

From Bône to Montpellier in 1840: a dive into history. How one letter can inspire much research

Sébastien Marrot
with Kenneth Nilsestuen and Michel Soulié

Introduction

This article was mostly caused by chance: the chance that the author, born and living in Montpellier, France is often wandering philatelic societies' websites for information and knowledge; that he watched a recorded presentation by Kenneth Nilsestuen at the Collectors Club of New York (Fig. 1) [1]; that Ken included a letter to Montpellier whose addressees' family names are locally famous; that Ken was enthusiastically generous with his time to let a French amateur study the unusual cancellation that this letter bears; that members of the Association philatélique de Montpellier [2] also enthusiastically encouraged the author to study French postmarks even though he was an amateur student of them.

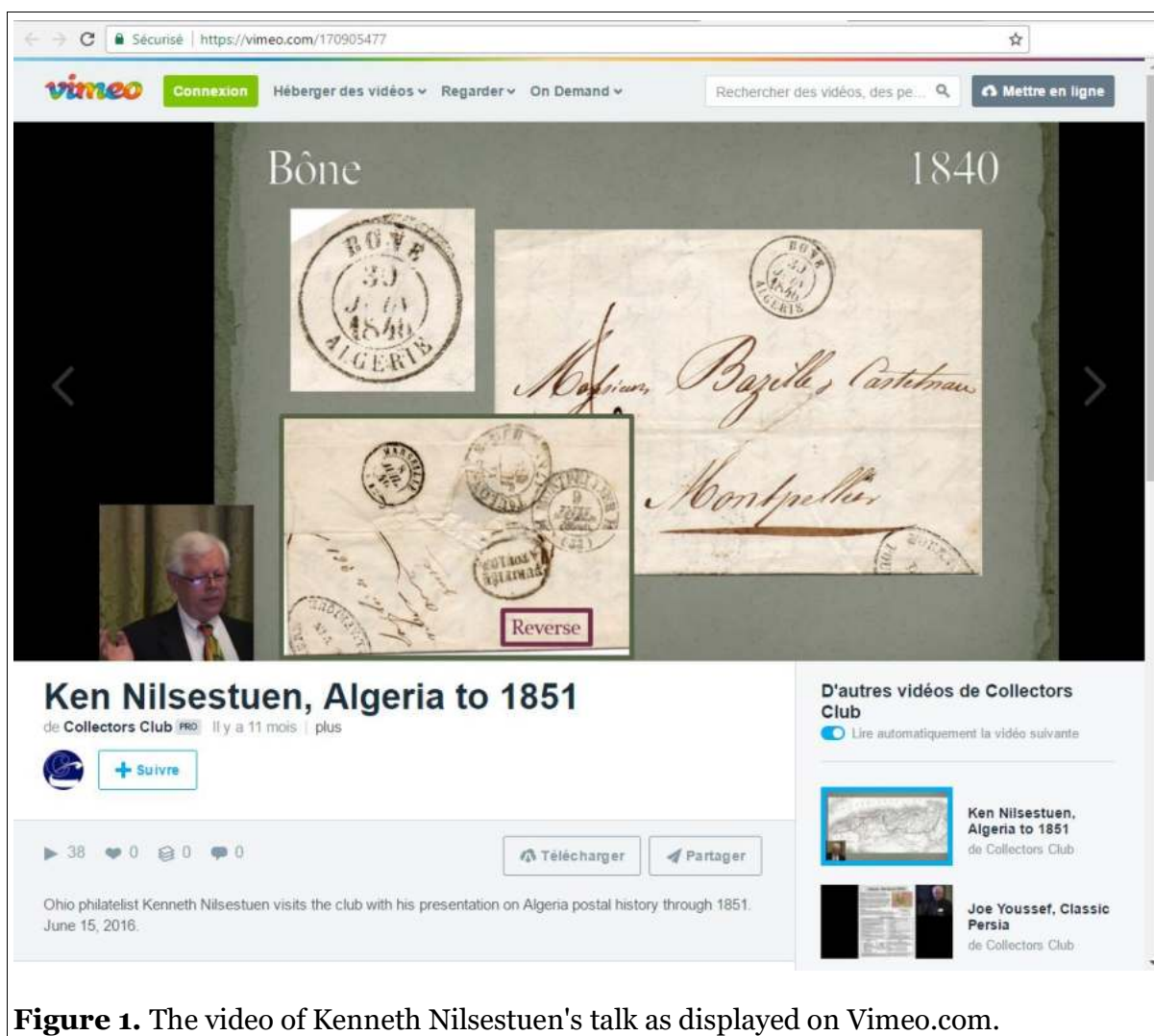


Figure 1. The video of Kenneth Nilsestuen's talk as displayed on Vimeo.com.

During his talk, "The Postal History of Algeria to 1851," Ken told the history of mail originating in Algeria [3] before and during the time of the French conquest, formation of the country and its three original *départements*, up to the time French stamps were

introduced.

Beautifully put into context with engravings and photographs, Ken's account of the various Algerian postmarks piqued my interest. While Ken was explaining an unusual cancel used in Bône in 1840, I became interested in the letter because of two locally famous addressees, Messieurs Bazille & Castelnau. Messrs. Bazille and Castelnau were from important trading families in the first part of the 19th century, but the Bazille family name reached national prominence by the success of a young impressionist painter, Frédéric Bazille, later in the century.

With Ken's kind authorization and the help of members of the Association philatélique de Montpellier, here is an article on the postal history of Bône in 1840 and on the economic, social and cultural history of 19th century Montpellier, inspired by an old letter.

A letter to Montpellier



This letter was written on 29 June 1840 by Martial Olivier in Bône and sent postage due to Messieurs Bazille and Castelnau in Montpellier, a city in southern France. (Fig. 2.)

Bône, currently known as Annaba, is located along the northeast coast of Algeria, 550 km west of Algiers and 100 km east of the Tunisian border. The French conquered Bône in March 1832, almost two years after the invasion began in June 1830. Charles X, then King of France, sent his army to Algeria partly to secure the area against Turkish piracy, and partly because the king was looking for a military victory to improve public opinion about his monarchy. Despite his efforts, the July 1830 Revolution resulted in him being deposed. His cousin, King Louis-Philippe of Orléans, and his government continued the conquest, and colonization began right away, but the military effort against rebellions lasted until 1847.

The letter was canceled in Bône June 30 and went via a traditional postal route across the Mediterranean Sea. A Toulon-sur-Mer postmark shows it arrived there, probably on 6 July.

Next to the Toulon transit marking is an oval “PURIFIÉE À TOULON” and a knife slit in the middle of the letter, both indicating it was disinfected against the plague. (Fig. 3, although the slit is more visible in Fig. 2.) [4] After disinfection the letter passed through Marseille on 8 July, arriving in Montpellier on 9 July.

The large manuscript “6” is the rate in décimes for a letter weighing up to 7-1/2 grams traveling between 220 and 300 km (on land) plus one décime *voie de mer* (by sea) for transit across the Mediterranean. The total was collected from the addressees.

A large oval marking and a few written words going around the folded page were certainly added in the offices of Messrs. Bazille and Castelnau for archival purposes: “FOURNITURE DE VIN POUR L’AFRIQUE,” or “wine supplies for Africa,” as the French conquests in Algeria were at first described.



Collection Kenneth Nilsestuen, 2016.

Fig. 3. The reverse of the Bône to Montpellier folded letter (Kenneth Nilsestuen collection).

A cancel outside the norm

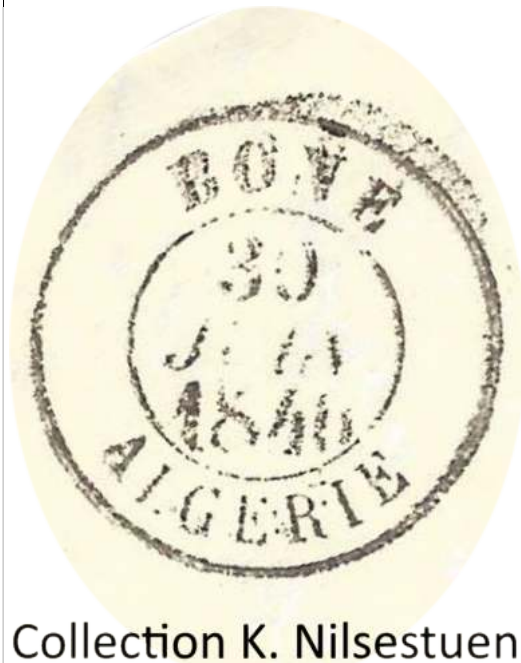


Fig. 5. An enlargement of the Bône to Montpellier cancel.

In his presentation Ken highlighted something unusual about the Bône datestamp: it has a four digit year instead of the two digit year this type of cancel should have had.

The outside ring bears the town name: “BONE / ALGERIE” and in the center is the date as “30 / JUIN / 1840.” (Fig. 5) The cancel is about 21 mm in diameter and should be a Type 15 according to Pothion’s French postmark classification or Type R2, using either the Bosc or Lambert-Nilsestuen classification system. [5] Bosc identifies this variety as Type R2A, Lambert-Nilsestuen Type R2u.

Type 15 cancels appeared in France starting in 1838, with older cancels steadily replaced after that. On the letter in Figure 1 one can see a Type 15 Marseille marking while the Toulon and Montpellier are the older large cancels, Pothion’s Type 14.

In Algerian post offices Pothion Type 14 cancels (used from 1836 to 1839) were inscribed “(POSS. D’AFR.)” - Possessions in Africa - in place of the *département* number used in French cancels. As a result, Bosc and Lambert-Nilsestuen refer to these as Type R1. In Algeria the Type 15 cancel was introduced with “ALGERIE” in place of the number or name of the *département*, hence Bosc and Lambert-Nilsestuen Type R2. (Fig. 6)

Recettes



R1 Double cercle de 25 mm et de 15½ mm (marge d'erreur, ±½ mm). Ville en haut; "(POSS. D'AFR.)" en bas (sauf Bugie, avec "ARF."). Utilisé de 1835 à 1840, sauf à Oran où il fut utilisé jusqu'en 1855.

Double circle, 25 and 15½ mm diameters (margin of error, ±½ mm). Post office at top, "(POSS. D'AFR.)" at bottom (except Bugie, misspelled "ARF."). Used from 1835 to 1840 except Oran, where it was used to 1855.



R2 Double cercle de 20½ mm et de 12 mm (marge d'erreur, ±½ mm). Ville en haut, "ALGERIE" en bas. Utilisé à partir de 1839.

Double circle, 20½ mm and 12 mm diameters (±½ mm). Post office at top, "ALGERIE" at bottom. First used in 1839.



R2u Comme R2, sauf le millésime qui est à quatre chiffres comme type R1. Connu seulement en 1840.

Same as R2, but year is in four digits like type R1. Known only in 1840.

Fig 6. Excerpt from *The Lambert-Nilsestuen Classification of the Date Stamps of Algeria 1835-1962*, 1999 (courtesy of Kenneth Nilsestuen).



Fig 6. Four Bône cancels in Kenneth Nilsestuen's collection. Upper line: type 14/R1 "(Poss. D'Afrique)" of 18 June 1837 and 19 May 1838. Lower line: type 15/R2 smaller and 2-digit year of 6 December 1853 and 15 April 1862.

But the Bône datestamp has a complete year, "1840," whereas a Type R2 cancel shows only the last two digits of the year. Indeed, the lower left corner of the "1" and the lower right corner of the "0" seem masked by the limit of the circle.

A second letter from Bone.

During my research I received the help of Michel Soulié, president of the Association philatélique de Montpellier. He searched his French postmark collection and found another letter from Bône dated the same day (Fig. 7)!



This postage-paid letter is also dated 29 June 1840 and canceled the next day in Bône. It presents the same signs of transit and purification in Toulon (although the date stamp is quite unreadable). It reached its destination on 10 July (possibly 16 July?) in Perpignan, on the southern tip of France.

Marked “P.P.” on the front to indicate that postage was prepaid, the seven décime rate was therefore marked on the reverse. This rate was for a letter again weighing less than 7-1/2 grams traveling between 300 and 400 km, plus the one décime *voie de mer*.

The lower part of the Bône cancel is hard to read because of the poor strike compared to Figure 1. However, the measurements and angles of both cancels seem to match (Fig. 8).

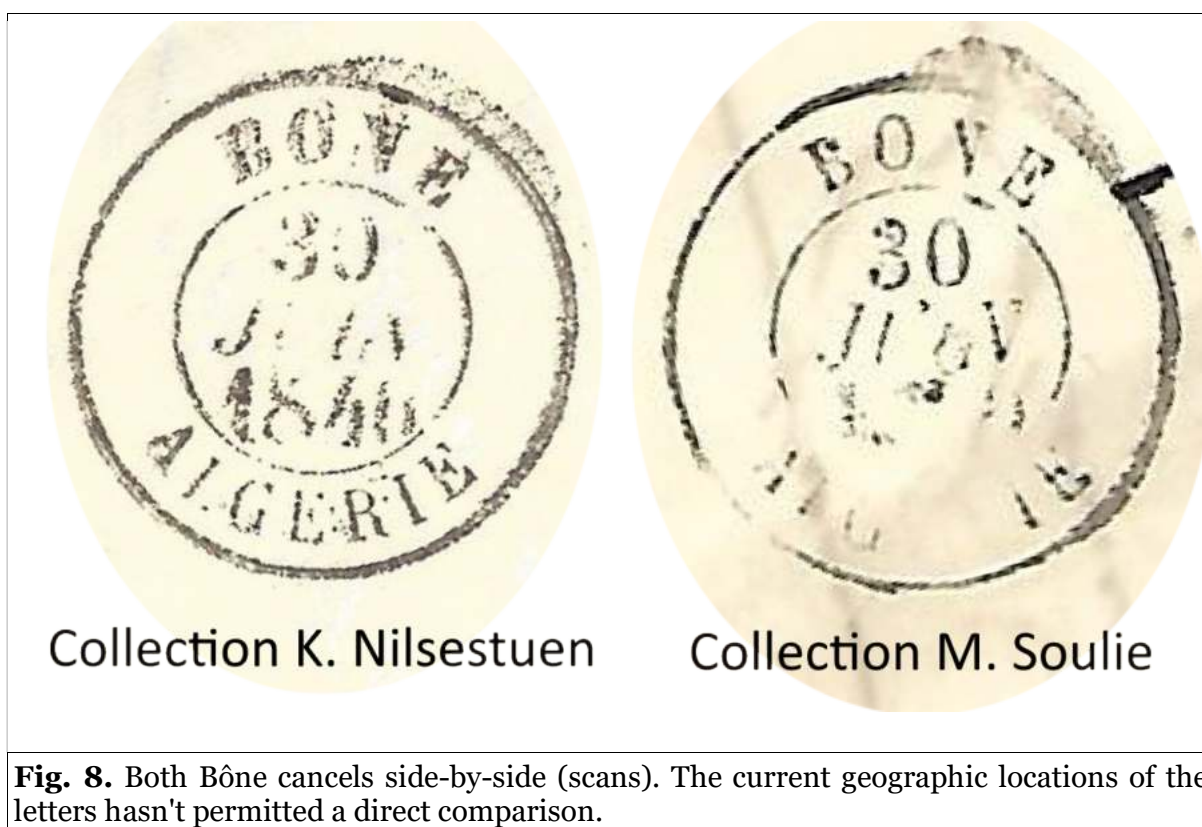


Fig. 8. Both Bône cancels side-by-side (scans). The current geographic locations of the letters hasn't permitted a direct comparison.

Other examples?

The seminal work on Algerian postal markings is *Catalogue des Marques Postales & Oblitérations d'Algérie 1830-1876*, by Ch. ab der Halden and E. H. de Beaufond, (Les Éditions E. H. de Beaufond, Paris 1949). However, this work does not identify or include an illustration of the four-digit Type R2A / R2u cancel used in Bône. Thus, we are disappointed by that text in our search for another example.

However, Claude Bosc did include an illustrated example in his catalogue. Interestingly, his cancel is dated “14 / MARS / 1848”! Is it possible that M. Bosc's example was really 1840, and the last digit was deformed as a result of forcing it into the Type R2 device – or so poorly struck that Bosc interpreted the year as 1848? Ken thinks this is likely, since the use of a non-standard cancel nine years after Type R2 cancels were adopted would be very unlikely. Michel has also found a letter canceled in Bône on 6 October 1848 with a two digit year date. Finally, the postmaster in Bône would have had to have a four-digit year date block for 1848. Since Type R1 cancels were replaced in 1839 and 1840, this also seems very unlikely. [6]

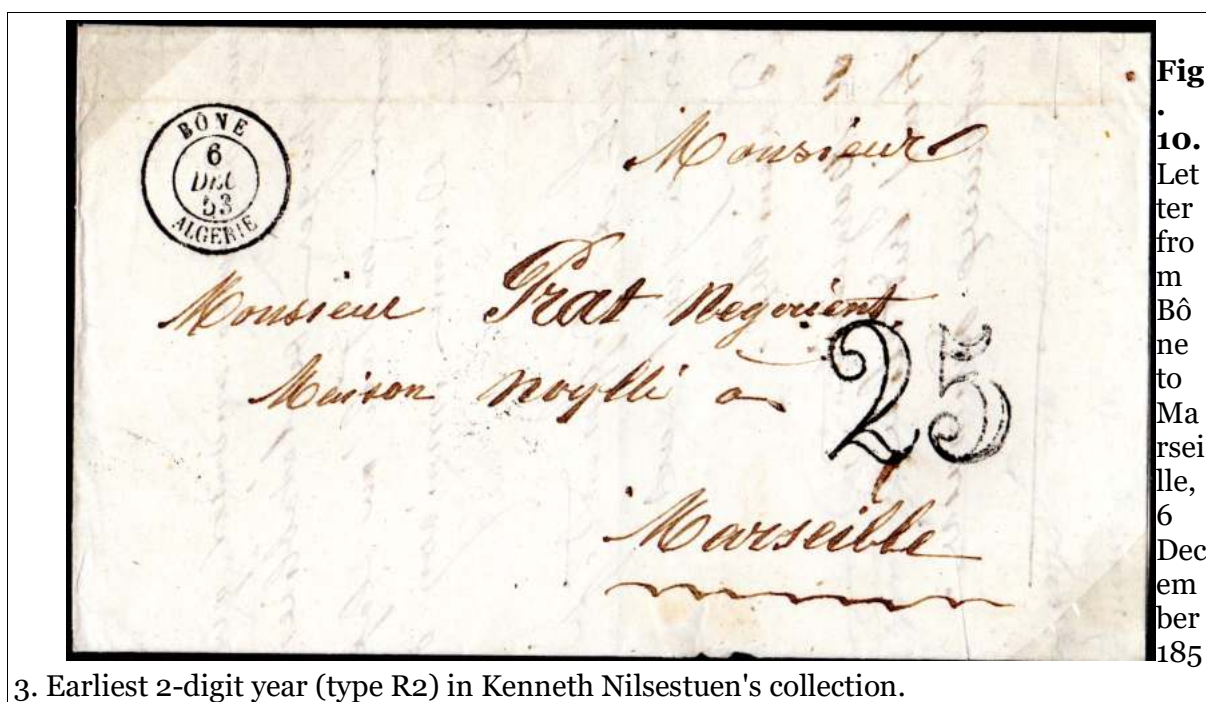
What happened in the Bône post office in 1840?

Ken Nilsestuen's hypothesis came from a discussion many years ago with Laurence Lambert, another American student of Algerian postal markings. As noted above, Ken and Laurence together wrote a monograph on the subject published in 1999 [7].

First point: They found the four-digit small postmarks only in Bône and only during 1840. [8] Earlier Bône cancels in Ken's collection are type R1 "(Poss. D'Afr.)" datestamps. (Fig. 6) The earliest two-digit year (type R2) on a Bône cancel in Michel's collection is to Marseille, 6 October 1848 (Fig. 9), and in Ken's collection is to Marseille, 6 December 1853 (Fig. 6 and 10).



Fig. 9. Letter from Bône to Marseille, 6 December 1849. Earliest 2-digit year (type R2) in Michel Soulié's collection.



3. Earliest 2-digit year (type R2) in Kenneth Nilsestuen's collection.

Second point: On the type R1 large datestamps they found used in Algiers, Bône, Bougie, Constantine and Oran from 1836 to 1838, the four-digit year is 8 mm long, the same as the “1840” on the Bône cancel.

His hypothesis: The problem happened when the postmaster in Bône received the new canceling materials, that is, the metal handstamp, the numbers and month blocks and the tools to fix them all together. In the past there were also year blocks, but not this time. So perhaps he didn't understand that the year should be two digits? Perhaps he expected to receive the year blocks to correct the oversight? He found a solution by forcing the “1840” from the Type R1 cancel into his new Type R2 device. Then, after a period yet to be determined, he adopted (by 1841?) the new two digit system. Did he learn this by observing incoming mail with Type 15 and Type R2 cancels? Did he communicate with other postmasters in Algeria? Did he inquire of the Paris postal authorities and receive an answer? [9]

At the Montpellier Philatelic Association Michel Soulié accepted that there was a problem at the Bône post office, at least in late June 1840. He is still wondering about the technical aspect of the postmaster's solution. How did the postal employee file down or abrade the 1840 year block so it fit without ruining or breaking the Type R2 cancel? How did he maintain this four digit block in a datestamp that it wasn't made for? And how long did it survive the repeated impacts as it was used? [10]

For now there is no answer, only the evidence of the two letters and their cancels.

About the correspondence.

Both letters are of interest for people who are curious about local history, either daily life of traders in Algeria or of their suppliers in France.

Martial Olivier's letter to Montpellier is about the numbers of empty wine casks he sent back to Messrs. Bazille and Castelnau and the maritime route the casks were taking or their definitive sale in Algeria. He wrote about the money involved he was paying back to his Montpellier suppliers: 100,000 *livres* for the previous order and almost the same amount for the next one. He used the name of the former monetary unit of France, replaced by the franc after 1795, surely as the common habit for large sums.

Donc le 29 juin 1840

Messieurs Bazille & Castelnau à Montpellier

Selon ma promesse par ma lettre du 14^e j'ai dû
 par le Courrier à Messieurs Servet & de recevoir par
 L. 100 000. Solde de la Commande n° 1.
 9417. à valoir sur la prochaine Commande
 et deux réceptions par le solde de tout ager vous m'avez expédié
 j'ai signé au Comptable un De compte de 261. Barriques
 Pides pour le 1^{er} Crémant de 1840. S'élève à f. 1305.
 en voici l'emploi:
 50 p 75 par l'ancien le 10 janvier } à M^{rs} Servet.
 50 x par le nouveau précédent le 10 janvier }
 150. x par l'ancien expédié à cette
 11 - 1875 en cas sur Place à 5 L'an
 261. —
 Veuillez me débiter 2 f. 55 pour le montant de ces deux Barriques,
 que dois-je faire des Barriques, que l'administration me
 rendra, il n'y a pas d'occasion pour cette et pour l'autre.
 Je reçois votre lettre de 19^e qui a trouvé sans
 réplique je vous prie d'être asse de m'entendre avec M^r
 Servet pour la ré expédié de l'autre. et pour la valoir sans réplique
 au mieux de vos intérêts. Agrée mes très sincères salutations
 P.S. veuillez m'envoyer mon petit Breck que j'ai prêté
 à Messieurs Servet & de avec un voucher n° 144
 à mon débiter.

M^r Olivier

Fig. 11. Martial Olivier's message to Messieurs Bazille and Castelnau, dated 29 June 1840 (Kenneth Nilsestuen collection).

Michel's letter is much more difficult to decipher as the author's handwriting is nearly illegible. The introduction informs us that it was written by a woman. She wrote her correspondent that she was unwell the 29th of June when she answered a letter sent the 14th of June. The deciphering of the rest is outside the capacity of the author.

A glance into the trading families of Montpellier.

During Ken's recorded presentation, Sébastien's curiosity was immediately piqued by the names of the addressee: "Messrs. Bazille & Castelnau" of Montpellier, two important families of 19th century Montpellier.

The two associates were surely Scipion Bazille (1793-1853) and Émile Castelnau (1793-1869), even if the latter's father, Louis-Michel Castelnau (died 1840), was the main actor in the history of the firm the decade before. [11] The period of the letter is a crossroad in the Bazille-Castelnau lineage's commercial empire. [12]

In Montpellier the Bazilles can be traced back to master goldsmiths since the 17th century. Protestants, they publicly converted to Catholicism, until the 1787 edict of tolerance signed by King Louis XVI allowed them to publicly be protestant. This act allowed free practice of religions to non-Catholics and legal and civil status, like the right to register births, weddings and burials. At that time most of the sons of the eldest child became traders. But it was a younger son who successfully wed a most important trading family: Paul-David Bazille (1711-1784), a *verdet* producer [13], married a Sarran daughter, and in 1745 joined the trading house of his wife's father, Guillaume Sarran.

Rebranded "Veuve Sarran & Bazille" (Widow Sarran and Bazille), the company employed Paul-David's sons and nephews, or allowed them funds to establish their own business or to follow other careers. For example, Paul-David's eldest son and grandson, Bazille-Méjean, became consular representatives for the Dutch in the nearby port of Sète (formerly Cette). It was a younger son of Paul-David who inherited the main business and then bequeathed it to his own son, Scipion Bazille (1793-1853) who came to specialize in wine trading. Hence there was a need to send and receive letters and casks of wine from tradesmen in Algeria. Martial Olivier's letter in June 1840 (Fig. 11) is an example of how the mail carried the necessary accountings between traders.

But the Bazilles were not a primogenitary dynasty, and Scipion needed associates to expand. He chose marriages as one means to do this. Two weddings strongly attached him with Louis-Michel Castelnau (d. 1840): Louis-Michel had already married (in 1792) a daughter of the Bazille serving as Dutch consul in Sète. Scipion married Castelnau's daughter (a second cousin). Family mattered.

Louis-Michel Castelnau's trading skills dated back to his father's marriage into a trading family of Sète. Before the French Revolution he was an associate in a wool and *indiennes* (printed textile) shop in Montpellier. But he was left broke after the fall in value of the *assignats* in the 1790s [14], and found a way out by working for Veuve Sarran & Bazille.

With this business association he finally became head of the family business when his father-in-law passed away 1809, and strengthened this position when his son Émile Castelnau fully associated in the main Bazille operation when it was renamed "Bazille & Castelnau" in 1838, just before Martial Olivier's letter was sent. Hence the "Messieurs Bazille & Castelnau / Montpellier."

Thanks to Scipion Bazille's choice to turn to wine trade and the successful management of Louis-Michel Castelnau, the Bazille-Castelnau lineage owned one of the most important spirits, wines and alcohol trading houses of Montpellier. This business helped finance a bank, other trading houses, factories and the first vineyards of other

members of the families until the 1920s.

From there the descendants and cousins of Louis-Michel Castelnau perpetuated the trade and marriage examples firmly established by the Bazilles. Business leadership passed to the most efficient sons, nephews or sons-in-law. The name of the main enterprise followed: “Bazille & Castelnau” became “Bazille & Leenhardt” when Albert Castelnau refused to take an interest in the business. Nicolas Leenhardt (1820-1870), one of Louis-Michel’s grand-sons, was then associated by a marriage with his associate Louis Bazille’s (a son of Scipion) daughter. More a genealogic jungle than a tree!

The banking lineage followed the same pattern: called “Leenhardt Castelnau & Cie” in 1869, the death of an associate forced it to be known as “Castelnau de Leenhardt & Cie” in 1871.

The same marriage strategy happened when the youngest son of Louis-Michel Castelnau and a Leenhardt son-in-law both became established by marriages among the trading families of Marseilles.

The collapse of most of the successful businesses took place between World War I and World War II. Both the Bazille & Leenhardt house and the bank fell after bad management by the inheritors, who chose their associates poorly outside their large families, and worsened by the post-1929 world financial crisis.

The businesses of these families were so important in the daily life of Montpellier that writer André Gide remembered all their names when he wrote his autobiography, *Si le grain ne meurt*, in 1924, more than forty years after his high school years in Montpellier. [15]

What is the lesson from all of this? Check carefully your commercial mail. The social and economic history of a region may appear beneath your eyes!

How did the Bazille name survive the lineage's commercial collapse?

In his article on Louis-Michel Castelnau’s descendants, historian Lionel Dumond explained these families had a lot of children and realized that land ownership can be a profitable form of economic activity. The last point made them very different from other dynasties of industrial Europe who preferred to invest in industry and banking only. [11]

Among the Bazilles, Scipion’s son, Louis Bazille (1828-1886), was to become an important vineyard owner and horticultural researcher. In the same generation, his first cousin Gaston Bazille (1819-1894) reached the presidencies of many agricultural associations and participated in the fight against the phylloxera bug that infested Southern French vineyards. In the end he was elected to the upper house of the Third Republic, the Senate, where he sat from 1879 to 1888.

But if one looks for Bazilles or Castelnaus nowadays, you won’t easily find the tradesmen, the horticultors or even the senator. But one will find the artists of these families.

The first was Frédéric Bazille (1841-1870) who is now considered a precursor of the impressionists as an international exhibition explained in 2016. [15] His parents wished him to study medicine, but he instead chose drawing and painting classes with sculptor

Auguste Baussan. On the advice of his cousin, painter Eugène Castelnau, he went to Paris where he met Renoir and Monet, now the most renowned impressionists.

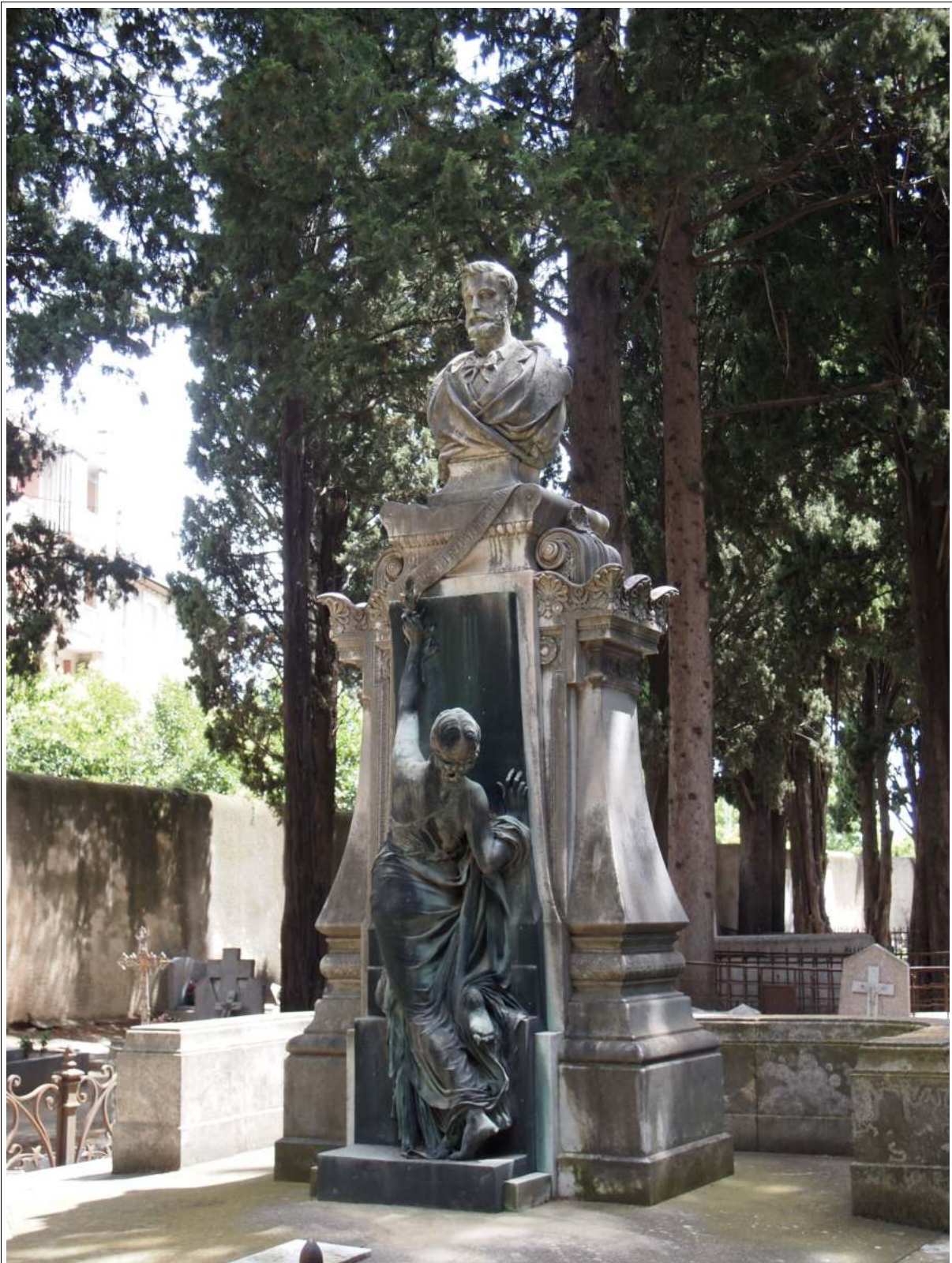


Fig 12. The funeral monument on Frédéric Bazille's tomb, at the Protestant Cemetery in Montpellier, Hérault (picture by Sébastien Marrot). [16]

But Frédéric Bazille's career was short, even if colorful: he voluntarily enlisted in the Zouaves infantry regiment to fight the war against the Prussians and Germans in 1870. Unfortunately, he was killed during a fight at Beaune-la-Rolande on 28 November 1870, one hundred kilometers south of Paris.



Fig. 13. The monument to Planchon by Baussan, in a park of Montpellier, Hérault (picture by Sébastien Marrot).



Fig. 14. Zoom-in the grape-grower sculpted in the likeness of Frédéric Bazille on the monument to Planchon (picture by Sébastien Marrot).

His father went to Beaune in December 1871 to take his son's remains back to

Montpellier. He bought a piece of land and erected a monument where Frédéric was killed. Auguste Baussan created the funeral monument that still can be visited in the Protestant Cemetery in Montpellier. He also used Frédéric's likeness for the face of the grape-grower on the monument to Jules Émile Planchon, the scientist who found solutions to save vineyards from phylloxera. The Planchon monument is in the garden in front of the Montpellier railway station.



Fig. 15. The commemorative stamp issued by La Poste on a maximum card postcard, with first day cancel from Montpellier, 17 February 2017.

The 2016-2017 exhibitions of Bazille's paintings help remember his talent. On 20 February 2017 the French post issued a stamp reproducing one of Bazille's "*plein air*"

paintings. *View of the Village* shows the daughter of one of Bazille's workers, who sat in their *Domaine of Méric* in Montpellier. The village of Castelnau-le-Lez is in the background.

Conclusion

I hope this article will increase interest in French postal history and research into the writers and recipients of the letters we collect.

The author wishes to thank Ken Nilsestuen and Michel Soulié for sharing their collections and in addition to their support, Michel Rettgen and other members of the Association philatélique de Montpellier for their encouragement and knowledge they offered to a beginning student of French postmarks.

Finally, a special thanks to the societies who allow us to watch their members' presentations from far away, in this case the Collectors Club of New York.

The author, Ken and Michel are interested to discover other mail from Bône around 1840 or any documentation that may help understand what happened to result in a four digit year in a Type R2 cancel. Please forward any information to Ken Nilsestuen at nilsestuen@sbcglobal.net, Michel Soulié at soulie.michel1@gmail.com or Sébastien Marrot at sebjarod@yahoo.fr.

Notes:

1. The presentation by Kenneth Nilsestuen on *The Postal History of Algeria to 1851* took place on June 15, 2016, in New York. It can be watched on *Vimeo* at: <https://vimeo.com/170905477>. For the program of events and links to the videos of the Collectors Club of New York: <http://www.collectorsclub.org/>.
2. Association philatélique de Montpellier (France): <http://www.asso-philatelique-montpellier.fr/>. The association will host the French national exhibition from 7 to 11 June 2019.
3. Algeria was never administered as a French colony, but once organized as "Algeria," it became part of the Metropole. In this article we have used "Algeria" to refer to this territory both before and after it was officially a country.
4. About purified mail of France and occupied territories, look for a new comprehensive work: Guy Dutau, *La Désinfection du courrier en France et dans les pays occupés. Histoire, règlements, lazarets, pratiques*, self-published, 2017, ISBN 979-10-699-0033-2. Marks of purification of Toulon are studied in chapter 6: this letter was treated with chlorine. The oval mark was used between February 1838 and 1849, with belated use until 1884; note that compulsory quarantine for boats from Algeria was abolished in 1841. Incidentally, for this article, Guy Dutau presents a purified letter from Bône to a business in Montpellier, cancelled 23 May 1838.
5. Jean Pothion, *L'Oblitération française (initiation)*, ed. La Poste aux lettres, Paris, 1976, pages 12-13. Pothion built on a system designed by Langlois and Gilbert in the 1920s, adopted in the 1930s by E. H. de Beaufond for use in his many monographs. After that the system was generally adopted by all collectors of French postal markings.

Students of Algerian postal markings use a different classification system because the markings are not quite the same. See, for example, *The Lambert-Nilsestuen Classification of the Date Stamps of Algeria 1835-1962*, by Laurence H. Lambert and Kenneth R. Nilsestuen, (Self-published, 1999), and *Catalogue Illustré des Marques*

Postales et Cachets à Date Manuels d'Algérie (1749-1962), by Claude Bosc, (Editions Bertrand Sinais, 2001).

6. Sadly, Claude Bosc passed away in January 2014. It was not possible to ask him about this 1848 postmark.

7. Unfortunately, Mr. Lambert died several years ago and his example of the Bône cancel is now unavailable for this article.

8. Email correspondence with Kenneth Nilsestuen, from December 2016 to February 2017. In a search of about forty auction catalogs Nilsestuen found one reference to a Bône cancel with a four digit year date for 1842, but the cover was not illustrated.

9. Email correspondence with Kenneth Nilsestuen, from December 2016 to February 2017.

10. Conversations and e-mails with Michel Soulié, from December 2016 to February 2017.

11. This social history part is based upon academic papers available online. The website *Cimetières de Montpellier* (<https://cimetieresdemontpellier.wordpress.com>) compiles sources and information on the families buried in the Protestant Cemetery, a private place opened 1809 where many members of the Bazille, Castelnau and their allied families rest.

Concerning the role of Louis-Michel Castelnau in the Montpellier protestant families lineage, a university paper by Lionel Dumond, “La descendance de Louis-Michel Castelnau : formation et reproduction d’une élite montpelliéraine au XIXe siècle”, was published in the *Annales du Midi*, Vol. 120 No. 263, pages 379-398, 2008. It can be read on the Persée Database: http://www.persee.fr/doc/anami_0003-4398_2008_num_120_263_7231.

12. In his article (see note 11) Lionel Dumond compared the Bazille-Castelnau family system with other families of the industrial age, especially in South Alsace. To him “lineage” better describes the Montpellier case after the entry of Louis-Michel Castelnau in the Bazille’s main business: all families were deeply involved by marriages and financial supports. More unusual, land ownership was not a consequence of economic success, it became part of the activities.

13. *Verdet* is the French colloquial name for copper(II) acetate that served as green colorant before industrialization. Its production was important in Languedoc because the region produced wines whose tasting qualities didn’t last a year. Imported copper was thus transformed into acetate with the local vinegar in caves that any member of a family could manage.

14. *Assignats* were paper money issued by the French National Assemblies from 1789 to 1796. They were backed by the values of the properties of the Catholic Church. *Assignats* had lost value from the beginning ; more rapid depreciation in value started in late 1791, reaching a nadir at the fall of Robespierre in 1794.

15. The exhibition *Frédéric Bazille and the Birth of Impressionism* was displayed in the Musée Fabre of Montpellier (June-October 2016), the Musée d’Orsay in Paris (November 2016-March 2017) and the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. (April-July 2017).

16. Creative Commons licenses allow the free reuse of document with a minimum of rules to respect. One can reuse these pictures and modify them if one names the author and publishes them under the same license. The author asks that you please respect this license arrangement.