. Rate not based on distance.

Second of two types of Marseille disinfection marking used on this letter.

Personal letter to soldier's father discussing business matters, soldier's life and Turkish tobacco.



Bône to Ajaccio,  
Corsica,  
April 13, 1835

Reverse – Ajaccio receipt  
mark, m/s "2" décimes  
postage.

Writer requests proof of his  
mother's marriage to  
establish his legitimate birth.



Bougie to Toulon,  
France  
August 11, 1834

Reverse – Toulon receipt  
mark, m/s "2" décimes  
postage.

Rarest of the four-line  
cancels.

Oran to  
Marseille, France,  
November 9, 1835

Letter requests search for  
lost belongings, attested by  
Mayor of Oran. No  
postage required – treated  
as official mail.





## Military Mail Service

## Other markings, usages

Two other unusual markings during the time of military mail service. Both the writers and the postal system had to make do with what was at hand.



Alger to Marseille,  
France, September 15,  
1832

M/s "ar D'afrique" in lieu of  
usual military marking.  
Pierced for disinfection.

M/s "11" décimes collected  
at destination.

Letter written on official Sardinia consular office stationery. Reports death of revolutionary Doria and the perfect tranquility of the Arabs.

Bône to St-Martin-  
d'Estréaux, France,  
September 29, 1832

"B" cancel used as  
franchise marking. M/s  
"X" across face indicated  
postage not required –  
addressed to Post Office  
Director.



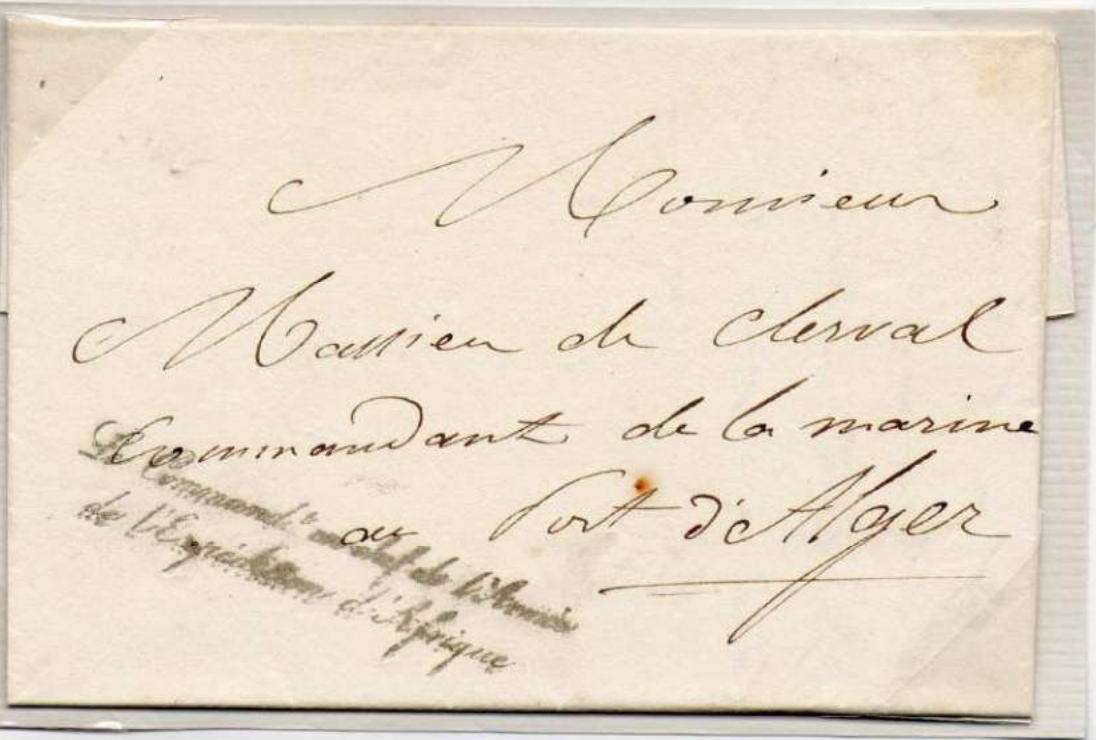
Writer is soldier telling of his boredom under the pretty sky and bright sun.



## Military Mail Service

## Free franks

Over time other special markings appeared. For example, the general in command of the North African forces used his own handstamp on official mail. Official letters were sent without charge. The French military was busy suppressing the rebellion led by Abd-el-Kader that began as a result of the invasion and pacifying the occupied territory.



Monsieur  
Marsien de Clerval  
Commandant de la marine  
Port d'Alger  
Commandant en chef de l'Armée  
de l'Exécution d'Afrique

Alger local letter,  
January 25, 1831

Handstamp used by  
Lieutenant-General  
Clauzel, commander of  
expeditionary force, in  
1830 and 1831.

Official business free frank. Note to naval commander asking if a ship will be ready the next day to depart for Oran.

Alger to Marseille,  
France, March 5,  
1832

Mark of major  
general commanding  
occupation force.

Disinfected at  
Marseille.



Messieurs  
Les Membres de l'Intendance  
Sanitaire de Marseille

Official business advising that a quarantine hospital is now complete.



<p>Numéro d'ordre au compte 50 des mandats payés.</p> <p>[ 116 ]</p> <p>Apposer ci-dessous le timbre du bureau qui a payé le présent mandat.</p> <p><b>A</b></p> <p><b>ARMÉE EXPÉDITIONNAIRE</b></p> <p><b>D'AFRIQUE</b></p> <p><b>P. P.</b></p>	<p><i>EXTRAIT de l'Instruction générale des Postes. (Service des articles d'argent.)</i></p> <p>§ I.</p> <p>Les mandats des Directeurs des postes pour articles d'argent de <i>deux cents francs et au-dessous</i> sont payables à vue dans tous les bureaux de poste du Royaume et des armées, et aux caisses des trésoriers de la marine dans les colonies (ces dernières pour des militaires et marins seulement).</p> <p>§ II.</p> <p>Les mandats des Directeurs des postes pour articles <i>au-dessus de deux cents francs</i> sont aussi payables dans toutes les caisses des préposés ci-dessus désignés, mais sur autorisation de l'Administration.</p> <p>§ III.</p> <p>Les mandats des Directeurs des postes sont payables à partir du jour du versement des fonds, savoir :</p> <p>1° Pendant <i>un an</i>, les mandats délivrés au nom de militaires et marins de tous grades employés hors d'Europe;</p> <p>2° Pendant <i>six mois</i>, les mandats délivrés au nom de militaires et marins de tous grades employés en Europe;</p> <p>3° Pendant <i>deux mois</i>, les mandats délivrés au nom de particuliers.</p>
<p>Payé à <i>Alger</i> le <i>24 février 1831</i> Pour acquit<sup>(1)</sup></p> <p><i>Doit se verser à</i></p> <p><i>67</i></p>	<p><i>Loi du 31 janvier 1833.</i></p> <p>ART. 1<sup>er</sup>. Seront définitivement acquises à l'Etat les sommes versées aux caisses des agents des postes, pour être remises à destination et dont le remboursement n'aura pas été réclamé par les ayant-droit, dans un délai de huit années à partir du jour du versement des fonds.</p> <p>Les délais pour les versements faits antérieurement à la promulgation de la présente loi courent à partir de cette promulgation.</p> <p>ART. 2. Les dispositions ci-dessus seront insérées dans les récépissés délivrés au public par les bureaux de poste.</p> <p>(1) Indépendamment de cet acquit la partie prenante devra signer une seconde fois sur le registre n° 17. — Les vagueuestres et facteurs indiqueront leurs qualités.</p>

Money order issued at Martres, France, January 29, 1834

Martres CDS applied when issued. "A" cancel applied at Alger, February 24, 1834, when money order was redeemed. Thirty-five centimes revenue tax paid by purchaser.

Postal money order for 100 francs payable to a soldier in the 67th regiment of the  
second line.

Front

*Le Directeur au bureau des Postes*  
*Jourdan*  
*Colin*  
*Gaudet*

(N° 3. Coq. 62 bis.) MANDAT DES DIRECTEURS DES POSTES. (a) SOMME VERSÉE F. (b) 100

ADMINISTRATION DES POSTES. BUREAU d' *Marthe* DÉPARTEMENT de *La Gironde*

SERVICE DES ARTICLES D'ARGENT.

Le Directeur des postes soussigné déclare que M. *Dubois* demeurant à *Cayla* a versé à sa caisse la somme de (c) *cent francs* pour être payée à M. *Jourdan* — au *6<sup>e</sup> regt* — (d) *Le ligueur de 3<sup>e</sup> classe* à (e) *Caulan* ou dans tout autre bureau de poste de l'intérieur ou des armées sur la présentation du présent mandat.

A *Marthe* le *29 janvier* mil huit cent trente quatre Le Directeur des postes, *Rouge*

(a) Ce mandat est soumis en timbre à 35 centimes. Il ne peut être employé que pour des versements au-dessus de 25 fr. francs. (b) Ecrire la somme en chiffres. (c) Ecrire la somme en toutes lettres au commencement des lettres. (d) Indiquer la qualité du destinataire. Si c'est un militaire, désigner l'armée, le numéro du régiment, le bataillon, l'escadron ou la compagnie; en temps de guerre, l'armée, le corps d'armée et la division; s'il est marin, désigner le bâtiment et l'escadre. (e) Indiquer le lieu de destination.



## Military Mail Service

## Forwarded mail

Due letters required an accounting at each post office so that each received its portion of the fee. *Déboursé* mark used for accounting between post offices when mail was forwarded. Forwarded mail *to* military in Algeria is much scarcer than forwarded mail *from* Algeria.



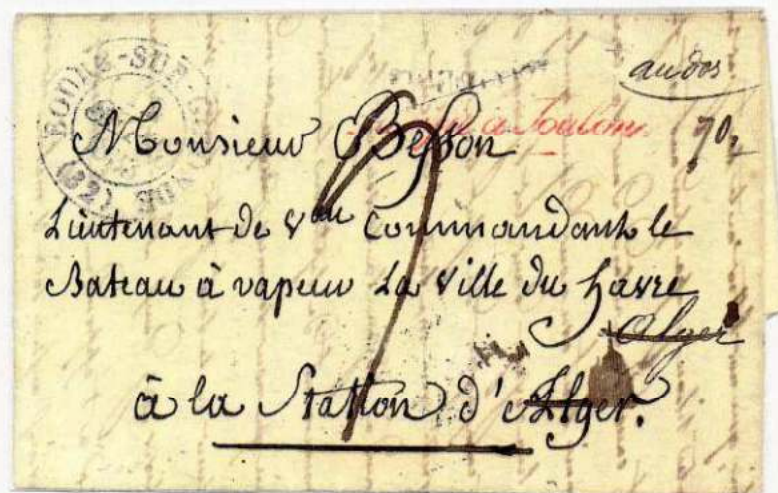
Bourg-sur-Gironde, France to Alger, September 12, 1833

Addressed to naval officer aboard the steamship "La Ville du Havre" at Alger. Disinfection mark applied at Toulon on return from Alger. M/S "*au dos*" at upper right is to see back of letter.

Reverse – Alger "A" cancel used as déboursé mark, m/s forwarding to Toulon, Toulon receipt marks dated October 16 and November 27.

Nine décimes is single letter rate for distances between 500 and 600 km.

Front



Personal letter from two different writers catching officer up on news from home.





Neuchâtel, Switzerland to Bône, Algeria, January 20, 1834

Blue Neuchâtel CDS. "2" rappen due Switzerland. Boxed "Suisse par Pontarlier" applied at exchange office. Also accounting mark "LN. 5½ K" (kreuzers) due to Neuchâtel.

Addressed to Bône ("Armée d'Afrique") and returned to Paris. Rated "10" décimes due. Notations at upper right and lower left are to see back of letter.

Reverse – "B" cancel used as déboursé accounting mark at Bône, m/s forwarding to Paris, blue Paris CDS receipt mark.



Front



## Military Mail Service

## Forwarded mail

Forwarded mail required handling at each office, and sometimes additional accounting.



Oran to Gray,  
France,  
June 17, 1832

"E" mark applied at Oran. Rated "8" décimes due (center of envelope). Re-rated "14" décimes, to include actual distance traveled from Oran to Gray to Fontenay-le-Comte. Re-rated again to "8" décimes (blue) and again "8" décimes in black at lower left. Oval "ID" is fee for rural delivery.

Reverse – Arrived at Gray, July 10. Forwarded from Gray on July 11. CDS transit mark applied July 15. Arrived at Fontenay-le-Comte on July 16. CDS transit mark applied in red July 18. Déboursé mark applied at Pau in red (July 18?). CDS transit mark applied July 20, also m/s notation that postage is paid (between offices). Pau transit mark (red) applied July 22, Oleron-en-Bearn receipt mark applied July 22.



DÉB. 64  
PAU

Reverse

Letter from officer  
updating his former  
leader on regimental  
activities.



## Military Mail Service

## Forwarded mail

Prepaid letters also required accounting when forwarded. Red "DÉBOURSÉS/CHAMBRE DES DÉPUTÉS" applied at forwarding post office along with forwarding address.



Mustapha to Paris, France, March 11, 1833

Prepaid letter indicated by "P.P." and manuscript "X" across face of letter.  
Oval "A.E.D." (*Affranchi Etranger Destination*) confirms prepayment,  
probably applied at Lyon.

Reverse – M/s "10" décimes paid by sender, rate for letters traveling 600 to 750  
kilometers. Disinfection mark applied at Marseille.

Officer requests uncle's help for promotion to captain. Uncle is member of Chamber of Deputies.



## Military mail service

There were a few Italians and other Europeans in Algeria at this time, some serving in the military and even fewer civilians. French military mails accepted letters intended for foreign addressees.

## Foreign destinations

Alger to Bologna,  
Romagna,  
November 30, 1831

Manuscript rating "42½"  
centesimi, corrected to "43"  
(at Nice?). Transit mark  
"NIZZA di MARE" applied at  
Nice (in Sardinia at this time).

Reverse – Marseille  
disinfection and Bologna  
receipt marks.

Personal letter to Italian contessa describing street scenes in Algiers, especially the innumerable rats.

Alger to Livorno,  
Tuscany,  
May 1833

Manuscript "30"  
centesimi collected at  
destination. Disinfected  
at Toulon. "T·E"  
(Transito Estero) and  
"NIZZA di MARE" transit  
marks.

Reverse – Livorno  
disinfection marking and  
three line receipt mark.



Reinforced.



Mostaganem li 6. majo 1835.

Illustrissimo Signore Conte.

Col Repugnanza vado a notificarvi il triste caso di uno mio più grande  
Benefattore, il quale  
era anche Vostra On.  
un Brigantino di 18  
to. e comandato da  
nome Robin Hood.  
fra quali anche io  
fatto di Gibralta

→ Mostaganem  
All' Illustrissimo  
Signore Carlo Conte Vojkovich & X.  
Porto. in Zagabria  
per Marselle in  
la Trieste Croatia

Mostaganem to Zagreb, Croatia, May 6, 1835

Prepayment indicated by fourth line "P.P." and m/s "X" across face of letter.

Slit for disinfection. Prepaid to only to Marseille.

M/s "18" kreuzers(?) additional postage collected at destination.

Reverse – Rate calculation (3 décimes postage plus 1 décime *voie de mer*), "*Purifiée à Marseille*" and "AGRAN" receipt mark.

Blue four-line mark is much less common than black mark. Note reference to "Robin Hood" in sixth line of letter.



سبحانك يا ذا الجلال والإكرام

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

توصل ان مشا الله تعالى بيه الشيخ اوليه و اوليه  
ورابعه نعت بيه تبليغ بلخير امين امين

au Scheik Oulid Nebaa à Bougie.

ق قلبه الى كوكبا  
وكنى ترمي كنج الى  
والا انهم المذكر  
المو زكوع رقتا  
تحقق عنرا وعزرا  
بلا بين بلا امر يق  
ع الرحا لاه المن  
اتفا خزر شوا  
تم الصا رف واش  
لهم الخوا

الحمد لله  
عبد الرحمن بن  
عبد الرحمن بن  
عبد الرحمن بن  
عبد الرحمن بن

وحي خالص مثل عليك لفرع من اهل البيت  
فريد شاهد بفضله على غير وارثه وارثه توفيقه ونباهه

Hussein Pasha was Dey of Alger who insulted Consul Deval, prompting French invasion.  
Letter introduces courier, who has real message.



## Civilian Mail Begins

## Large CDSs

In July 1834 the occupied territory was put under the authority of a military governor. In September the postal service was assigned to civilian authority. The first visible result was the replacement of the straight line cancels with circular date stamps similar to those used in France. In 1835 there were still only four French post offices. Mail disinfection continued, but the marks were more often on the back of the letter.



Alger to Carpentras,  
France, December 22,  
1836

New boxed "P.P." mark  
and diagonal pen stroke  
indicate postage  
prepayment.

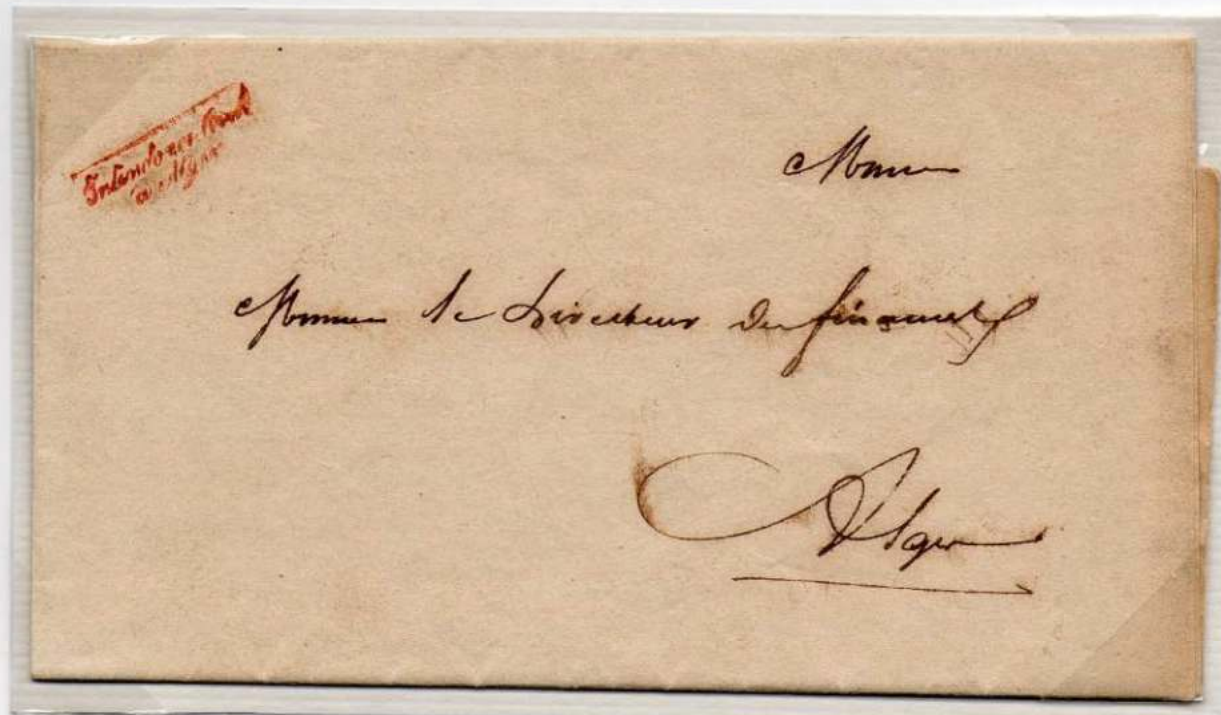
Reverse – M/s "6" décimes  
and Carpentras receipt  
CDS.

CDS in use from mid-1835 to May 1839. Letter asks assistance to settle debt.

The French established other civilian authorities as well, including a legal system modeled on France itself.

Alger local use,  
June 29, 1836

Official marking of  
civilian court, no  
postage required.



Letter (on official letterhead) directs the civilian government finance director to garnish payments to an Italian resident to cover a debt guarantee.



## Civilian Mail Begins

## Large CDSs

In 1828 France had established a 1 décime *voie de mer* (ship fee) for letters to and from Corsica. As part of creating the civilian mail service in Algeria, the *voie de mer* became effective for letters from Algeria to other countries across the Mediterranean Sea.



Bône to Ajaccio,  
Corsica, June 18, 1837

M/s "3" décimes paid  
single rate plus *voie de mer*.

Reverse – Red Toulon  
disinfection mark and  
Ajaccio receipt mark.

CDS in use from early 1836 to January 1839.

The Bougie marking is an anomaly. The town name is the Italian spelling, "BUGIE." The abbreviation of "Afrique" is misspelled "ARF." The marking is known only in blue for the first two years of use. No one has found any records that can explain any of these unusual circumstances at Bougie.

Bougie to Aix,  
France, February  
23, 1836

Earliest known use.

Reverse – Aix large  
CDS.



Commercial letter ordering large quantities of supplies including turpentine.



*A Madame  
Madame Wartet de St. Marsault  
Rue St. Guillaume N° 11  
Vlg. St. Germain  
à Paris.*



Oran to Paris,  
France, January 1,  
1836 (1837)

The postal clerk did  
not change the year to  
1837.

Reverse – Blue Paris  
receipt mark dated  
January 1837.

CDS in use from September 1836 to March 1853.

The French occupied Constantine late in 1837 after a fierce battle. This CDS was only used for about 10 months in 1838 and 1839. It is by far the rarest of the five large CDSs.

Constantine to  
Bône, May 18,  
1838

M/s "2" décime basic  
letter rate.

Reverse – Bône large  
CDS.



Personal letter to fellow officer in engineer regiment.





Alger to Verviers, Belgium, August 18, 1838

Manuscript "18" décimes is 17 décimes for letters weighing  $7\frac{1}{2}$  to 10 grams travelling 750 to 900 km plus one décime *voie de mer*.

Reverse – Black Toulon transit mark and "Purifiée à Toulon" in black, blue Paris transit mark, blue "**FRANCE PAR QUIEVRAIN/BRUXELLES**" transit mark and faint red Verviers receipt mark.



Reverse



## Algeria Joins France

## Small CDSs

There is no official document naming "Algeria." However, in 1839 we see the word "ALGERIE" appear in hand stamps. An ordinance dated August 21, 1839 put Algerian mail service under the French Treasury, a step on the way to treating Algeria as part of France itself.



Alger to Paris,  
France, May 25,  
1839

Unusual use of both  
large and small CDS.  
Official mail, free frank;  
m/s "X" on face  
indicates no postage due

Latest known use of large CDS at Alger; earliest Alger small CDS is about a month before.

Constantine to  
Beaune, France,  
August 27, 1839

Reverse – Black Toulon  
and Lyon transit marks  
and "PURIFIÉE A  
TOULON" in black,  
Beaune receipt mark.



Earliest known use of small CDS at Constantine.



## Recettes

## Small CDSs

The French opened about 15 more *recettes* (first class post offices) in the ten years before stamps appeared. Most had ordinary CDS (double circle) markings and ECU dates several years after the offices opened. At a few offices, shown on the next few pages, the markings were unusual.



Bône to Montpellier,  
France,  
June 30, 1840

CDS and m/s "6" décimes  
applied at Bône.

Rate is for letters up to 7-½  
grams traveling 150 to  
220 kilometers plus one  
décime *voie de mer*.

The postal clerk apparently  
used the four digit year  
date from the large CDS.  
This only happened in Bône  
and only in 1840.

Tlemcen to  
Coulommiers, France,  
June 21, 1843

CDS applied at Tlemcen.

Earliest known use. Only  
CDS with "ALGERIE" at top,  
"TLEMCEN" at bottom.  
Used until about 1853.



Philippeville to  
Montpellier, France,  
August 12, 1839

CDS and m/s "6" décimes  
applied at Philippeville.



The French created Philippeville in 1838 as a port about 50 miles north of Constantine. This slightly smaller CDS with no inner ring was used only at Philippeville, and only from May 1839 to January 1844.



## **Kecettes**

## **Small CDSS**

As the French occupied more of Algeria, they also expanded postal service. These two offices opened in early 1844. In both cases, the spelling of the name changed a few years later.



Gigelly to  
Bergerac,  
France,  
July 5, 1847

As we will see later, the name changed to Djidjeli and later on to Djidjelli.

Orleans-ville to  
Alger,  
December 7,  
1844

Reverse – m/s "2"  
décimes local rate  
for letters addressed  
within the same  
province.



Some time in late 1848 or early 1849 the French removed the hyphen and spelling became "Orleansville."



## Recettes

Commerce and government also expanded.



Oran to Paris,  
France,  
March 21, 1844

Free frank  
"Ministère des  
Finances/Directeur de  
l'Adm<sup>n</sup> des Postes"  
shows that the  
postal service is  
part of the  
Finance Ministry.

Letter written by General Martimprey (1808-1883), who spent most of his career in Algeria.

Alger to  
Lisbon,  
Portugal,  
July 25, 1844



Red "P.P."  
indicates postage  
prepaid to  
Bayonne. Blue  
"360" reis  
collected from  
addressee.

Reverse – m/s  
"7" décimes  
French portion.  
M/s forwarding  
agent notation  
and handstamp,  
Lisbon receipt  
marking (July 10).



Mailed by forwarding agent Sieveking & Co. in Marseille. Letters to Portugal could not be fully prepaid.



## Recettes

Italians had been in Algeria before the French invasion doing business and maintaining diplomatic relations with the Turks. Mail to other destinations is much scarcer in the 1840s.

## Foreign destinations

Alger to  
Carlskrona,  
Sweden,  
August 29, 1846

Red "PD" indicates  
prepayment to  
destination. "To  
Hamburg" at lower  
left.

Reverse – transit  
markings through  
Marseille, Lyon,  
Hamburg and  
Stralsund.



Rated 16 décimes – 1 décime voie de mer, 10 from Alger to Strasbourg, and 5 to Sweden.

Douéra to  
Ravenna, Papal  
States,  
August 31, 1847

VIA DI NIZZA entry  
mark added in  
Sardinia; CORRIS.a  
EST.a. DA GENOVA  
in Florence, Tuscany;  
oval foreign mail  
mark added at  
Bologna. M/s "21"  
bajocchi collected  
from recipient.



Bologna marking used 1839-1848.



## Distribution Offices

As early as 1840 the French opened a distribution post office, roughly like a second class office in the U.S. These offices received a distinctive two-line cancel with the town name above and "ALGERIE" in the second line. Mail before 1850 is rare, as is stamped mail during the period when these two-line cancels were in use. Of the seven distribution offices at this time, cancels are known from only five.

## The small villages



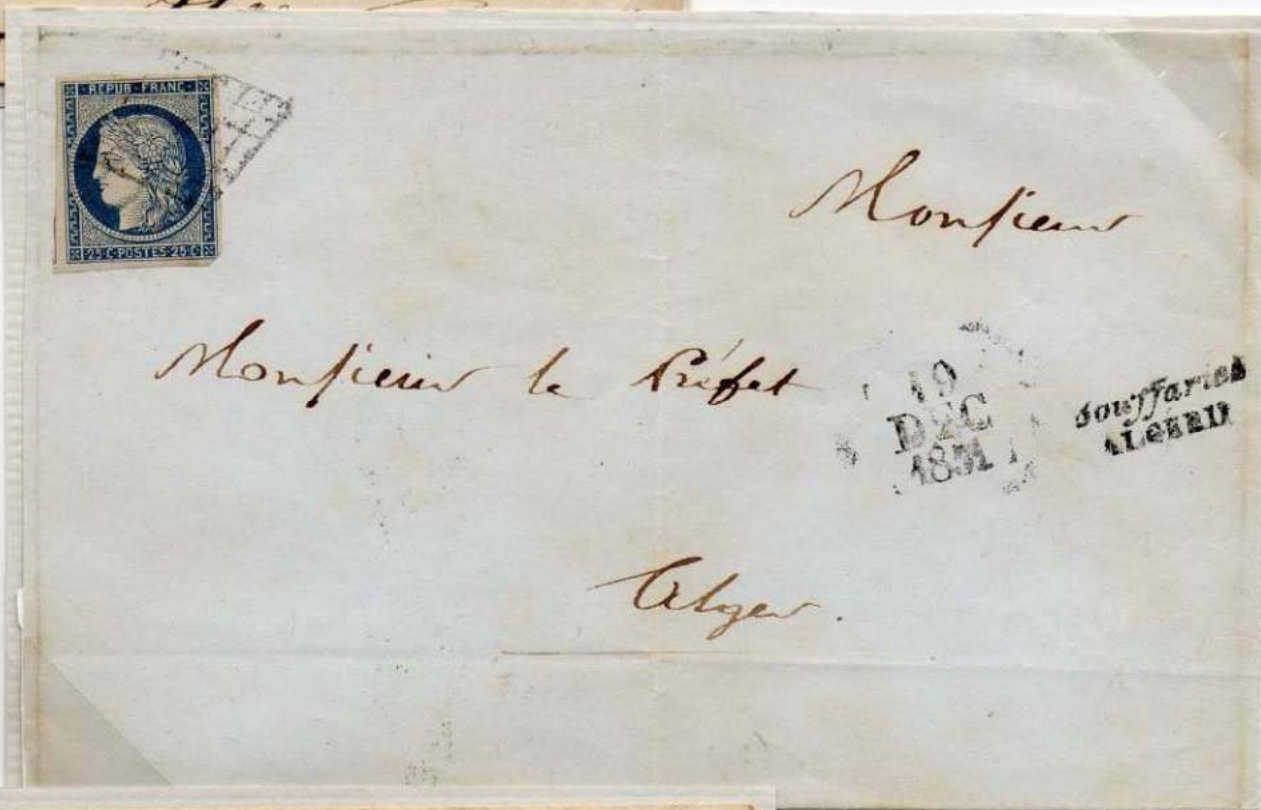
Bouffarichh to Alger, April 13, 1849

Metal handstamp "2" décimes rate. There is much more about the new rates starting in the next frame.

Bouffarichh to  
Alger,  
December 19,  
1851

There is also much more about the new stamps in the next frame.

Contents missing.



Bouffarickk to St.  
Armand, France,  
January 20, 1853

The French changed the spelling in early 1852. The hollow numeral "25" handstamp is the most common rate marking from distribution offices.



The borderless date stamp is unique to Bouffarich(k).



## Distribution Offices

## The small villages

These cancels are from the other four distribution offices, the only offices opened before 1851 from which cancels are known. Dély-Ibrahim, Bouffarick and Coléah are inland a few kilometers from Alger. Arzew and Mers-el-Kébir are coastal towns near Oran. These areas are where the French army focused its efforts to occupy the country.



Top to bottom ancillary markings:  
 (1) CDS and hollow numeral "25" due marking on letter to France.  
 (2) Douéra CDS and m/s "2" décimes due (1840 rate still in effect), "A" in circle is receipt or delivery mark applied by postman.  
 (3) "C" in circle is also postman's mark.  
 (4) Oran CDS applied en route. All – Rates calculated and marked at *recette* offices only. Distribution offices would only cancel and forward mail.

Oran was using its small CDS on all mail by now.



## 1849 – New Rates

Effective January 1, 1849, France adopted new postal rates based only on weight, not distance. At the same time they issued their first two postage stamps to prepay those rates, and distributed the stamps to Algeria as well. Prepayment was not required. Stamps were to be canceled with a diamond-shaped grille, not the CDS.

## First stamps

Batna to Alger,  
March 5, 1849

Rectangular mark  
unique to Batna. 20  
centimes Cérès paid  
postage on letters up  
to 7-½ grams  
regardless of distance  
within France.

Front

Cancel is earlier of two known uses with 1849 stamp. Batna PO opened in June 1849.

Batna to  
Paris, France,  
January 21,  
1850

1 franc Cérès  
stamp paid  
postage on  
letters weighing  
more than 15  
grams, less than  
100 grams.



Earliest reported use of this CDS at Batna. Letter is an official copy of a general's advice to use artillery before launching an infantry assault against an oasis.



## 1849 – New Rates

## First stamps

In 1850 a 40 centime stamp appeared to pay the second weight step, letters weighing between 7-½ and 15 grams. The cancels were not uniform in all offices. Médéah let its grille device fill with dirt and ink, making an unusual looking cancel. The postal clerk(s) at Oran continued to use the old style large canceler.

Front only



Alger to Lyon,  
France, May 3,  
1850

Médéah to Senlis,  
France, June 8, 1849

Metal tampon "2"  
décimes improperly  
applied, then crossed  
out.



Oran to Paris,  
France,  
December  
20, 1849



## 1850 – More changes

## First stamps

Effective July 1, 1850, the letter rate increased to 25 centimes and a new stamp appeared the same day. Later in 1850 France issued a 10 centimes stamp to pay the local letter rate that had been in effect since April 1830.



Alger to Lyon,  
France, May 15,  
1851

M/s notation tying  
stamps indicates  
second weight class  
(15 grams)  
exceeded.  
Additional 5  
décimes due from  
addressee.

Oran to  
Karguentah  
("suburb" of Oran),  
February 9, 1853

Oran used the large  
CDS for about another  
month after this.



The cancel on the stamp is a "small numeral" of which we will see much more in a few pages. The writer expresses his regrets that illness prevents him from visiting the recipient.



## 1850 – More changes

## Registered service

Registered mail service was available in Paris starting in 1829. The 1849 rate revisions extended this service and required double postage and obligatory prepayment. The July 1, 1850 rates reduced the registration fee to 25 centimes and removed the prepayment requirement.



Oran to Amboise, France, June 25, 1851

Type R2 CDS, boxed "R," m/s "no. 149" and "75<sup>CS</sup>" applied at Oran.  
Reverse – M/s "14 g." indicating letter was in second weight class, Lyon and Orléans transit marks.

Postage	50 centimes
Registry fee	<u>25 centimes</u>
Total	75 centimes

Rates effective July 1, 1850.

Addressed to an artillery captain on mission to Emir Abd-el-Kader, the leader of the Algerian resistance. In 1847 Abd-el-Kader had signed a treaty to cease resistance.



**1851**

## Foreign destinations

Along with domestic rate changes, foreign mail rates were also redesigned. Many rates depended on which nation's ships carried the letter.



Oran to Guatemala,  
February 9, 1851

Type R2 CDS, boxed  
"P.P." applied at Oran.  
British "PAID" CDS  
added at Southampton.  
"4" reales collected  
from addressee.

Reverse – M/s "15"  
décimes rate for letters  
to foreign destinations  
via England, Paris  
transit mark.

News for his family and friends, especially of health conditions, including a man who is recovering from dysentery.

Alger to Livorno,  
Tuscany, April 5,  
1851

Rated "40" quattrini or  
"8" crazie at Livorno.

Letter routed from Alger  
to Cette, Marseille and  
Briançon, France, then  
Genoa, Sardinia (red  
arrow), Cesana,  
Romagna, and finally  
Livorno. Some marks  
are on reverse.





## 1850s

Soldiers and merchants accounted for most of the mail. The French army included Spaniards, and Italians (although Italy was not yet unified). The French had quickly expanded in Alger, for example, which by the 1851 census had 34,600 Europeans (about 40% French).

## Foreign destinations

Alger to Barcelona,  
Spain, April 10, 1852

Red "6ms" (maravedies)  
postal tax for roads  
assessed at Barcelona.  
Blue "2 Rs" (reales) also  
collected from addressee.



Orleansville to  
Valencia, Spain,  
January 31, 1853

Red "2R" (reales) due  
from addressee. Blue  
"Lista" in oval indicates  
letter was on a list at  
the post office, like  
general delivery.



Letter describes poor food and difficult march to Orleansville.



Alger to  
Florence,  
Tuscany,  
September  
25, 1853

Rated "18"  
crazie due from  
addressee.

Addressed to a marquis, Chamberlain to the Grand Duke of Tuscany.



## Small Numerals

## Cérès stamps

At the beginning of 1852 the French occupation corresponded to the old Roman territory, roughly the northern third of the current area. The army was still advancing southward from the coast, occupying ever larger areas of the country. French and European settlers were never far behind. Natives were also present, often in large numbers.

On January 1, 1852 the postal administration assigned numbers to all French and Algerian post offices. In Algeria, there were now 30 offices. The January 1852 Algerian numeral cancels began with 3710 (Alger) and ended with 3739 (Tlemcen). Major postal rates remained unchanged from July 1850.



*Sidi-Bel-Abbès to Beauvais, France, May 30, 1852*

Small numeral "3736" and Type R2 CDS applied at Sidi-Bel-Abbès. M/s "16" grams and "5" décimes applied at Paris.

Reverse – Paris transit mark, Beauvais receipt mark.

One franc letter rate effective July 1, 1850 for letters between 15 and 100 grams. "16" grams at upper left indicates letter was overweight for 50 centimes rate (up to 15 grams), additional 5 décimes collected from recipient.

Cérès stamps remained in use for about nine months after the numerals appeared.



## Small Numerals

Louis Napoleon Bonaparte was elected president in December 1851, and his bust replaced Cérès on new stamps that appeared in September 1852. The legend at the top of the stamps was "REPUB. FRANC."

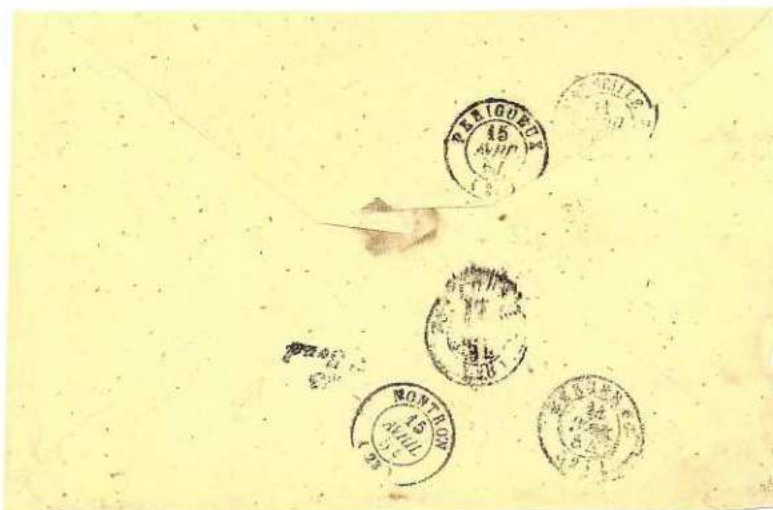
## Presidency stamps



Sidi-bel Abbès to Nontron, France, April 7, 1854

Small numeral "3736" and Type R2 CDS applied at Sidi-bel-Abbès.  
One franc rate for letters between 15 and 100 grams effective July 1, 1850.

Reverse – Marseille,  
Périgueux, Bergerac, Tour-  
Blanche and St. Saud  
(straight line) transit marks,  
Nontron receipt mark.



Late use – new stamp inscribed "Empire Franç." issued in December 1853 after Louis Napoleon declared himself emperor in November 1852.