

FRANCE : RAIL MAIL

The coming of the railway and the development of a railway network did much in France (as in Britain) to enhance the delivery of mail throughout the country. As a consequence of this, and the reduction in the cost of postage, there was a large increase in the number of letters, and in due course postcards, sent in the post. This necessitated the efficient organisation of the carriage of mail on the railway and as a consequence systems were put in place to deal with large volumes of mail.

The carriage of 'rail mail', therefore, plays a significant part in the study of postal history and it seems appropriate that we should have an understanding of its development and additionally the range of railway cancellations that were applied to the mail. The purpose of this display, therefore, is to examine explain the various postal markings associated with the carriage of mail by rail within France.

The study considers one of France's major railway companies, Paris Lyon Méditerranée (and P.L.M.'s forerunner companies) which operated in a segment of the country radiating in a south-easterly direction from Paris, but it is equally relevant to the remainder of the French railway network. It examines the development of cancellations, both on board the train (the "ambulant" and the courrier-convoyeur') and at the station (the 'gare').

What became the P.L.M. railway network was initiated in 1849 with a route between Paris and Bourges, but the company itself was created in 1857 and rapidly expanded, acquiring other smaller companies in order to build up an extensive network of routes. In 1938 the company was absorbed into the state-owned S.N.C.F.

This particular display is one part of a wider examination of French "rail mail". The other parts include a more detailed examination of a branch line between Besançon and Bourg-en-Bresse; the unique Mont Cenis railway across the Alps; the role of the railway companies in the carriage of cross-Channel mail; Paris railways; and the Chemin de Fer du Conakry au Niger in Guinée Française.

An additional sheet is added at the end of the display, as it is not from the P.L.M. network, but nevertheless still important in the overall French rail mail story. It illustrates one of several trial courrier-convoyeur cancellations applied to early mail carried on the line from Paris to Maisse via "CORBEIL" from late 1865 to 1866 and is quite rare.

Contents of this display:

The early railway and the Ligne de Lyon.

Formation of P.L.M.

The ambulant cancellations

Courriers-convoyeurs

Station cancellations/cachets

Bureau de Passe

Parcel post

First World War

Rail crash, Melun

Excursion traffic

T.G.V.

"CORBEIL" trial cancellation.

Bibliography:

"La Poste Ferroviaire de ses Débuts à 1870" and "de 1871 à 1914", Académie de Philatélie. Tome I & II

"Les Bureaux Ambulants de France", C Chase & E H de Beaufond

"Catalogue des Cachets des Courriers-Convoyeurs de l'Origine a 1900", Dr C Chase

"France Obliterations 1849-1876", J Pothion, La Poste aux Lettres

"Catalogue des Marques et Cachets d'Entrée en France 1800-1881", G Noel.

THE EARLY RAILWAY

The railway between Paris – Lyon – Marseille was constructed in a number of different stages, starting from both ends, and operated by separate companies prior to the formation of the P.L.M. The first section was opened from Paris to Bourges and from early 1849 operated with a freight van (wagon-allège) which also carried mail. This letter from May 1849 would have been carried on the railway in the manner described below.



Letter from London, 20 May 1849 sent to Carpentras.

The letter is written concerning the difficulties of sending a loan of £200 to France due to "the political events of the moment".

After crossing the Channel, carried from Le Havre to Paris gare Saint Lazare by rail.

Ambulant cancellation 'LIGNE-DU-HAVRE'.

Taken from gare Saint Lazare to Hôtel des Postes by coach.

Cancellation applied to indicate routeing via the Marseille post road 'ROUTE No 7 / PARIS'.

Taken to Gare d'Austerlitz by coach and put into a freight van attached to a steam train.

Carried by rail as far as Bourges and there transferred to a mail coach towards Marseille..

Probably carried by road from Avignon to Carpentras.

LIGNE DE LYON

Prior to the formation of the Paris, Lyon, Méditerranée railway company, a number of smaller railways were in operation. Prime amongst them was a railway running south-east from Paris which was planned in 1844 with a concession being granted to the Compagnie du chemin de fer de Paris à Lyon. A precursor to the P.L.M., initially it operated as far as Dijon, then extended to Chalon-sur-Saône, then to Lyon. This line was known as the 'Ligne de Lyon' and mail sorted on board was cancelled with an 'ambulant' cancellation 'LIGNE-DE-LYON /1' and '2', in use between 29 August 1852 and 21 May 1854, with the number representing the two brigades in operation.



Letter from Paris, 22 September 1852 with 25c imperf Ceres adhesive and star cancellation..
 'LIGNE-DE-LYON /1' ambulant cancellation 22 September.
 Put off the train at Dijon.
 'PONTARLIER / (24)' arrival cancellation 23 September.



Letter from Metz, 17 January 1854 with 25c tampon, sent to Marseille.
 'LIGNE-DE-LYON /2' ambulant cancellation 18 January.
 'DIJON' 19 January and 'LYON' 20 January transit cancellations.
 Carried by road to Marseille arriving 22 January.

COURRIER - CONVOYEUR

An early courrier-convoyeur cancellation indicating 'Service Intermédiaire' was applied on the line from Paris to Lyon-Vaise from January 1852 (initially as far as Chalon-sur-Saône, but to Lyon from July 1854). The aim was to sort the mail on board in order to speed its delivery and to tax all unpaid letters at 25 centimes (later 30). The Services Intermédiaires ceased to function from 6 August 1854 on the Paris – Lyon route and were replaced by ambulant cancellations.



Letter from Tonnerre, 5 December 1852 sent to Dijon.
 Courrier-convoyeur cancellation 'SERVICE INTERM / PARIS A LYON' 5 December.
 '25' centimes tampon applied as a charge mark.

FORMATION OF P.L.M.

The railway between Paris and Marseille remained two separate entities until at least 1857. Hence a letter sent from Paris to Marseille would receive two ambulant cancellations, applied between Paris and Lyon and Lyon and Marseille.

The Paris, Lyon, Méditerranée railway company was created on 11 April 1857 from the amalgamation of the earlier Compagnie du chemin du fer de Paris à Lyon and Compagnie du chemin de fer de Lyon à Méditerranée. It also incorporated a number of smaller railways including Compagnie du chemin de fer d'Avignon à Marseille, Lyon-Genève, Dijon-Belfort, Compagnie des chemins de fer du Dauphiné.



P.L.M. cachet, in use 1858.



P.L.M. printed stationery used from Marseille, November 1858 sent to Grasse.

20c adhesive cancelled with Petit Chiffre '1896' of Marseille.

AMBULANT CANCELLATIONS

Prior to the amalgamation of the Paris-Lyon and Lyon-Marseille railways in 1857 to form P.L.M., two separate cancellations were applied to mail travelling beyond Lyon. However, 'PARIS A MARSEILLE', together with the letters 'PM' within a dotted diamond, was introduced as an ambulant cancellation from 1865 and was utilised until 1876.



Letter from Paris, 9 December 1855 with 20c imperf. Napoleon adhesive, sent to Marseille.

'PARIS A LYON 1' daytime ambulant cancellation, 9 December.

'LYON A MARSEILLE 2' daytime cancellation, 9 December.

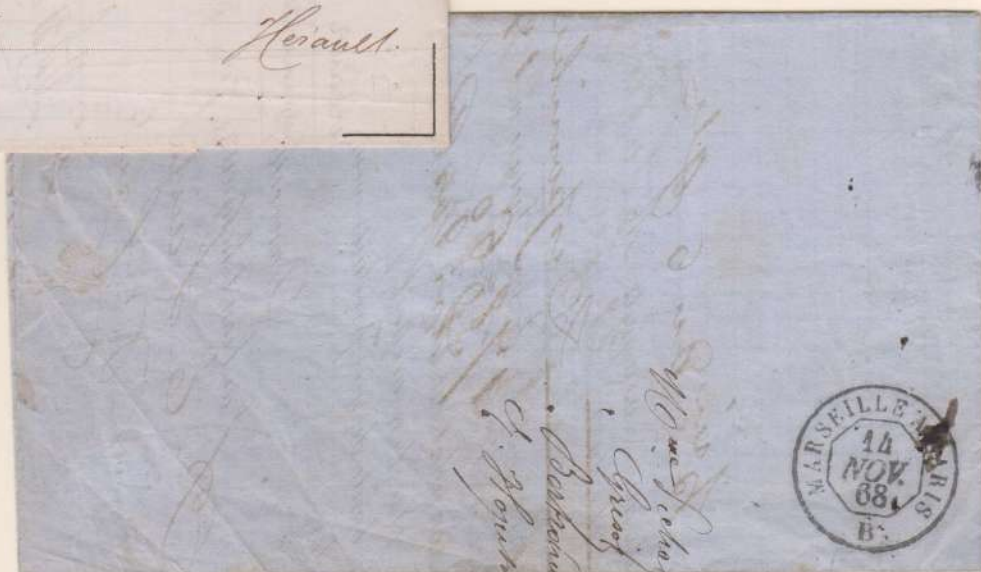
'MARSEILLE' arrival cancellation, 10 December.



Letter from Marseille to Gray.

Adhesive cancelled 'ML2'.

'MARSEILLE A PARIS /B' ambulant cancel 14 Nov 1868.



Letter from Paris to Montpellier.

Adhesive cancelled 'PM'

'PARIS A MARSEILLE C'

Ambulant cancel 10 February 1873.

AMBULANT CANCELLATIONS

The use of the word 'MEDITERRANEE' in ambulant cancellations as an alternative to 'MARSEILLE' first appeared between Marseille and Lyon from 1862 and from Marseille to Paris from 1881. Its use is shown in different forms with, oddly both 'Marseille' and 'Mediterranee' used together in the first example on a letter from Alger.



DAYTIME CANCELLATIONS

Ambulant cancellations were applied to mail sorted on board the train. The display examines the different types of such cancellation (which are typical of all French railways) in use from the main locations of this major route.

The characteristics of cancellations applied during the daytime are an outer circle and an inner octagon. The start and destination points of the ambulant are shown. The number indicates the time period of cancelling, 1 being first. The letter signifies the 'brigade' applying the cancellation. Letters were originally cancelled by letters within a dotted diamond indicating the particular ambulant, for example 'PL1' is for Paris-Lyon, in the first time period.

Dijon to Ain, 15 April 1858.
'PARIS A LYON 1 /F' ambulant.
Adhesive cancelled 'PL1'.
Letter inscribed 'par Bagnieu'.
'BAGNIEU' transit cancel on rear.



Letter to Rheims 6 August 1859.
'LYON A PARIS 1 /F' ambulant.
Adhesive cancelled 'LP1'.
'PARIS A SEDON' cancel on rear.
'REIMS' arrival cancel, 7 August.

Train to Marseille, 13 August 1875.
'LYON A MARSEILLE 2 /G' ambulant
Adhesive cancelled 'LM2'.



Marseille (from P&O agents) to
Lyon, 14 November 1867.
'MARSEILLE A LYON 2 /F'
ambulant cancellation.
Adhesive cancelled 'ML2'.
'LYON' arrival cancel, 15 Nov.

NIGHTTIME CANCELLATIONS

Ambulant cancellations applied on night trains follow the same principles as daytime trains, except that they have both outer and inner circles.

Dijon to Grenoble, 17 January 1859.
'PARIS A LYON 2 /F' ambulant.
Adhesive cancelled 'PL2'.



Letter to Rheims 18 January 1864.
'LYON A PARIS 2 /E' ambulant
Adhesive cancelled 'LP2'.
'LE CREUZOT' arrival cancel,
19 January.

Card to Paris, 13 June 1875.
'MARSEILLE A LYON 1 /A' ambulant.
'ML1' cancellation on adhesive..



Vincennes to Bastia, 30 June 1863.
'LYON A MARSEILLE 1/D' ambulant.
'PARIS A LYON 2 /E' ambulant.
'PARIS' transit cancellation.
'BASTIA' arrival cancel, 5 July.

AMBULANT CANCELLATIONS : SECOND TYPE

Slightly larger cancellations (Pothion type 2) were introduced in 1886 and lasted until around 1918.

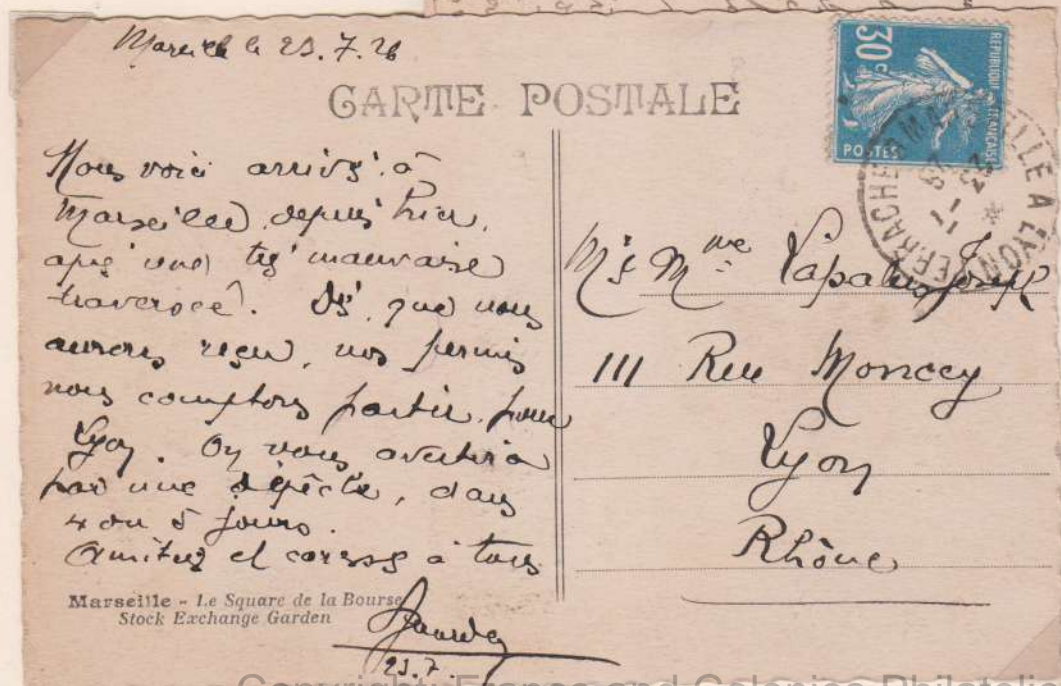
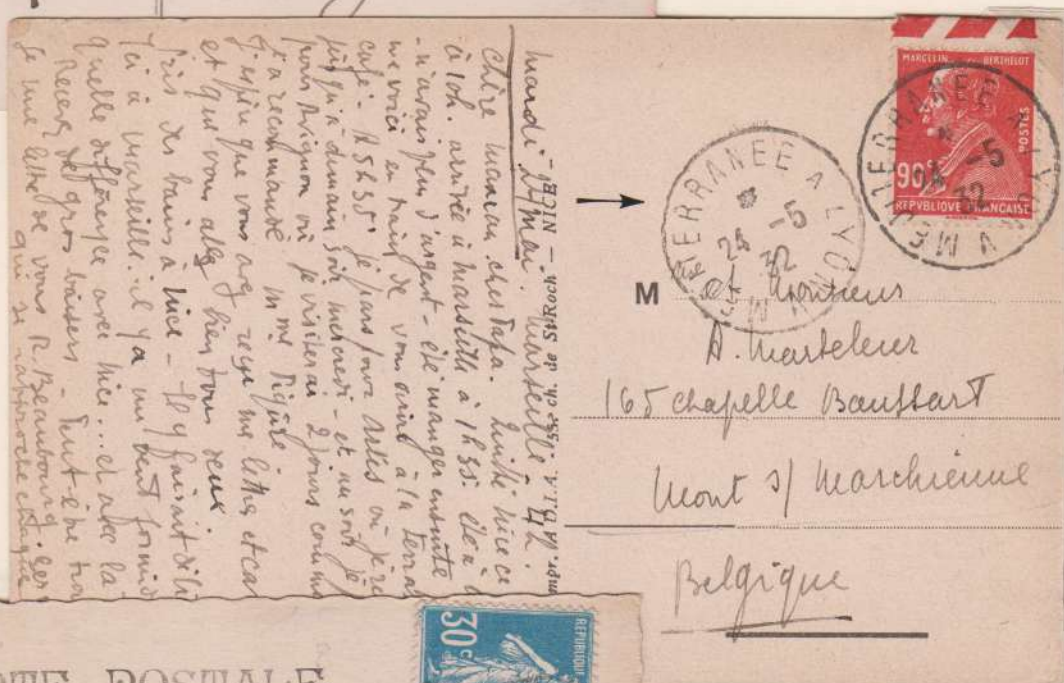


Postcard from Royan 16 August 1902, sent unpaid to Montereau.
 'PARIS A LYON 1 / F' applied on the daytime ambulant, 17 August..
 'MONTEREAU / Sne ET Mne'' arrival cancellation 17 August.



Postcard from Lyon, 25 September 1913 to Toulon.
 'LYON A MARSEILLE 1 / B' applied on the night ambulant

The third type of cancellation on night ambulants was introduced around 1904 (hence overlapping with type 2) and consist of a large single octagon applied on daytime trains and a large single circle on night trains. A range of wordings on the cancel are known, of which three incorporating Lyon are shown here – ‘PARIS A LYON’ (day), ‘MEDITERRANEE A LYON’ and ‘MARSEILLE A LYON PERRACHE’ (night).



EXPRESS AMBULANT CANCELLATIONS

Night express trains operated and were given special cancellations reading 'RAPIDE'. Examples of the three types are shown here.

Paris to Marseille, 10 September 1873.

'LYON MARS. RAPIDE /B' night

Ambulant, 11 September.

'MARSEILLE' arrival 11 September.



Paris to Lyon, 1 August 1900.

'PARIS A LYON-RAPIDE /A' night express ambulant.

'LYON' arrival cancel 2 August.



Letter from Paris 28 April 1932, sent to Avignon.

'PARIS A NICE-RAPIDE / *' express ambulant cancellation.

Nice was served as an extension of the line from Marseille.

EXPRESS AMBULANT CANCELLATIONS

Express ('rapide') trains also operated with special cancellations reading with a 'wiggly' (ondulée) central section. Some have the word 'RAPIDE' while others do not; examples of the latter less common type are shown here, in both directions between Lyon and Marseille.



Letter from Milan railway station, 21 August 1882, sent to Avignon.

'GENOVA' transit cancellation on rear indicates that this letter unusually travelled by sea rather than rail via the Fréjus tunnel.

'MARSEILLE A LYON 3 /L' ondulée rapide ambulant cancellation, 22 August.

'AVIGNON / VAUCLUSE' arrival cancellatio 23 August on rear.



Letter from Lyon, 23 May 1885, sent to Vals.

'LYON A MARSEILLE 3 /L' ondulée rapide ambulant cancellation, 23 May.

'SPECIAL' AMBULANT CANCELLATIONS

A further classification of ambulant mail between Marseille received the cancellation 'SPECIAL' (with no time period shown) or alternatively having the adhesives cancelled 'ML*' (known as a 'fleuron'). It has been suggested that this 'Special' classification indicated that the mail was being forwarded from or to paquebots. This is not always the case, though, as shown by the upper letter from Marseille to Belfort, in which case it is likely to indicate a 'rapide' or express service. 'SPECIAL' cancellations are much less common than other ambulant cancellations.

Marseille to Belfort, 6 November 1872.
'MARSEILLE A LYON 2 /H' daytime
ambulant cancellation, 7 November.
'ML*' cancellation on adhesive.
'DIJON' transit cancel, 8 November.
'BELFORT' arrival, 9 November.



Letter to Elbeuf, 24 August 1869.
'MARSEILLE A LYON / SPECIAL'
night ambulant, 26 August.
'PARIS' transit cancel 27 August.
'ELBEUF' arrival cancel 27 August.

Postal stationery card from Netherlands
Indies, 14 May 1884, to Hamburg.
'MARSEILLE A LYON / SPECIAL',
27 June.



'SPECIAL' AMBULANT CANCELLATIONS

Displayed are two 'Special' cancellations, of type 2 (Pothion), both from Philippeville (hence following the theory regarding mail transferred to/from paquebots), one applied on a daytime ambulant, the other on a nighttime ambulant.



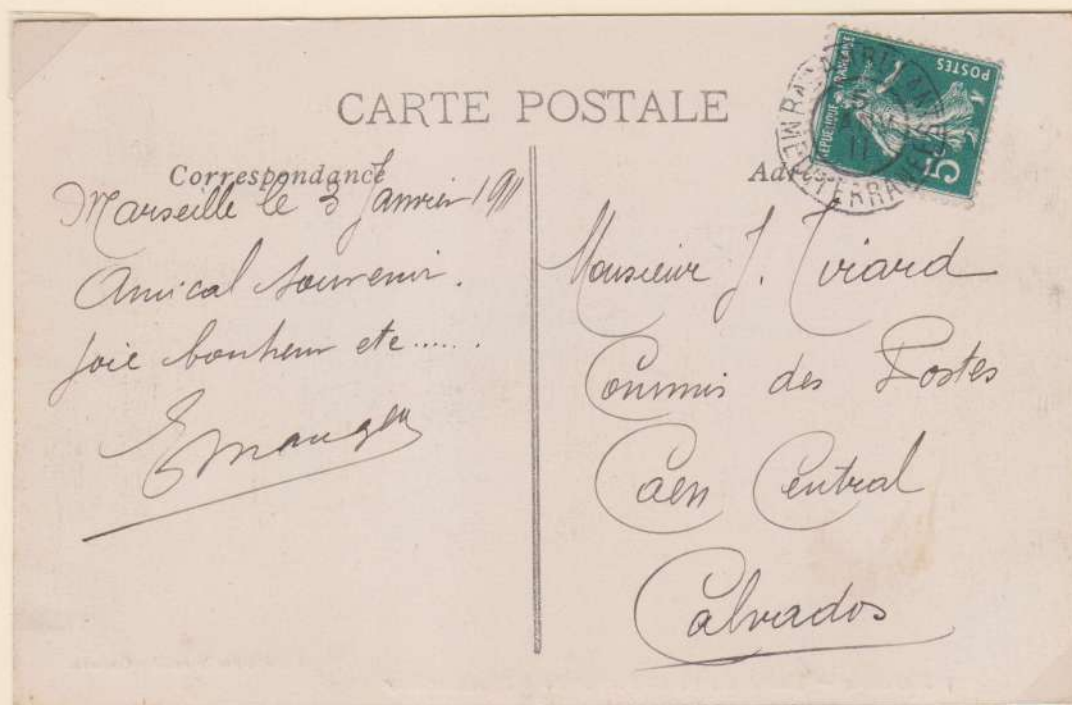
Postcard from Philippeville 30 May 1901, sent to Toulon.
'MARSEILLE A LYON / SPECIAL' night ambulant cancellation.



Postcard from Philippeville 1 August 1908, sent to Rodez.
'MARSEILLE A LYON / SPECIAL' day ambulant cancellation.

BUREAUX AMBULANTS

A small number of special cancellations – ‘bureau ambulants’ – were introduced for rail networks, for example nord, est, ouest and also Lyon, with variations of the word ‘BUREAUX’, ‘BUR’, ‘BURX’, ‘BAUX’. This particular cancellation ‘BAUX AMBULANTS / MEDITERRANEE’ is not recorded by Chase & Beaufond (‘Les Bureaux Ambulants de France’).



Postcard of Marseille with unrecorded cancellation ‘BAUX AMBULANTS / MEDITERRANEE’ 5 January 1911, sent to Caen.



Postal stationery 5c envelope for visiting cards, addressed to the Chef de Brigade, Besançon to Dijon ambulant. Cancelled ‘BUREAU-AMBULANTS / LYON’ in blue (in use 1900-13), 2 January 1902. Uncommon.

ENTRY CANCELLATIONS

Ambulant cancellations (generally as 'AMB.') were applied to mail entering France from a foreign country (always indicated in the cancel) where the mail was passed to the railway company for onward transmission towards the destination. The upper example is only seen on mail from Messina for destinations other than Marseille (1861-6).



Letter from Messina, 28 February 1864 sent unpaid to Lyon.
 Inscribed 'per vapour francese' and arrived at Marseille having been carried by Ligne d'Egypt.
 'ITALIE / AMB. MARSEILLE G' French entry mark applied on the night ambulant, 3 March.
 'LYON / (68)' arrival cancellation 4 March on rear and '6' décimes charge mark (per 1861 convention).



Letter from Spoleto, 20 December 1875 with 40c Italian adhesives, sent to Carpentras.
 'AMBULANTE TORINO-MODANE' Italian ambulant cancellation on rear.
 'ITALIE / AMB. LYON MARS F' French entry mark applied on the night ambulant 21 December.
 'CARPENTRAS' arrival cancellation 22 December on rear.

AMBULANT RECEIPT OF SHIPMENTS

Receipt of shipments carried on the Marseille to Lyon ambulant 31 May 1859. Daytime ambulant cancellation
'LYON A MARSEILLE 2 / E', 1 June.

(N° 1 séries. Car. R.)
Juin 1858.

DIRECTION GÉNÉRALE
DES POSTES.

Timbre du bureau
ambulant.



SERVICE DES BUREAUX AMBULANTS.

ACCUSÉ DE RÉCEPTION DES CHARGEMENTS

ENVOYÉS AU BUREAU AMBULANT

En service de MARSEILLE A LYON 20 (Train n° 4).

BUREAU de Toulouse à Dep d

J'ai reçu le 31 mai 1859, joints à votre dépêche en date
du 31 1859, les chargements mentionnés dans le tableau
ci-après.

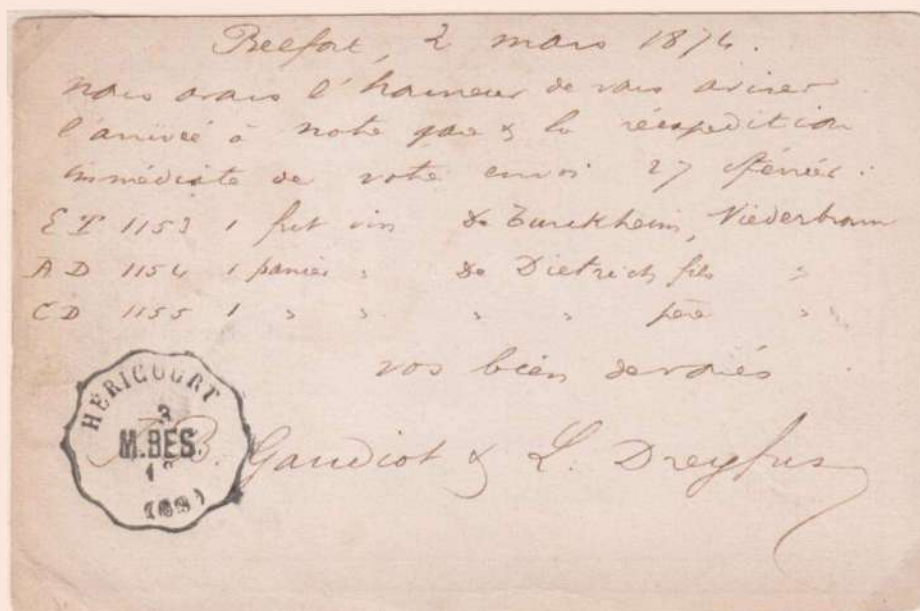
NUMÉRO D'ORDRE du registre de dépôt.	TIMBRE D'ORIGINE.	NOMS DES DESTINATAIRES.	LIEUX DE DESTINATION.	POIDS DES LETTRES.		TAXE	
				Grammes.	Centigrammes.	PERÇUE.	(**) À PERCEVOIR.
				5	6 (*)	7	8
1	2	3	4			déc.	déc.
392	Toulouse	Royer	Lyon	6	50	4	
118	interf. pub	Des au sorty	Lyon	1	10	1	5
114	i	Valluy	i	4	95	4	
120	Perrigault	Des au sorty	Metz	1	10	1	5
122	i	M. Desj. p. l.	Toulouse	1	10	1	5
123	i	i	i	1	10	1	5
157	Carcafontaine	Des au sorty	Sorgues	1	10	1	5
1917	Toulouse	Royet	Caumont	8	70	6	
97	Auch	Chapomey	Lyon	5	10	4	
Valeurs cotées.				NATURE DE L'OBJET.		ESTIMATION.	

(*) La dernière limite du poids est fixée à 25 centigrammes.

(**) Inscrire dans cette colonne la taxe à percevoir sur les chargements
d'office seulement.

COURRIERS - CONVOYEURS

These were post office subagents who were accommodated in a small compartment of a second class carriage, working generally on branch lines or lines of secondary importance. Courrier-convoyeurs collected mail en route and deposited it at the terminus' post office. Their "ondulée" cancellations (scalloped edges), were in use from 1866, initially naming the "station" where the mail was received and letters which denote the actual line. From 1877 a second type of cancellation, known as "ligne", was introduced, showing the line's starting and finishing points.



Postcard (March 1874) with courrier-convoyeur-station cancellation "HÉRICOURT /3/ M.BES" indicating the station, the day of the month, the line Montbelliard to Besançon, plus the département number at the bottom.



Postal stationery card (January 1906) with courrier-convoyeur-ligne cancellation "BESANCON A LOCLE". Unusually there is also a "GARE DE MORTEAU" cancellation.

COURRIERS - CONVOYEURS

These were post office subagents who were accommodated in a small compartment of a second class carriage, working generally on branch lines, lines of secondary importance, or as in this case, on intermediate sections of main lines. Their cancellations are of 'ondulée form (scalloped edges) and were much less used after 1910, though these examples prove their later re-appearance. There are a number of different variations in size (increasing in size in later years) and lettering (as with the examples below, all for Marseille to Lyon, but each having slight differences).

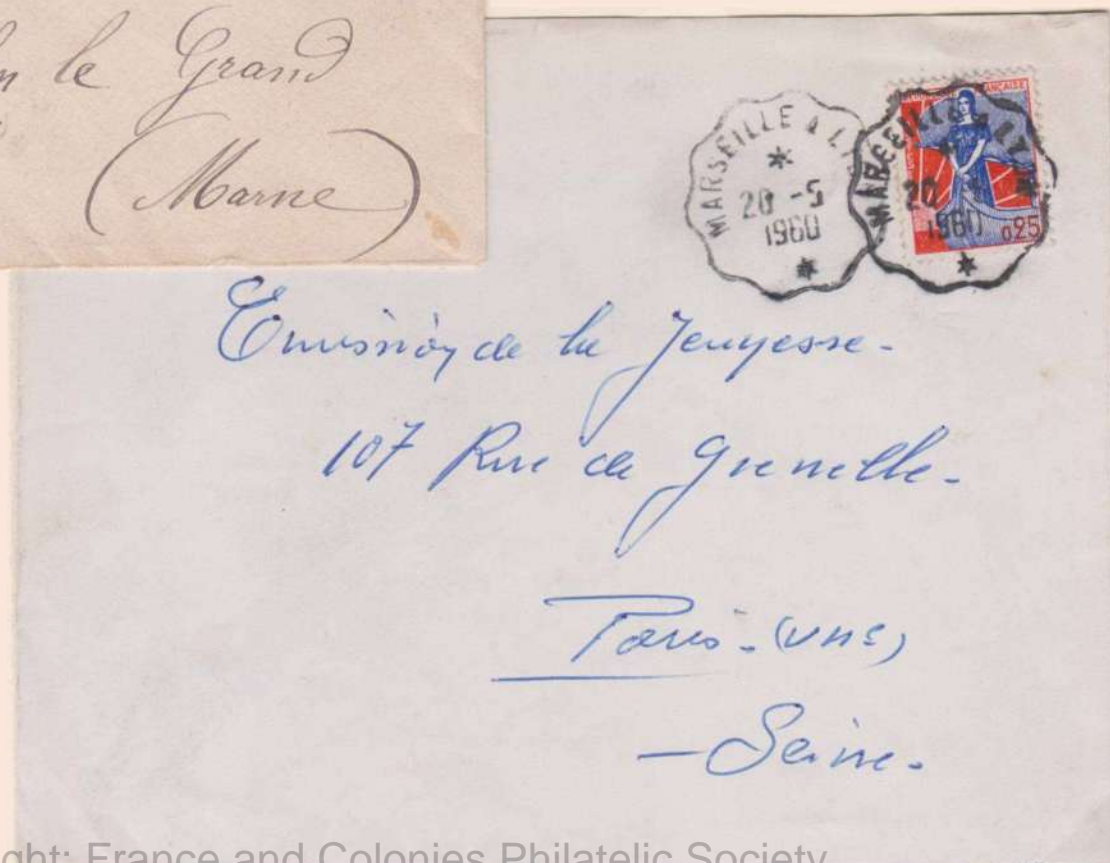
Letter-card 27 September 1930, sent to Bron.
'PARIS A LYON / B' courrier-convoyeur
cancellation.



Letter to Moummelon le Grand, 2 July 1919.
'MARSEILLE A LYON' courrier-convoyeur cancel.

Monsieur Bevol
106 Batterie Lourde P.H.P.
Bureau de la Mobilisation
Quartier national
Moummelon le Grand
(Marne)

Letter to Paris, 20 May 1960.
'MARSEILLE A LYON / *'
courrier-convoyeur cancellation.



COURRIER – CONVOYEUR CANCELLATION

Courriers-convoyeur were sub-agents of the post office, accommodated in a small compartment of a second class carriage, generally on branch line trains. They collected mail from the station post boxes and sorted it en-route, applying an 'ondulée' (scalloped edge) cancellation which either signified the branch line, or in this case the station. Displayed is a letter sent from Turin (six weeks before the opening of the Mont Cenis Railway) but carried out of the mails by diligence over the Alps to St. Michel de Maurienne where a French adhesive was applied and it was posted at St. Michel station.



Letter from Turin, with Levi & Comp. Firm's cachet to St Rambert, Ain, 5 May 1868.

20c French adhesive applied and posted at St. Michel de Maurienne station.

'ST. MICHEL-DE-MARIENNE' / (88) 'courier-convoyeur cancellation for the branch line 169, between St. Michel & Chambéry.

One would have expected the postal agent to cancel the adhesive 'SM.CH' (St. Michel to Chambéry, but he didn't).

At Chambéry the letter was transferred to a Mont Cenis to Macon main line train.

'MACON AU MONT CENIS /A' and 'M.CM' (on the adhesive) cancellations applied on main line ambulant.

St. Rambert was a station on the line of this route..

STATION CANCELLATIONS

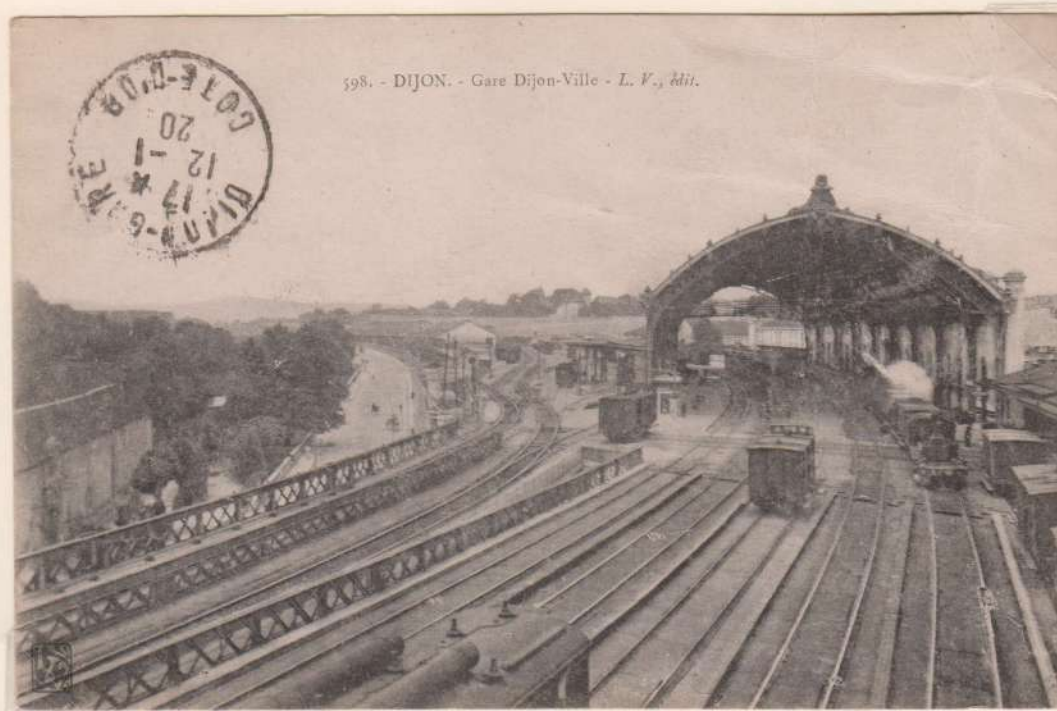
Cancellations were applied to mail posted at a post office adjacent to a station ('gare'). As such these cancellations are no different in form from those applied at any other post office and have no specific relevance to the carriage of mail on the railway.

Three different types are shown for Dijon, an important town situated between Paris and Lyon.



Two letter-cards sent 1891 & 1895.

'GARE DE DIJON / COTE D'OR' and 'DIJON GARE / COTE-D'OR' station cancellations.

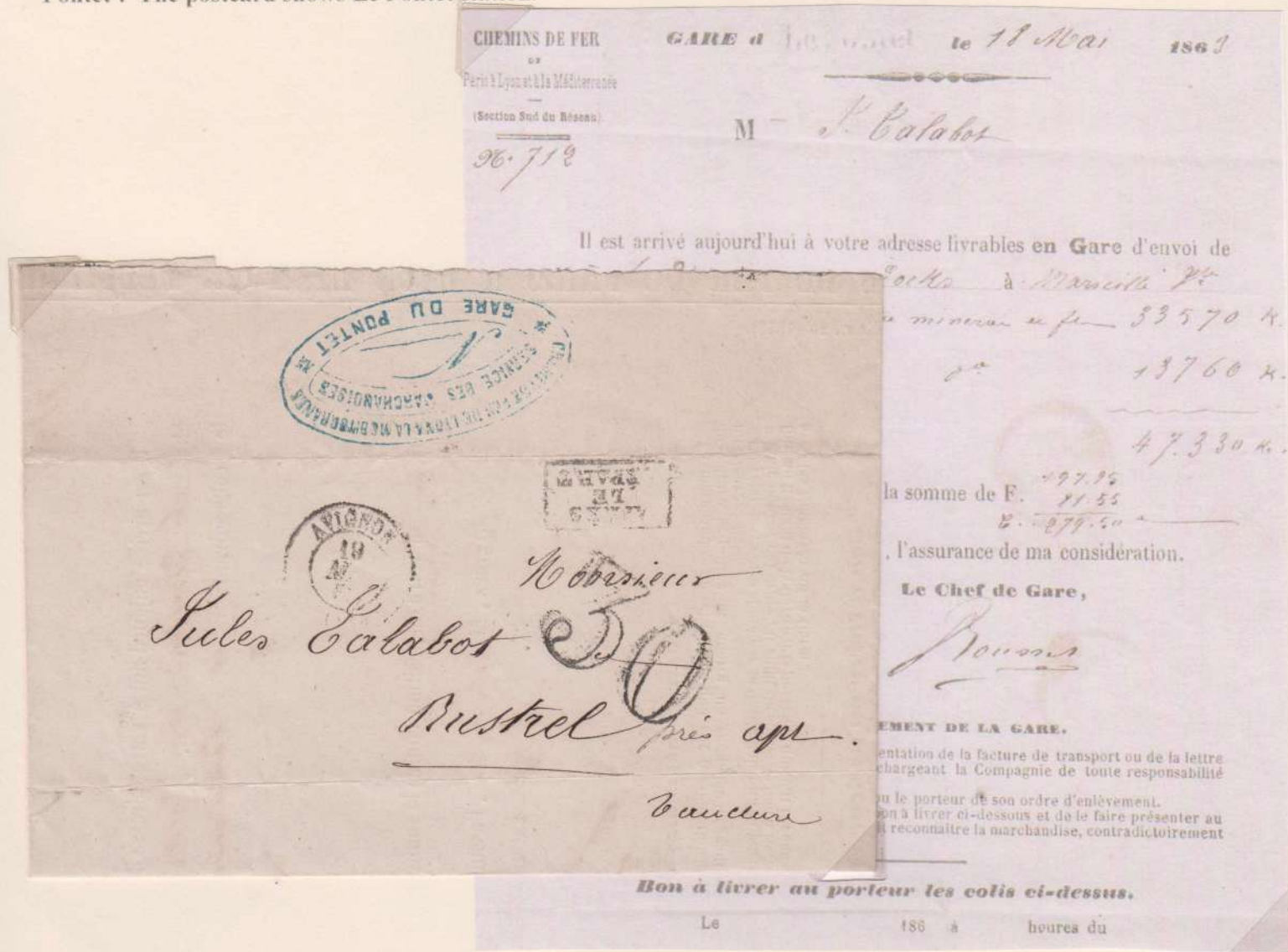


Postcard of Dijon station, 21 January 1920, sent to Salins les Bains.

'DIJON-GARE / COTE-D'OR' station cancellation.

STATION CACHET

Stations also applied cachets to mail on occasions. In this case it was at Le Pontet, just to the north-east of the City of Avignon. The cachet reads 'Chemin de fer de Lyon a Méditerranée / Service des Marchandises / Gare du Pontet'. The postcard shows Le Pontet station.



BUREAU DE PASSE

Located at major rail stations or railway junctions, outside Paris, the Bureaux de Passe were transit sorting offices whose function was to receive mail from static offices, ambulants or courrier-convoyeurs and to forward it to their place of destination. There were 33 such offices in France and they applied a distinctive cancellation comprising a bold numeral within two circles, normally on the rear of the letter. The most common is that of Dijon, number 1307, which is on the line of the PLM route from Paris to Marseille but also from Paris to Belfort and Paris-Pontarlier-Switzerland.



Letter from Auxonne to Vauchus, 20 November 1868.
 '1307' Bureau de Passe transit cancellation of Dijon, 20 November.
 'PARIS A MARSEILLE / B' ambulant cancellation, 21 November.



Letter from Paris, 6 October 1868 to Vernaizon, 8 October and redirected to Beaune, 9 December.
 'PARIS A LYON' night ambulant cancel 6 October.
 Somewhat surprisingly it has a '1307' Bureau de Passe cancel of Dijon, 7 October.
 'LYON' transit and 'VERNAISON' arrival cancels 8 October.
 'VERNAISON' departure and 'LYON A PARIS' night ambulant cancels, 8 October.
 '1307' Dijon Bureau de Passe cancel 8 October.
 'BEAUNE' arrival 9 October.

PARCEL POST

Displayed is a copy of the P.L.M. railway parcel post form notifying the arrival of a parcel at the station of Pont Le Veyle, on the branch line from Macon to Bourg. The form then is folded so that it can be posted to the recipient.

CHEMINS DE FER
de
Paris à Lyon et à la Méditerranée

Service
des
Colis Postaux

Les droits de magasinage
sont passibles de la majoration
générale des prix de
transport en vigueur.

AVIS N° 18

M. _____
à _____
Il est arrivé aujourd'hui, à votre adresse, en gare, d'envoi de
M. _____
demeurant à _____
un colis postal qui est à votre disposition contre la somme de :

Fr. _____ pour _____
Fr. _____ pour _____
Fr. _____ pour affranchi de la présente lettre d'avis.

TOTAL . . . _____

A _____, le _____ 192

LE CHEF DE GARE,

Reçu le colis postal ci-dessus :

SERVICE DES COLIS POSTAUX
Compagnie des Chemins de Fer de Paris à Lyon et à la Méditerranée

M. *Elvage J. Jeanne d'ac*
à *St André d'Hinniat*
par *Pont. de Veyle*
Département d *ain*

PONT LE VEYLE P.L.M.
32

RECEVUE
6-10
032
50

PONT LE VEYLE P.L.M.
28-1

Postal stationery (Service des Colis Postale) sent to Pont le Veyle, 6 October 1932.

Copyright: France and Colonies Philatelic Society

PARCEL POST

Bulletin de'expédition : Receipt for a parcel sent from Lyon to Marseille on the P.L.M. railway, 1943.

S.N.C.F. COLIS POSTAL 274758
R. C. Seine 276.448 B

ICI
vignettes pour livraison
A DOMICILE ☒ PAR EXPRES

3 TURE 3 5 KG + 11.4 F

COLIS POSTAL
jusqu'à 10 Kgs
DOMICILE

A REMPLIR PAR L'EXPÉDITEUR
(Écrivez en MAJUSCULES le nom du destinataire)

EXPÉDITEUR (Nom et adresse) M DEGUEST 18 rue Vaucluse
à LYON dép^t 73361

DESTINATAIRE (Nom et adresse) M SUARES, 89-81 L. la Madeline
à MARSEILLE dép^t 13

DÉSIGNATION ET CONTENU DU COLIS 1 colis en bois poids (1) 4 kg 350 g - dimensions (2) 17x17x17

LIVRAISON (4) à DOMICILE - par EXPRES ☒ en GARE - au BUREAU d

VALEUR DÉCLARÉE (En toutes lettres) Quatre mille huit cents francs

INTÉRÊT A LA LIVRAISON (En toutes lettres)

REMBOURSEMENT (En toutes lettres)

À PAYER à M (3) DEGUEST
rue Vaucluse n° 18
à LYON
à DOMICILE ☒ en GARE - au BUREAU
d 13 dép^t 13

Compte Chèques Postaux N°
par Bureau 13

Rég^l Périodique : C^{te} Circons des Recettes N°

EXPÉDITION REMISE à 11 h (heure de remise)
Le 28/9/1943

EMPREINTE DU CACHET (1)
OU DE SON FAC SIMILE

Signature de l'Expéditeur Dequest

Gare destinataire Marseille

28 SEPT 43
P.L.M.

* - Y compris le timbre perçu en compte avec le Trésor.
1) - En cas de déclaration de valeur ou d'intérêt à la livraison.
2) - Lorsque l'une d'elles est supérieure à 1 m. 50.
3) - S'il s'agit d'une personne autre que vous-même.
4) - Rayez les mentions inutiles.

FIRST WORLD WAR

P.L.M. trains were utilised during the First World War for transporting large numbers of troops to the front, for which offices of the Military Commission were established at main stations such as Dijon . The Commissioner's duties included the provision of a suitable letter box so that whenever a troop-carrying train stopped at his station, military personnel could put in it their cards under the free-post arrangements.



Postcard with cancellation 'DIJON-GARE / COTE D'OR', September 1917.
'COMMISSION MILITAIRE / GARE DE DIJON-VILLE / LE / COMMISSAIRE / MILITAIRE / S.M.' cachet.



Postcard of Paris with an unusual dated large circular cancellation applied by the Commission in Paris.
'COMMISSION DE GARE / PARIS / P.L.M. / LE COMMISSAIRE MILITAIRE' 20 December 1917.

FIRST WORLD WAR

P.L.M. trains were utilised during the First World War for transporting large numbers of troops to the front and additionally they were utilised as hospital trains. A typical 'train sanitaire semi-permanent' comprised 23 carriages, 16 of which were for the wounded with 8 beds in each, 3 doctors, a pharmacist, an administration officer and 45 nurses. Special cachets were applied to mail sent from such trains with two such being displayed here indicating reference to the P.L.M. railway. No charge was made for the postage of such mail carrying these cachets.



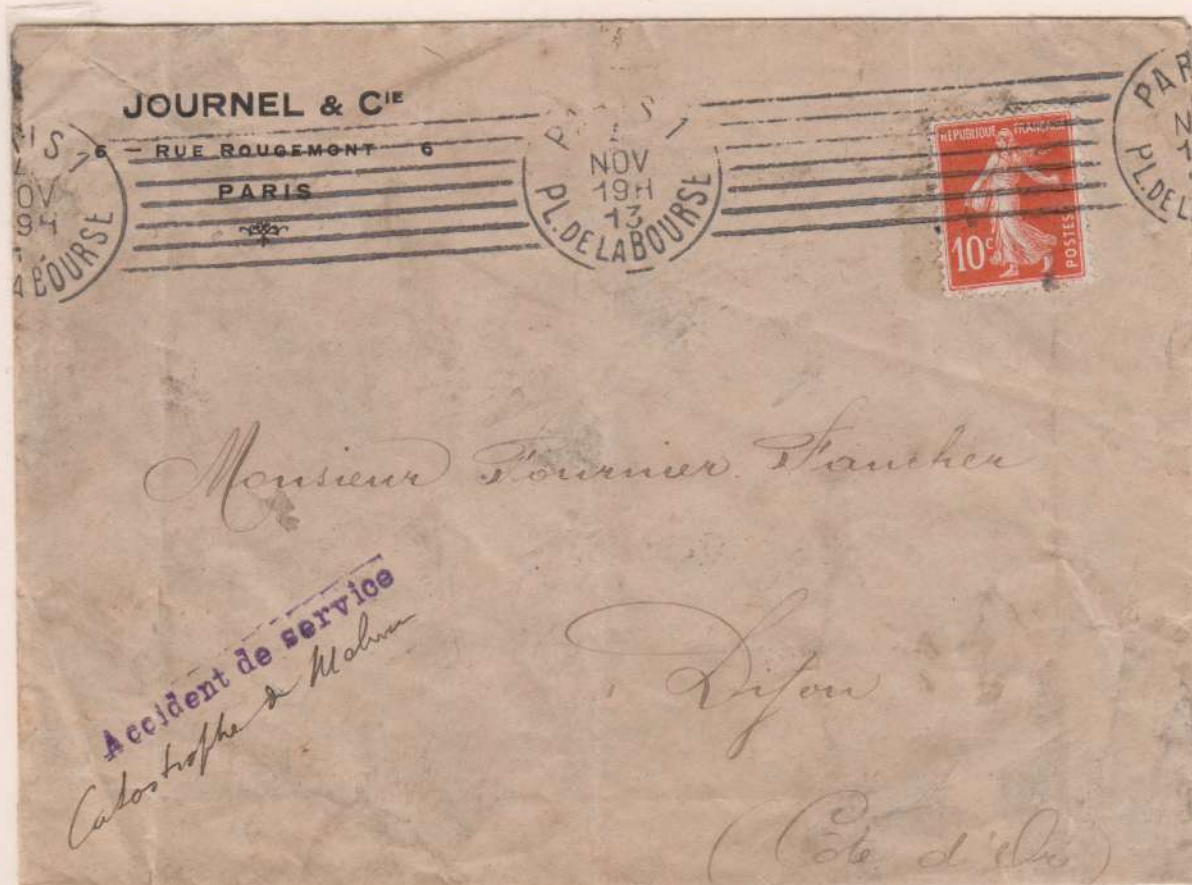
RAIL CRASH - MELUN

On the 4th November 1913 there was a collision between the northbound express train travelling from Marseille to Paris and the southbound mail train from Paris to Lyon. The accident occurred at Melun, 28 miles from Paris as a consequence of the non-observance of rail signals. (As the southbound train entered a loop line enabling northbound trains to pass, it was struck by the northbound express). Thirty-nine people lost their lives in this tragic accident.



RAIL CRASH - MELUN

The mail train was made up of eight vans containing bags of mail for Besancon, Lyon, Pontarlier, (including mail for Switzerland), the Mont Cenis route to Italy, the Mediterranean coast, Greece, Egypt and beyond. A special cachet was applied to some of the mail that was recovered – 'Accident de service' as shown in the example below.



Cover posted in Paris n 4th November 1913 to Dijon, carried by the southbound Paris – Lyon mail train.



A postcard with cancellation 'GARE DE MELUN /SEINE –ET-MARNE' applied four months prior to the accident.

EXCURSION TRAFFIC

A trip to the mountains.

The railway companies soon understood that they could generate more revenue by encouraging people to travel by rail to interesting destinations and then travelling onwards from the rail station by coach. Several companies, including P.L.M. operated their own vehicles for this purpose, or hired in operators under contract, as in this example here of travel to the Alps.



One can imagine someone starting their journey in Bourgoin (the location of this postcard) and there catching the train travelling from Lyon to Grenoble.

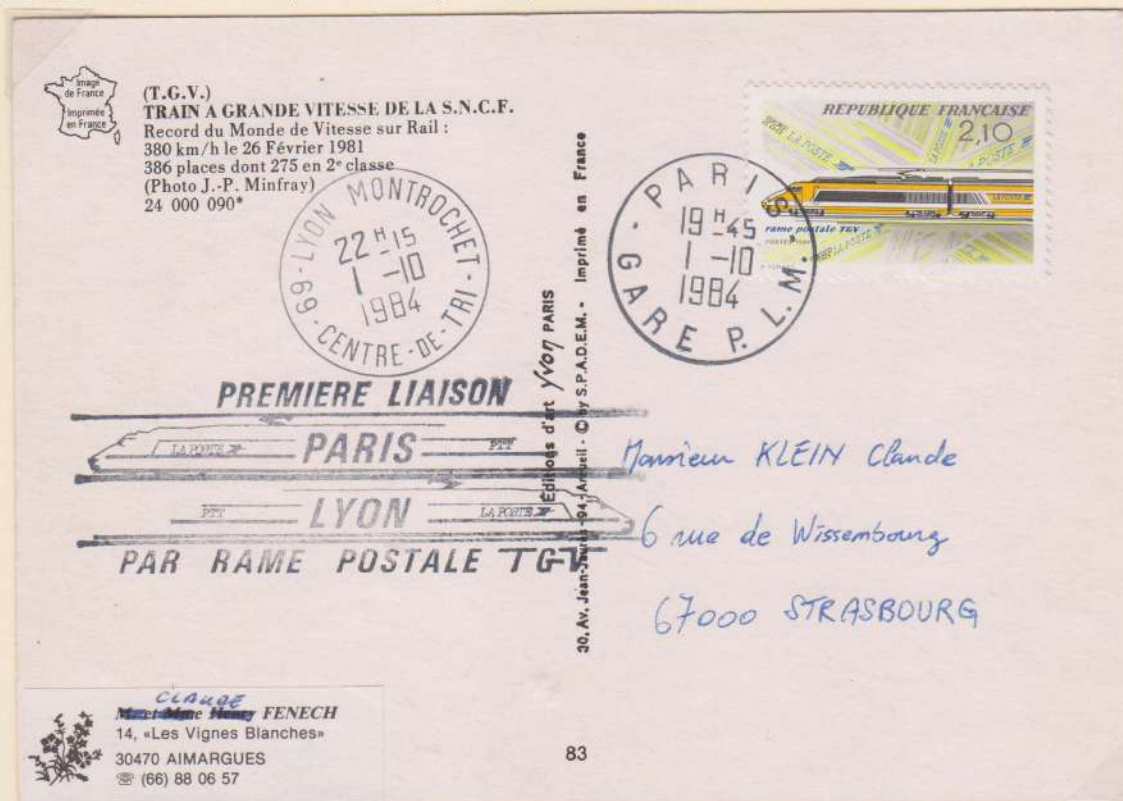


They travelled onwards from here on the 'Route des Alps et du Littoral' for P.L.M. passengers on a coach operated by E. Repellin & Traffort, of Grenoble.

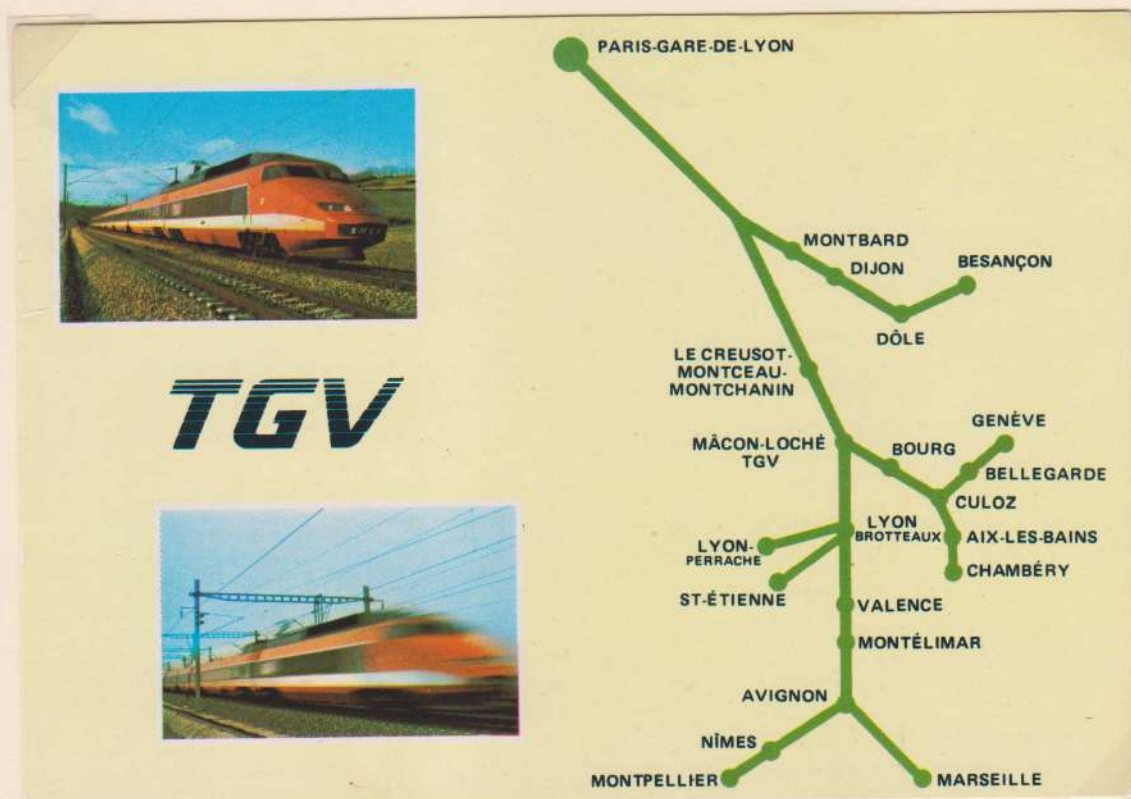
T.G.V.

Approved by the French government in 1976 and opened in two stages 1981/3, the TGV (train à grande vitesse) from Paris to Lyon was the first of a new concept of high speed train lines with trains travelling up to 260 km/h normally but 380 km/h world record speed (1981).

TGV postal trains were introduced in 1984 to the Paris-Lyon route, with five yellow half train sets operating for La Poste. Other routes were developed but by 2014 these ambulant sorting offices sorting offices re confined to Paris, Macon and Marseille and a year later they were withdrawn. Mail will still be carried by rail via a hub built at Bonneuil-sur-Marne south of Paris, but no longer in special TGV mail trains.



An SNCF postcard commemorating the introduction of the TGV mail trains with a special adhesive cancelled PARIS / GARE P.L.M. and LYON MONTROCHET / CENTRE-DE-TRI. Cachet 'PREMIERE LIAISON / PARIS / LYON / PAR RAME POSTALE TGV'.



Postcard showing the expanded TGV network from Paris within the former P.L.M. territory.

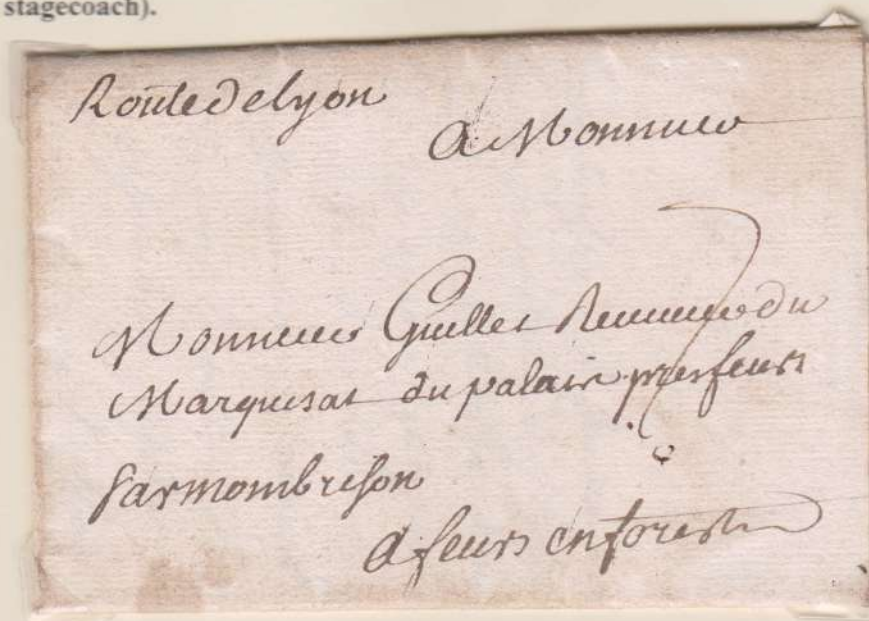
LAST AMBULANT

Mail was still being sorted on the Lyon – Marseille ambulant up to 1993. These two commemorative covers were issued on 26 March (from Marseille to Lyon) and on 27 March (from Lyon to Marseille).

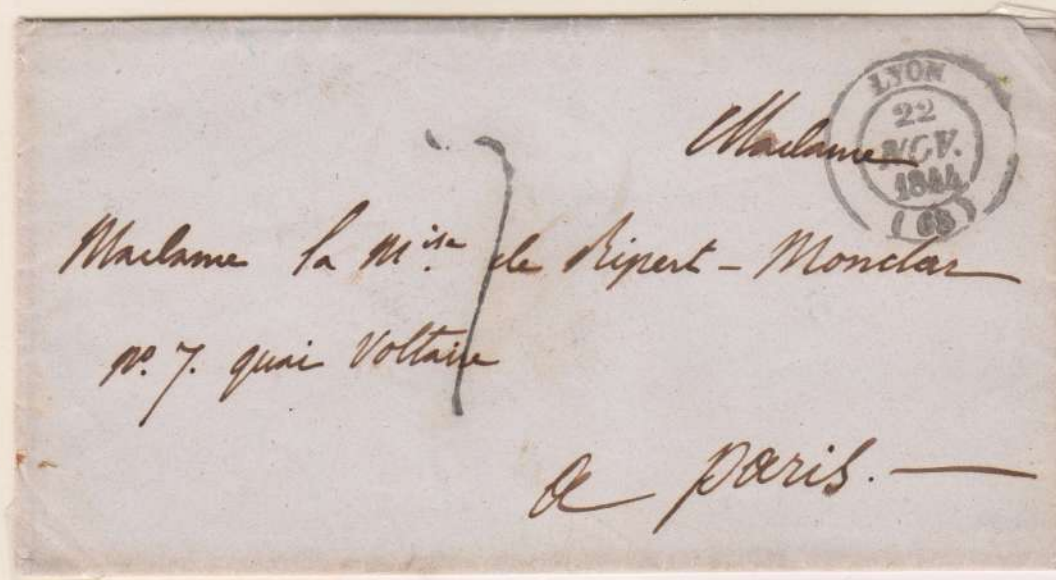


SO HOW WAS THE MAIL CARRIED PRIOR TO P.L.M.?

Post routes, including the 'Route de Lyon' existed as early as 1584 from Paris to Lyon and Lyon to Marseille. Indeed by 1848 a comprehensive network was in operation across France, with mail and passengers carried on 'diligences' (akin to a stagecoach).



Letter written 19 May 1742, inscribed 'Route de Lyon'.



Letter from Lyon to Paris which makes reference to the diligence service. 22 November 1844.



ORLÉANS

Compagnie du Chemin de fer de Paris à Orléans was established in 1838 in order to connect Paris with Corbeil, then Orléans. The first section, to Corbeil via Juvisy opened on 20 September 1840 and eventually reached Orléans in May 1843, being at that time the longest railway in France. Special 'convoyeur' cancellations were introduced as a trial, only on this line from Paris to Maisse, from December 1865 and were withdrawn by November 1866, showing the name of the station and numbers 1, 2 or 3.



Mourning letter written at Corbeil and sent to Paris, 23 January 1866. Cancellation 'CORBEIL / 1' applied on the train. Arrival backstamp for Paris the same day, 23rd and Paris star used to cancel the adhesive.

COMPAGNIE DU CHEMIN DE FER DE PARIS À ORLÉANS.

Ouverture de la section de Paris à Corbeil,

DIMANCHE 20 SEPTEMBRE 1840.

STATION A PARIS,

Rue Neuve-de-la-Gare, près le pont
d'Austerlitz.

DÉPARTS DE PARIS,

8 heures du matin.	3 heures du soir.
10 heures »	5 heures »
Midi.	7 heures »

DÉPARTS DE CORBEIL.

Les départs de CORBEIL ont lieu aux
mêmes heures que les départs de Paris.

Chaque convoi dessert VIRY-CHATILLON, RIS, ABLON et CHOISY-LE-ROI. Des correspondances directes établies à CORBEIL desservent déjà FONTAINEBLEAU, ÉTAMPES, MILLY, MELUN, LA FERTÉ-ALEPS, MENNECY, NANGIS, PROVINS, etc., etc. Transport des voyageurs au chemin de fer par les Gazelles, les Omnibus, les Hirondelles, les Favorites, etc., etc.

(5956)

Advertisement for the opening of the railway line between Paris and Corbeil on 20 September 1840, taken from an original newspaper.