

FRANCE – The Rural Service.

Correspondance locale, Distribution.

Background:

Before 1829 local collection and delivery of mail was almost non-existent. The environs of main post offices had some sort of delivery service but outlying areas had none unless private arrangements were made. It was up to private individuals to collect their letters but many seldom visited their post office, as a result of this some 300,000 dead letters were recorded in 1828. To overcome the problem proposals for rural collection and delivery were made law in acts published 3rd and 10th June 1829. This resulted in the installation of some 35,000 mailboxes and the recruitment of some 5000 extra staff to work as rural mailmen which in itself was a boost to local economies.

The new acts set the framework and established a fixed fee of 1 Décime, (that is 10 Centimes or one tenth of a Franc). A small oval 1^D hand stamp was introduced to be applied by the post office. This was the only indication of the Rural Service

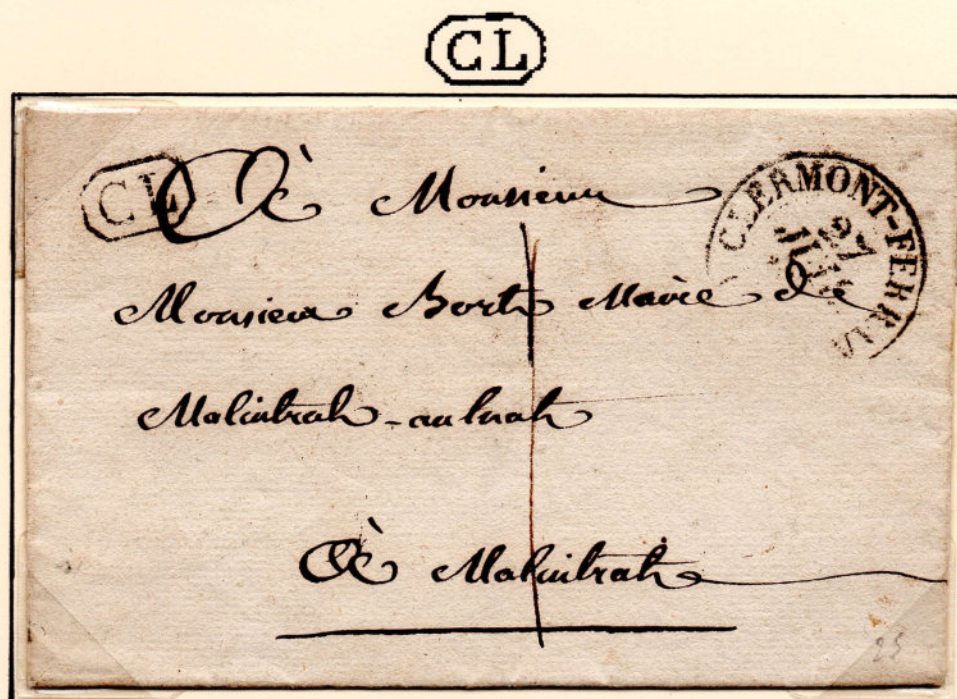


The new service commenced 1st April 1830 when most letters for rural collection or rural delivery were stamped with the 1 Décime handstamp. Initially no colour was specified for this handstamp so black was the norm but sometimes red and occasionally blue.



Letter written and posted in Paris on 27 MARS 1830 to the village of Villeneuve near Clermont in the Herault department. Arrival dateur backstamp 31 MARS 1830. It was obviously delivered on the next round to Villeneuve probably on 1 April which makes this letter a **Rural Décime First Day Cover!** Clermont l'Herault is about 607km south of Paris hence the progressive charge of 9 Décimes. Total charge to recipient 10 Décimes.

The Rural Décime was only to be applied to mail that had originated in a rural area, or was for delivery in a rural area, or both. Almost immediately confusion arose regarding the status of local and rural mail as local mail circulating within a rural postal district was exempt from the Rural Décime. An instruction of 5 June 1830 introduced a small straight sided hand stamp incorporating the letters CL, meaning "Correspondance Locale". This was issued to both main post offices (direction offices) and to sub post offices (distribution offices) so that the status of local mail could be clearly identified. Only the local charge was to be made which was one Décime for basic weight letters of up to 7½grms.



A cover sheet from a letter posted at CLERMONT-FERRAND 27 JUIL 1831 addressed to Malintrat-aulnat which was situated in the Clermont rural postal district. It was marked with the CL hand stamp and with the progressive charge of 1 Décime. Malintrat is a commune in the Puy-de-Dôme département in Auvergne in central France some 9.5km north-east of Clermont-Ferrand. Aulnat is just 3km back towards Clermont.

The above letter highlights a problem. Clermont-Ferrand was quite a large rural postal district with several sub post offices (distribution offices) serving the main office. The rules regarding the Rural Décime state that where rural mail crosses from the district of one office to the district of another the additional 1^D should be charged. We know that this letter passed to the distribution office and Malintrat and their dateur is on the back (same date 27 JUIL 1831). The postmaster at Malintrat did not apply his 1^D mark because CL meant it did not apply.

There are two possible situations which dictate the application of the Rural Décime:

1. The item must have originated in a rural postal district, either from a letter box or handed to the postman. 1^D mark applied by the despatching office.
2. The item is destined for delivery to an address in another rural postal district. 1^D mark applied by the delivery office, unless already applied. The Rural Décime is only to be charged once.

Correspondance locale, Distribution – the mark – it's use and misuse:

In fact, it seems that the introduction of the CL mark overlooked the Rural Décime requirements consequently an effort was made to correct matters. The "CD" mark (Correspondance locale, Distribution) was introduced in "Instructions Général sur Le Service des Postes, Premier Volume, Juin 1832". The CL mark remained for the sole use of the main post office (direction office) while the CD mark was allocated to each distribution office in rural postal districts. It's intention was to identify local mail circulating only in the postal district of the distribution office. Such mail was exempt from the Rural Décime.



A letter written at Ymonville and dated 16 Mai 1833. Ymonville is in the rural sub-district of the "Bureau de Distribution" at 27 Voves (cursive hand stamp). The letter is for delivery within Voves itself consequently the letter is not subject to the Rural Décime and the charge rate is 1 Décime. The CD mark is applied to indicate this. These places are in the Eure-et-Loir department (27). An example of the CD mark correctly used and a very early usage.

(Roumet certificate, ex Roumet HP vente sure offres #71, lot #1531)

From the introduction of the CD mark, the use of the CL mark was restricted only to the direction office. We can see, from many examples, that rural mail from distribution offices back to the direction office have the Rural Décime charge added. Mail flowing in the other direction seems to be rather scarce! This means that with the introduction of the CD mark the problem of charging the Rural Décime was mainly solved.

In a circular of 18 October 1834 it was decreed that from 1 January 1835 the Rural Décime was to be struck in black if the mail was for delivery to a rural location or in red if the mail originated in a rural location.

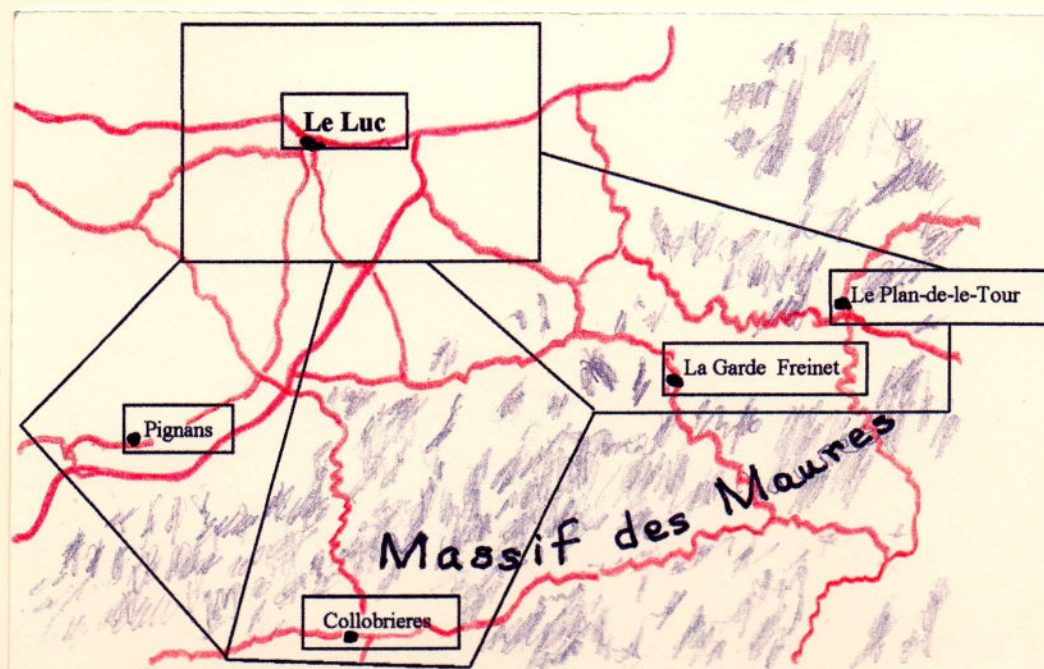


Black for delivery.



Red for collection

The CD mark was sometimes applied in error as shown in this example from Le Luc rural postal district.



The Le Luc rural postal district includes a number of Distribution offices each of which relies on the Direction office at Le Luc. Three of these Distribution offices existed at La Garde Freinet (15km to the south east), Collobrieres (17km to the south), Pignans (12½km to the south-west). Their sub-districts are suggested on the sketch map above.



A letter written at La (Plan-de-la-) Tour (a place without a post office) and probably posted in a rural box there and dropped off by the mail man at La Garde de Freinet where the cursive hand stamp 78 La-Garde-Freinet and the CD mark were added. The CD mark was applied in error therefore obliterated and replaced by the Rural Décime in black (probably should have been red for rural collection). The progressive charge is 1 Décime, for delivery within the same rural postal district, via LE LUC 17 MAI 1835 (identical back stamp) to Collobrieres. A round trip of some 62km by road.

Collobrieres is only about 15km away as the crow flies but it is not in the same sub-district as the office at La Garde. Being on the southern edge of the Alps the terrain is rugged and sparsely populated with poor roads. It is easy to understand how the mistaken application of the CD mark arose.

The CD mark (Correspondance locale, Distribution).

A letter written to **La Chapelle-aux-Saints** in the Brive arrondissement in the Correze department. Someone has written Beaulieu Correze on the front but the letter was not written there. According to the map this is probably Beaulieu-sur-Dordogne some 9km east of La Chapelle. However records do not show a post office in either of these places but they do show Beaulieu-s-Menoire which is probably the same Beaulieu. The actual place of writing cannot be located, is it Calle? However, it looks like a CD mark correctly used in the area of the distribution office. Unfortunately they omitted to apply the office date stamp.

Culle le 14 Novembre 1838.

Mon cher Monsieur Simbille,

Je profite de l'occasion de M^r Breton qui se transporte à Beaulieu, pour répondre à la lettre que vous m'avez adressée. Je vous aurais écrit plus tôt, mais j'espérais toujours que les circonstances m'amèneraient quelque chose de plus favorable pour vous. Je songeais à vous passer à Beaulieu, quand j'appris que la place était offerte à M^r Breton. Dès lors j'étais bien aise de vous savoir placé à La Chapelle aux-Saints. Cependant si vous aviez voulu rester à Brancillat, M^r le Préfet vous aurait autorisé à faire confectonner le mobilier qui vous aurait été nécessaire. Quand vous aurez besoin de moi, vous connaissez mon adresse.

Votre Dévoté ami

P. BERTH

Monsieur
Monsieur Simbille, Instituteur
à
La Chapelle-aux-Saints.

arrond de
Brive

BEAULIEU

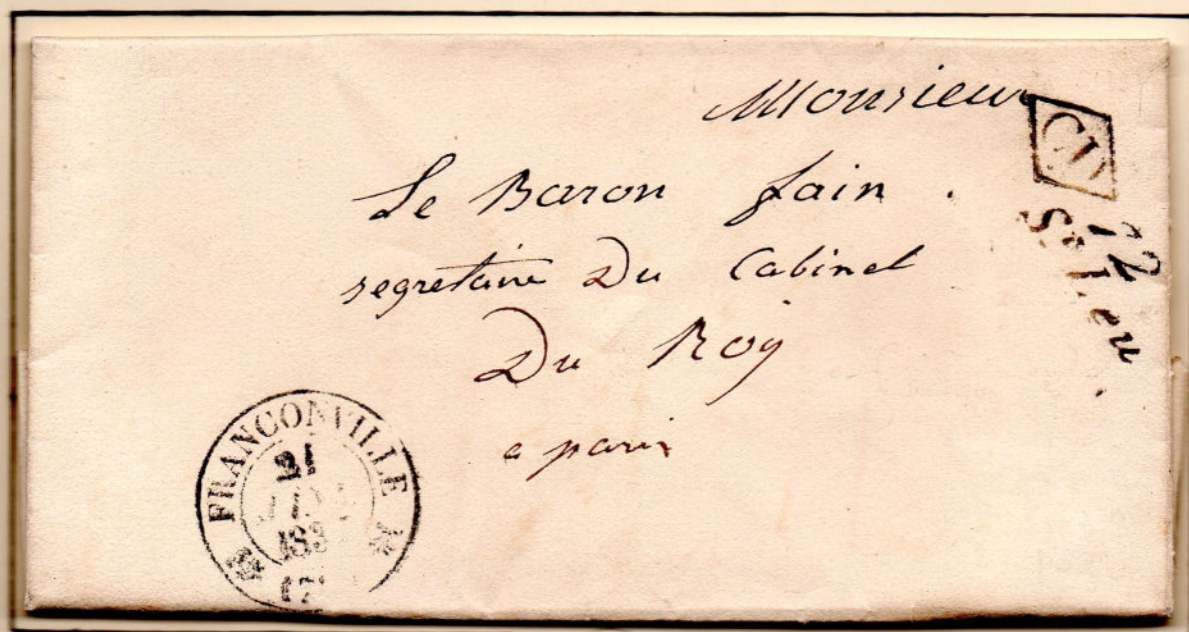
CORREZE

It seems that the staff at St^t Leu had a particular problem in application of the CD mark!

A cover sheet from letter originating in the rural sub postal district Saint-Leu-Taverny in the postal district of Franconville and circulating in the Seine-et-Oise department. It received the **St^t Leu** cursive hand stamp and is addressed to Montmorency (only 7km from St Leu) but in the postal district of Enghien-les-Bains. A charge rate of 2 Décimes has been added. From St. Leu it went to the main post office at FRANCONVILLE 18 DEC 18??, then to ENGHIEU 19 DEC 18?? for delivery to its Bureau de distribution at Montmorency. A trip of nearly 20km! This letter does not meet the qualifications for application of the CD mark as it is circulating between two separate postal districts. As this is only a cover sheet it is not known if this was a rural collection. Perhaps it was, maybe the clerk applied the CD mark by mistake while intending to apply the 1^d mark. The charge of 2 Décimes is correct. Possibly 1835.



Another letter with CD mark and **St^t Leu** cursive hand stamp. This letter originated from the town hall in St. Leu and is addressed to a representative of the Cabinet in Paris. For this reason there is no progressive charge and was carried free due to its official status. It does not qualify for the CD mark but maybe the clerk thought it would smooth its free passage. Collected from the town hall in St. Leu and despatched to the main office at FRANCONVILLE 31 JANV 1837 and from there to Paris. There are no other postal markings.



On October 18, 1834 it was decreed that the CL and CD stamps should be struck in red.

Each letter box had a letter of the alphabet allocated to it. This was embossed on a metal plate fitted inside the box. From 1 January 1836 the mailman was instructed to apply the letter box stamp to every letter collected from the box. These circular pill sized stamps were for identification and accounting purposes.

The CD mark has been applied to both letters shown below. As neither has letter box pill it is reasonable to presume that both were handed in at the Bureau de Distribution in the town of Lourmarin where the CD marks were applied. All places are in the Vaucluse department.

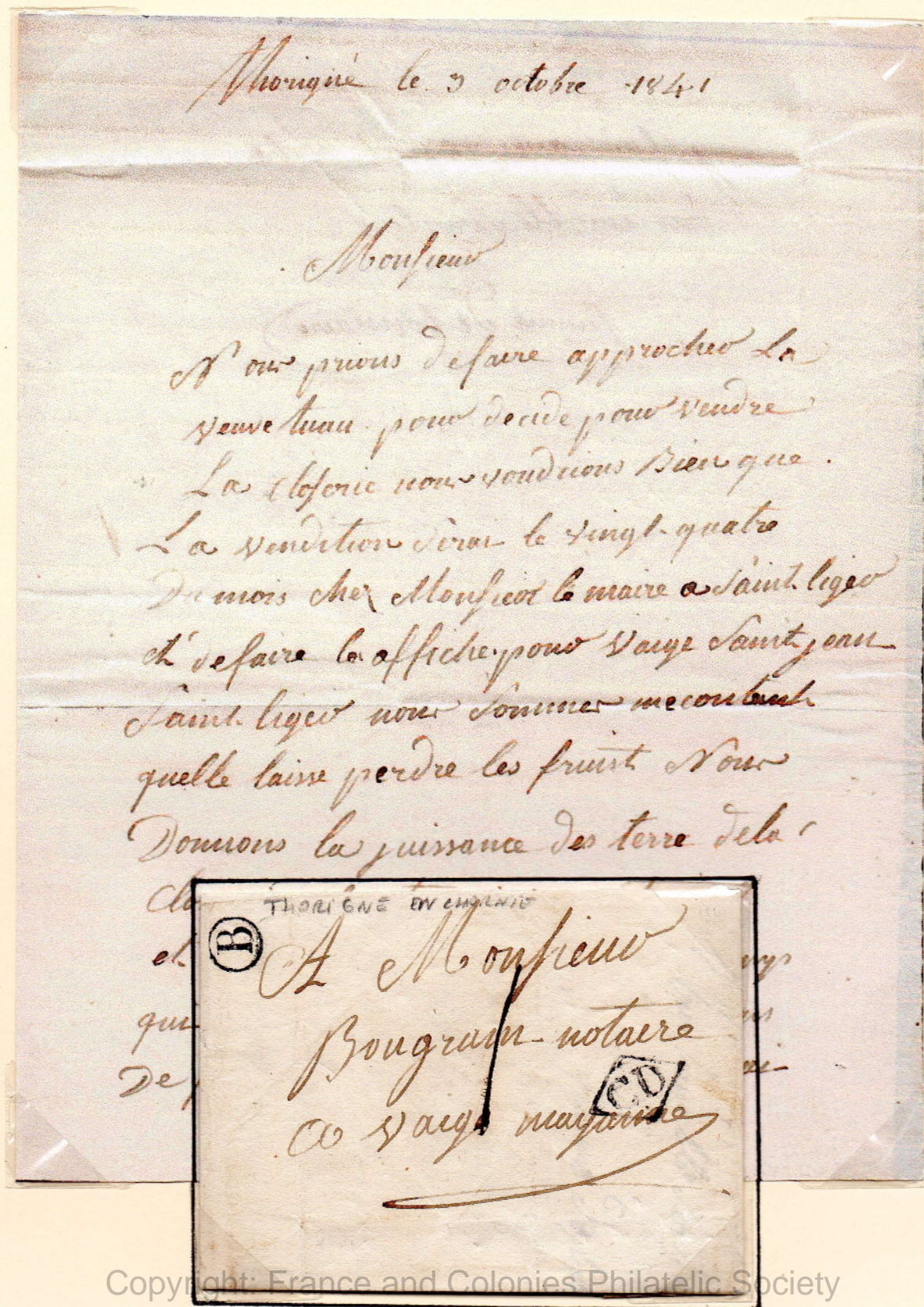
The first letter was written at Lourmarin and is addressed to "apt Deptment / Vaucluse". It is back stamped APT 20 OCT 1841. Apt is about 13km to the north. The local rate of 1 Décime has been charged. The letter was not circulating in the sub postal district but was direct mail between two offices. CD mark incorrectly applied. The Rural Décime is not applicable in this case as there was neither rural collection, nor rural delivery.

The second is addressed to Cavaillon which is about 28km to the west of Lourmarin. It received a poor CAVAILLON 21 OCT 1844 on the front. The same situation as the first letter.



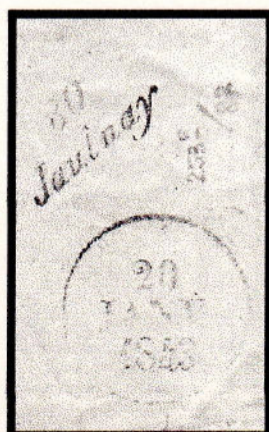
The CD mark (Correspondance locale, Distribution).

A letter written to **Vaiges** in the Mayenne department. Someone has written Thorigne en Charmie on the front and the letter was indeed written at Thorigne on 9 October 1841. There was no post office at Thorigne so we can safely agree that box **B** was situated near there. This is inside the postal sub-district of Vaiges and accordingly this appears to be a CD mark correctly used in the area of the distribution office. Unfortunately they omitted to apply the office date stamp. CD mark applied in black and local charge 1 Décime. The postal distance is about 10km.



The CD mark (Correspondance locale, Distribution) apparently correctly used by a Bureau de Distribution and circulating in the district of that office.

A cover sheet from a letter circulating in the rural sub-district of Jaulnay in the Vienne department. (Incidentally the numbers above the cursive names and at the foot of circular date stamps are those of the department in which the office was situated). This letter was handed in at the post office where it received the **Jaulnay** cursive hand stamp and the dateur 20 JANV 1843. Apparently Buftamane (probably a house name) is in the postal district of the office so to avoid the letter travelling to the main office and back the CD mark was applied and taken direct to its recipient for the local rate of 1 Décime. There are back stamps again Jaulnay and the dateur with same date.



The CD mark (Correspondance locale, Distribution) apparently correctly used by a Bureau de Distribution and circulating in the district of that office.

A letter written at Brandelon some 10km east of the Distribution office at Orgeres. It was collected from box H (probably situated there). The letter is addressed for delivery in Orgeres so it would have been taken back to the office where the cursive hand stamp **27 Orgeres** was applied along with the CD mark and the 1 Décime charge for local delivery within the district of the office. "27" is the number of the Eure et Loir department. The writer has dated the letter "Brandelon le 29 Juin 1845".

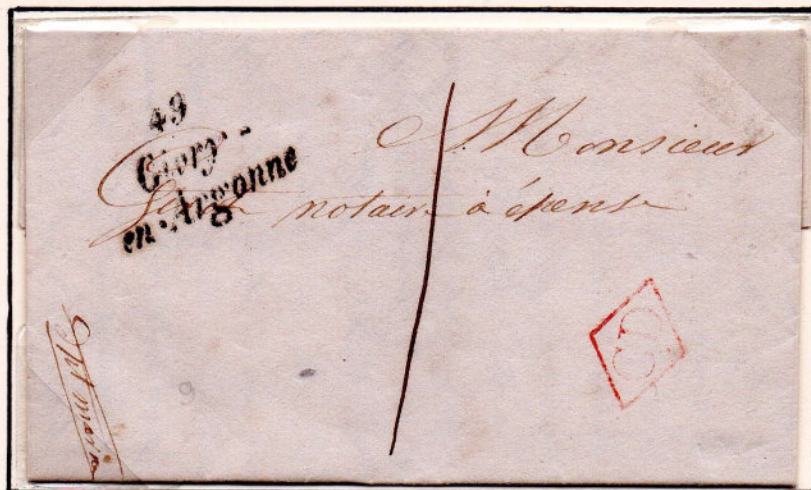


Another letter with the cursive hand stamp **27 Orgeres**. There is no mailbox pill or postmans pill so the letter was probably handed in at the Orgeres distribution office where the CD mark and the 1 Décime charge, for local delivery within the district of the office, were added. The writer has dated the letter "le 15 Janvier 1846". Unfortunately, the place of writing cannot be identified (could be a house name). The addressee is the same as the letter above, reading "Monsieur Forteau / Notaire a orgere / eu loir".



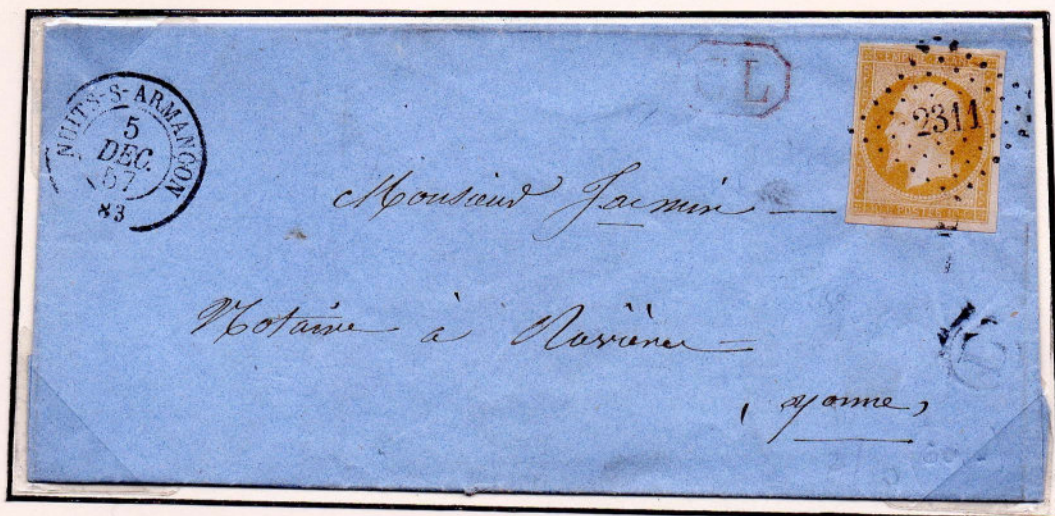
The CD mark (Correspondance locale, Distribution) apparently correctly used by a Bureau de Distribution and circulating in the district of that office.

A letter written at Le Chatellier some 2km south of Givry en Argonne in the Marne department. There are no collection markings on the letter so it was probably handed in to the bureau at Givry where the cursive hand stamp **Givry-en-Argonne** was applied along with the CD mark and the 1 Décime charge for local delivery within the district of the office. The address is to Epense which is some 5km further on. The writer has dated the letter "Le Chatellier le 2 Mars 1848".



The use of the CL and CD marks on local rural mail was discontinued in December 1858 because of new arrangements for collection of the postage due provided for by the introduction, on 1 January 1859, of the new Chiffre Taxe stamps.

A cover sheet from a letter posted in rural box E in the postal district of NUITS-S-ARMANCON 5 DEC 57 in the Yonne department. The stamp is cancelled PC 2311 of the Nuits post office. As the letter was for circulation in the local postal district the cover was stamped CL (very unusual on letters franked with postage stamps).



A letter, dated the letter 28 O^{ber} 58, written at La Trinite (La Trinité-Porhoët) some 9km south of Plémet in the Cotes du Nord (now Cotes d'Amor) department. There are no collection markings on the letter so it was probably handed in at the office in Plémet (La Trinite had its own office). The pearled date stamp is PLÉMET 29 OCT (58), a "Bureau de Distribution", and where the CD mark was applied for local delivery within the district of the office. The address seems to be Le Forges Au Vaublanc (now Le Vau Blanc) some 5km north of Plémet. The CD mark is not often met with, especially after the issue of postage stamps.

