

Retour

A journal that reports about and studies the myriad markings
added to a letter that explain how it reached its final destination.

Publication of The Auxiliary Markings Club
www.postal-markings.org

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President's Message

by John M. Hotchner

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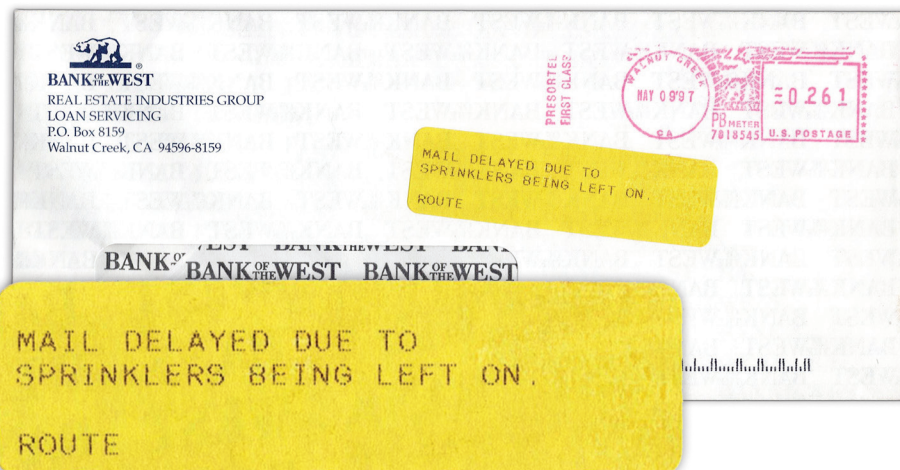
HAVING BEEN in the auxiliary markings hunt for about 40 years it is rare to stumble across a totally new marking, but thanks to Bill Oliver, the cover shown here, canceled May 9, 1997, is one I have never seen before: “MAIL DELAYED DUE TO SPRINKLERS BEING LEFT ON.” What new/unusual markings have you come across lately? Please send your discoveries to Editor Andrew Kelley.

Tony W's passing. Since our last quarterly issue, Tony W. passed away, and the AMC's Andrew Kelley, Doug Quine, and Peter Rikard, got together to prepare and distribute a special memorial edition of *Auxiliary Markings* to honor

Tony and his many accomplishments and contributions to philately and the AMC. Every member should have received one in a special mourning envelope. If you didn't, please let me know.

In recognition of Tony's long and faithful service to the Club, the Board has approved an award in his name for the best article in each year's run of *Auxiliary Markings*. It will carry with it a modest cash prize, and the first winner will be named for the 2023 run. In grateful thanks for Tony's service, and also to honor her having stepped in to take up the Treasurer's duties in an emergency a few years ago, the Board has also conferred Honorary Life Member status on Tony's wife, Mary.

AMC constitution and by-laws. Turning to the Board's efforts to revitalize the AMC, Doug Quine chaired a committee to update our constitution and by-laws; assisted by current VP Scott Steward and past president Ralph Nafziger. This long-needed project has been completed. Now, with a little luck and Board approval, it will be presented in this issue for approval by the Membership (which I urge). Early approval will allow us to resume an orderly future for the Club, including elections next year. Any Member who is willing



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Continued from page 1

to give a bit of time and talent to assure our future by serving in a Board position (President, Vice President, Secretary/Treasurer, Director) is welcome to let me know ASAP.

Questionnaire responses. I want to thank the 17 members who responded to the questionnaire distributed with our last issue. A report of the results can be found on our website, but I'll give you a précis here. Most respondents find our journal helpful, and would prefer to see it centered on US material, but with some foreign content.

Most respondents agree that the Club's first priority should be the creation of an auxiliary markings catalog, but this was not unanimous. Several suggested that building and expanding *Auxiliary Markings* is more needed, and that building up the membership is a vital need. (More on that below.)

Most would like to see a members-only auction, and a few respondents indicated that they could help with such a project, but no one volunteered to chair it. Again, anyone who would be willing to do that, please get in touch.

There were many helpful comments and suggestions and I appreciate the thought that went into those. They will guide future actions of the Board.

PIPEX '24 National AMC Convention. As previously announced, our first national meeting of the AMC will be at Portland, Oregon's annual PIPEX from May 3-5, 2024. The PIPEX Organizing Committee notes that in addition to philately, PIPEX has a good hotel (see below at the end of this column for details) at a reasonable price, free parking, free shuttle from the Portland Airport, good restaurants nearby, and a hospitality suite open Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings.

We need members to support AMC's participation by attending, exhibiting, presenting a program, and giving a few hours to help staff an information/recruiting table that the show will make available to us. This was an effort Tony was going to chair but that task seems to have fallen to me now, and I will definitely be there.

Several members have said that they will be attending and exhibiting, but more are needed so that we can have a good representation. Our object is not only to put up competitive gold medal exhibits but to show the breadth of our collecting field. If you can help by filling one or more frames, please let me know.

Likewise, if you can give a program, help with a table, would like to participate in a members' dinner, and/or have a related book or monograph that you would like to sell (and autograph) at our table, please get in touch.

The show will also make available a 16-page frame for the Club to present itself to all show-goers. Is there a Member who would step forward to do that frame?

Zoom meetings for club members and for those interested in AMS. AMC Director Gregg Redner has taken on the task of arranging Zoom meetings to encourage member interchange and to help publicize the fact that we exist. This vital function is one that I hope our members will participate in. Gregg will be updating his plans in a separate article in this issue.

Thank you to those of you who are working on behalf of the AMC and helping to publicize our collecting area. There are never enough willing hands, and I fervently pray that more of you will get in touch to offer your time and talents to make the AMC the best it can be, and to grow our part of the hobby.

PIPEX Hotel: Monarch Hotel and Conference Center, 12566 SE 93rd Ave., Clackamas, OR 97015. Phone 1 800 492-8700. Show rates are not yet settled.

Thank You From Mary Wawrukiewicz

A BIG THANK YOU to those who sent me a sympathy card after Tony's passing last July. I have enjoyed reading how Tony helped you with your postal questions. He never met a cover he didn't like. We will all miss him.

—Mary Wawrukiewicz

Tin Can Mail—A Case of Too Many Markings

by Jerry Johnson

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“**T**IN CAN MAIL” denotes how mail was delivered to Niuafou, a small island in Tonga. The island did not have a place for safe anchorage. A purser on a ship would put mail in a can and toss it to swimmers who would take the can to the island.

Sometime around 1929 a German trader named Walter Quensell began rubber stamping outgoing mail “Tin Can Mail”. Once stamp collectors found out about this mail service, Quensell began creating various cachets for the outgoing mail. In 1932 the Tongan government stopped the practice of using swimmers for the mail after one was bitten by a shark. At that point the island started to use canoes for the mail service. This continued until 1946, when the volcano erupted. The island was evacuated and the people did not return until 1962; and then tin can mail was resumed as a tourist attraction.

Quensell put his cachets on mail that entered and left the island. As he was sending the items around the globe, he started to print markings in foreign languages on the back side of the envelopes.

Above is the front and back of a cover sent to Niuafou from Brooklyn, NY in 1936. It is addressed to Mr. Quensell. The 5-cent stamp paid the correct UPU rate. In my opinion a single Tin Can Mail marking qualifies as an auxiliary marking. However, this cover is clearly a philatelic item since there are six markings on the front side denoting the item as tin can mail. Another one appears on the back side along with the various foreign language markings.

Enclosure Prohibited Exportation

by Andrew S. Kelley

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THIS COVER, sent to a German soldier in a French prisoner of war camp in July 1918, has a wealth of auxiliary marking and postal history interest. The New York censor station found that the cover contained material that could not be sent abroad (photos, picture postcards, stamps, etc.) and stamped it “ENCLOSURE PROHIBITED EXPORTATION.” The letter should have been returned to sender. Instead, it was sent to France as evidenced by the French censor tape and handstamp.

For reasons unknown—perhaps the end of World War I while the cover was in transit—the cover was not delivered to the German POW. Instead, it was returned to sender, arriving back in Kansas City, MO in January, 1919. At some point, several pointing hand return to sender marks were added.

Because the return address was Kansas City general delivery, the cover was advertised (evidently unsuccessfully) and then forwarded to the Dead Letter Office. Note the “DEAD LETTER BRANCH / CHICAGO, ILL / MINOR LETTER / NO. 47819” handstamp on the face of the cover. Since there is no postage due stamp collecting the advertising fee, it is likely that the cover was never reunited with the sender.



ENCLOSURE PROHIBITED EXPORTATION



Decédé/ Overleden Auxiliary Labels on Belgian Mail

by Gregg Redner, PhD

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UNTIL RECENTLY, the earliest known Belgian “deceased” auxiliary label came from a December 14, 1894 registered cover from France to Belgium. The cover may be seen on page 4 of *Auxiliary Markings*, Vol. VI, no. 2. The label is printed in red ink and is framed. The text is printed in two lines with no division, and the French term, *decédé* at the top is printed in serif capital letters. The Flemish term *overleden* is at the bottom and printed in lower case serif lettering.

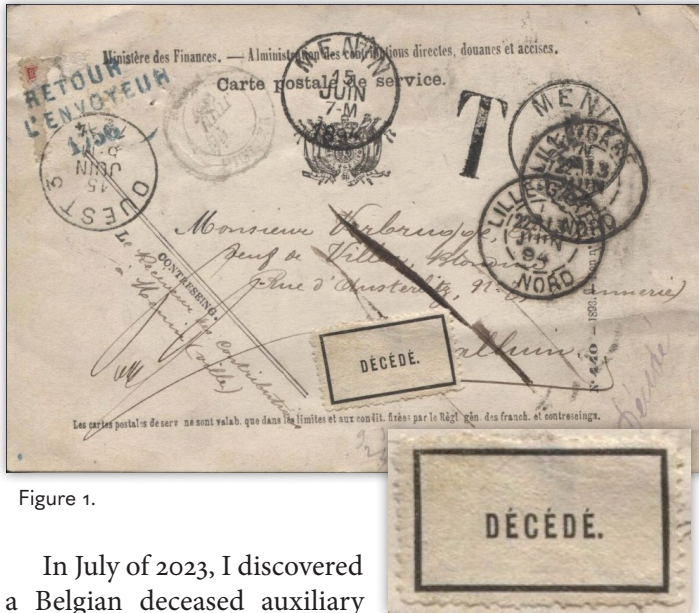


Figure 1.

In July of 2023, I discovered a Belgian deceased auxiliary label on a June 15, 1894 unpaid cover mailed from Menin to Halluin (See Figure 1), which is now the earliest known use of a Belgian deceased auxiliary label. This cover is extremely interesting for a number of reasons. First, the label is printed in black and not in red as the label discussed above is. Second, the wording is only in French, with no Flemish equivalent. It is not surprising that it is in French, as Halluin is a French town located

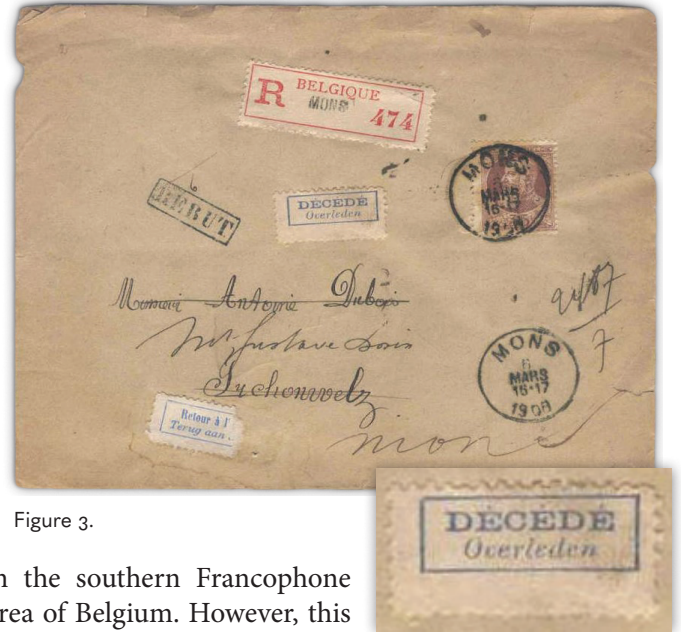


Figure 3.

in the southern Francophone area of Belgium. However, this is one of the very rare early Belgian auxiliary labels that does not have the term in both languages.

The difference in color between the December 14, 1894 example and this current one is also interesting. Although separated by only six months the two labels are completely different. This leads me to wonder whether the production of these labels pre-1910 was carried out locally or regionally.

The label has a solid rectangular frame and the word *decédé* appears in capital type without serifs. The text is followed by a period. This is the only example of a label in this format that I have ever found. Prior to the appearance of this label all *decédé* markings appear to have been placed in manuscript form.

Figure 2 seems to confirm the fact that these early labels were sourced at the local level. This registered cover was mailed in 1896 from and to the post office in Brussels, the



Figure 2.



Figure 4.

principal postal office (Perception Principale) in the country, yet it contains a manuscript *decédé* marking. Surely, if any office would have had labels for this purpose, the Brussels office would have, but did not.

This 1908 cover from Mons (See Figure 3) shows what would have been the standard format of the first generation of post office produced *decédé* labels, which appeared after the turn of the century. While the color of the printing has changed from red to blue, the label maintains the pre-twentieth century practice of placing the French language term at the top of the label in capitalized serif print and the Flemish in lower case serif italic lettering at the bottom. This style of label would remain standard into the 1910s.

Figure 4 shows a very interesting and rare 1922 deceased auxiliary marking handstamp. The supposition is that this handstamp was privately produced by the Post Office in Poperinghe, as a replacement handstamp following the cessation of hostilities in World War I. While the card was canceled by a hammer that is showing the year 19**, we can tell that it is post-WWI because the stamp used on the envelope is a King Albert I 1915 five centime issue. This stamp would not have been able to be used on Belgian mail during the occupation of the country by Germany. The five centime

stamp paid the rate for a postcard between November 15, 1918 and December

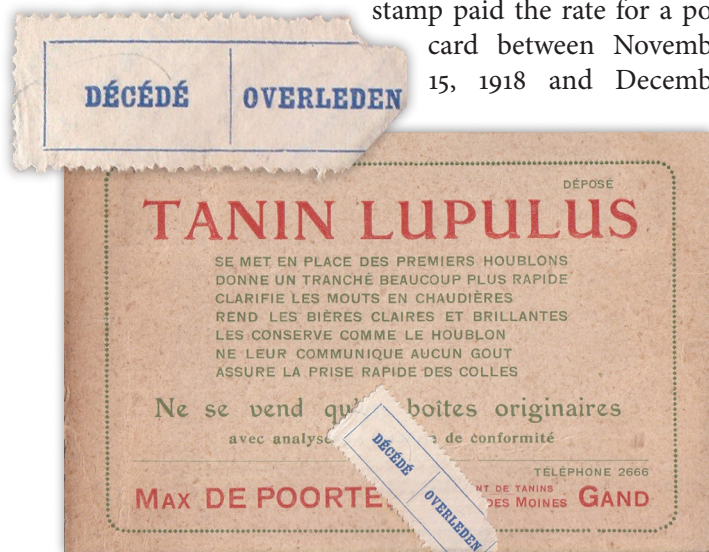


Figure 5.

11, 1919. Following the war most Belgian offices, who had destroyed their postal equipment as the German Army advanced, had to make do with whatever they could to cancel mail. This would have also been the case with the handstamps and labels of any kind. The handstamp shown in label clearly fits this brief.

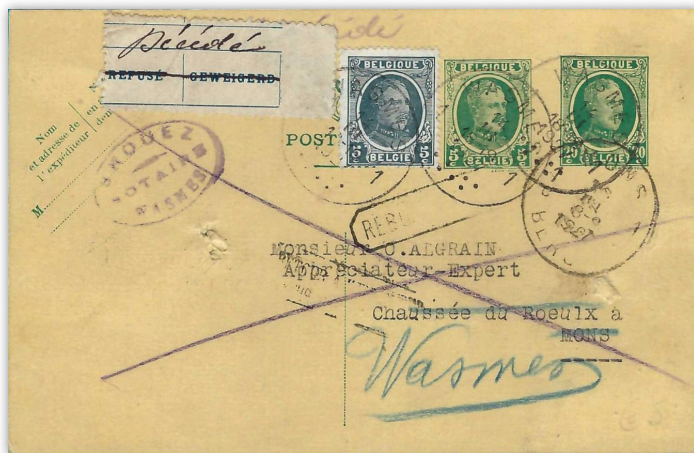


Figure 6.

By mid-1922 the format of deceased auxiliary labels had begun to parallel that of other Belgian auxiliary labels. Figure 5 shows an example of this, on a printed rate card. The format of the label shows a number of changes from just a year before. First, the framed text now appears in capital serif lettering in a single line. Gone is the ranked linguistic placement of the prior year's label. This is also an early example of the broken center line format, which along with



Figure 7

the single line capital disposition would remain present on and off into the early 1940s.

Figure 6 shows a 1927 "refused" auxiliary label that has been overwritten as not deliverable because the addressee

Continued on page 6

had died. One wonders why an appropriate deceased label was not put on the card, as certainly a large post office like Mons would have had a supply of these. In fact, the overwriting of auxiliary labels was forbidden according to Belgian postal regulations at the time, so this label is somewhat unique.

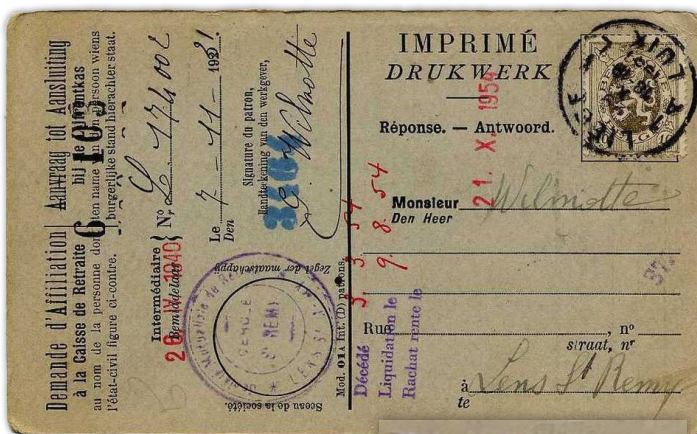


Figure 8.

Figure 7 (on the preceding page) shows a 1946 example of a decedé handstamp, the first we have encountered. The unbroken framed marking is printed in black in a two line format. The French language term is placed on top and printed in serif capital lettering, while the lower Flemish lettering is printed in a different sans-serif lower case format. This is a highly unusual and rare example of a mid-century decedé handstamp.

Figure 8 shows another deceased auxiliary marking handstamp, this time on a membership card from 1951. This handstamp, which is one of a kind, is an example of a



Figure 9.

non-postal auxiliary marking, as it was issued by a private organization and not the Belgian postal authority. Because the card did not need to conform to postal regulations, it is unique in that it does have a separate line for the Flemish language.

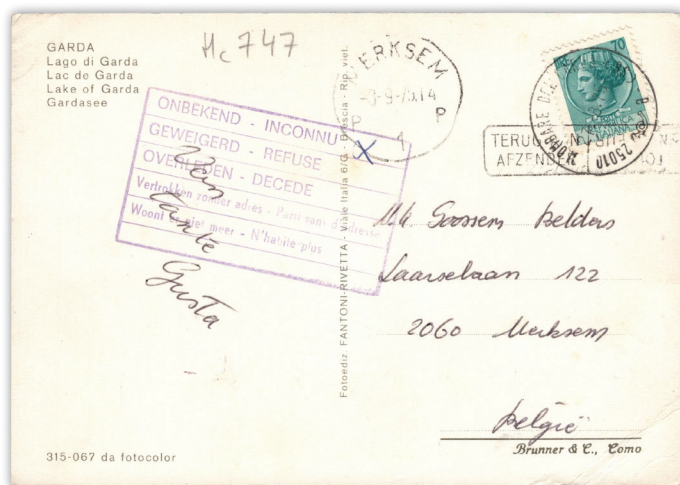


Figure 10.



Figure 11.

Figure 9 shows the post-World War II format we have come to recognize in previous articles in this series. In this instance, this 1953 cover shows a label in which the Flemish language, for the first time appears at the left and the French at the right. The framed label is constructed with discontinuous lines, as is the center dividing line. The text is printed with serif typeface and the ink is a darker blue. This format would remain in use into the mid-1960s.

Figure 10 shows a 1975 cover with an amalgamated format handstamp, which combines a number of the lesser used auxiliary markings into one handstamp, that can then be filled in by the postal clerk as appropriate. While this handstamp is not rare, it does not seem to have ever been put into large scale use. Notice that the frequently used "Terug den Afzender" (Return to Sender) auxiliary marking handstamp is separate, no doubt because it is employed more regularly.

Figure 11 shows a 1976 cover, with what would become the standard decédé label for the remainder of the century. The continuous line frame and center line features inverted text, which is politically neutral, printed in serif type face.



Figure 12.

Our final decédé/overleden auxiliary markings can be seen in Figure 12. This handstamp on a 2014 cover mailed to Oostkamp in West Flanders, a region in the Flemish speaking north, is unique in that it contains no French text at all. This reflects the growing political tensions in Belgium during this period.

Join Us for Our Next AMC Zoom Presentation Early Belgian Auxiliary Markings and Labels

ON TUESDAY, October 17, 2023 at 7:30 PM (EST), join Auxiliary Marking Club Director Gregg Redner for a discussion of the origin of Belgian auxiliary markings and labels. Gregg's talk will cover the period from 1830 until 1920. This area of study has remained largely untouched by philatelists and so much of Gregg's research is new and groundbreaking.

A Zoom link will be sent out to all members the week prior to the meeting. You may also access the link at <https://tinyurl.com/AMCZoom2>.

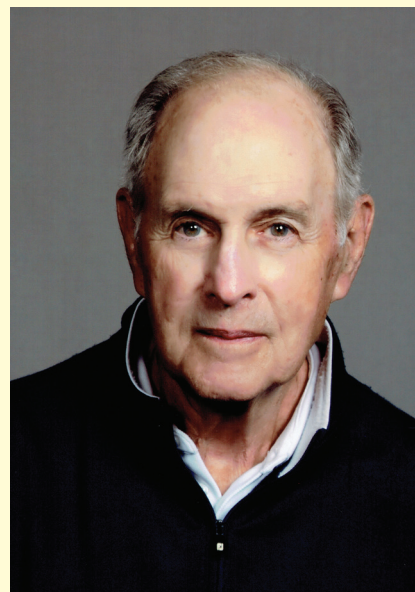


Meet Your Officers: Roger S. Brody Board Member

ROGER S. BRODY is a specialist, exhibitor, author, and lecturer in early twentieth century U.S. stamp production and postal history. Additional studies and exhibits include U.S. Embossed Revenue Stamped Paper, and the production and postal history of post-World War II U.S. definitive issues, specifically the Prominent Americans and Great Americans series.

He is active in organized philately as an elected governor, treasurer, and past president of The Collectors Club. He is Board chairman of the United States Stamp Society, serving since 1990, and a past member of the Smithsonian Institution's Council of Philatelists. Appointed to the Board of Trustees of the American Philatelic Research Library in 2005, he is an APRL Past President. He is also a recipient of The Collectors Club's Alfred F. Lichtenstein Award, the APS John N Luff Award for Research, and the Philatelic Foundation's Mortimer L. Neinken Medal for Meritorious Service, and a signer of the Roll of Distinguished Philatelists.

Roger is a member of the Westfield, NJ Stamp Club, The Jockey Hollow Stamp Club, The Collectors Club, and a Fellow of the Royal Philatelic Society London.



Belgian Postal Labels

by Bas Kee and Jan C. ter Welle

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AT THE UPU Congress in Paris on July 1, 1878, it was recommended to return postal items, which could not be delivered to sender, citing the reason why. This recommendation was followed by the Belgian Postal Authorities in 1885.

The first time “postal labels” were mentioned was during the UPU congress in Vienna on July 4, 1891.

The Belgium post office issued Instruction No. 20 on July 9, 1892 prescribing that the reason why postal items were returned should be mentioned by way of labels nos. 399/406. (Where this numbering comes from is unknown). Their size was restricted to 2x5 cm, they must be bilingual, with red print on white paper and be printed in sheets of 75 labels and their number printed in the sheet edge.

The following labels came into use:

- 399: RÉFUSÉ/Geweigerd
- 400: INCONNU/Onbekend
- 401: Non Réclamé/Niet afgehaald
- 402: DÉCÉDÉ/Overleden
- 403: Retour à l'envoyeur/Terug aan afzender
- 404: Adres Insuffisante/Onvoldoende adres
- 405: Non admis au transport/Niet ter vervoer toegelaten
- 406: Parti sans laisser d'adresse/Vertrokken zonder adres op te geven

On the returned items the local postman had to put his signature or his number. See Figure 1.

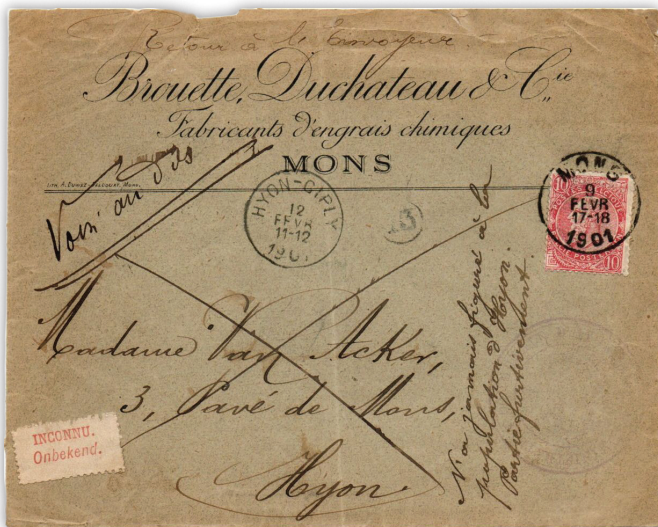


Figure 1.

Since 1894 these labels were printed in blue color on white paper and in 1900 labels were issued with the text framed.

Until 1910 French was the main language and Dutch was only a translation until a law was passed on bilingualism. The French text was the top line and Dutch was in italic on the bottom line. The layout changed and since then both

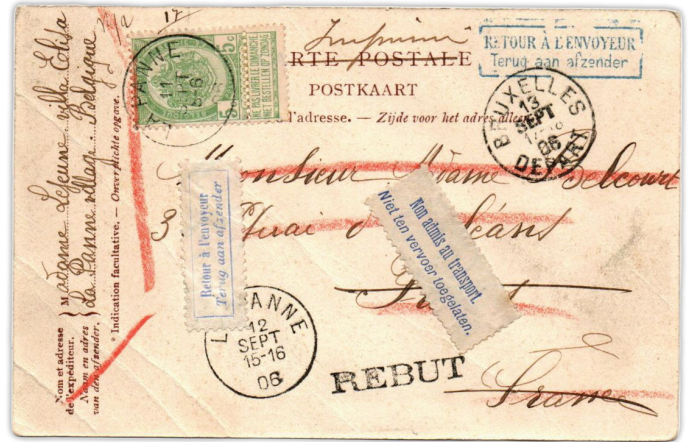


Figure 2.

languages were printed next to each other and in the same lettertype.

And they came in a large variety; see Figure 3:

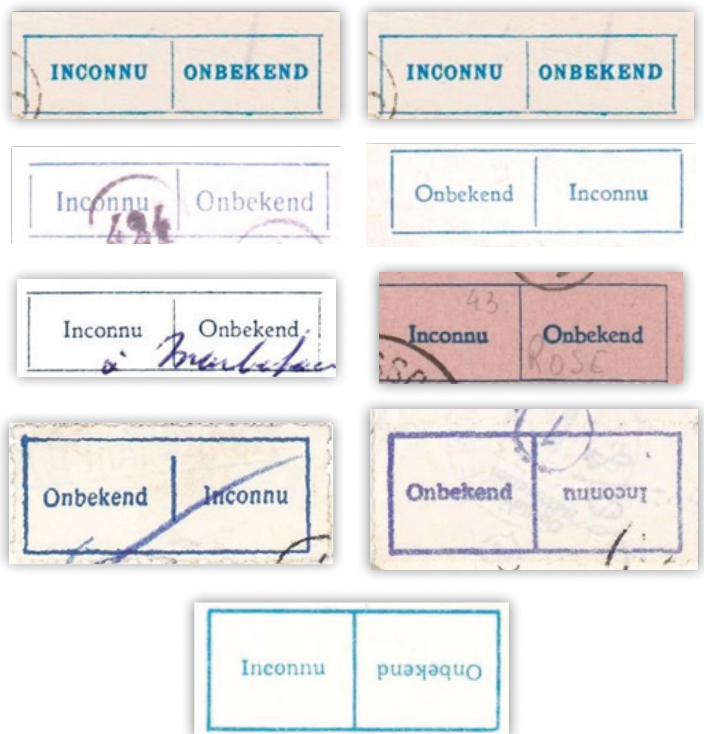


Figure 3.

French first for the French speaking part and Dutch for the Dutch speaking part and even in a few cases a 3rd language: German for the German speaking region in the eastern part. See Figure 4.

In 1932 a totally new set of reasons appeared to be necessary and a large number of new labels were issued, of course in French and Dutch. In

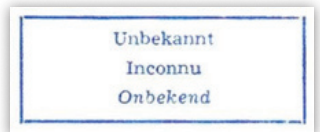


Figure 4.

this summary I will give only the Dutch text and, between parentheses, the translation in English:

130: Overleden (deceased)

131: Overleden Erfgenamen onbekend (deceased heirs unknown)

132: Overleden erfgenamen vertrokken zonder adres op te geven (heirs moved without leaving address) 133: Geweigerd (refused)

134: Geweigerd voor het strafport (refused because of the tax)

135: Geweigerd zonder reden op te geven (refused without reasons)

136: Niet ter vervoer toegelaten (not allowed in transport)

137: Vertrokken zonder adres (moved without leaving address)

138: Niet afgehaald (not collected)

139: Terug aan afzender (return to sender)

140: Ontoereikend adres (insufficient address)

141: Onbekend (unknown)

142: Niet bestelbaar te Huize/bericht afgegeven op (not delivered at the address/message left)

144: Gebruikte taal niet aangeduid (used language not mentioned)*

145: adres van afzender ontbreekt (sender's address unknown)

237: Afwezig de... bericht afgegeven (absent on... message left)

238: Huis gesloten (house/company closed)

239: Afwezig den.../tot... (absent from.../till...)

241: Afwezig/opnieuw aan te bieden (absent/to be offered again)

319: Kon niet uitgereikt worden (could not be delivered)

831: Afwezig de (absent on)

835: Woont niet meer op het aangeduide adres (does not live anymore at the given address)**

*During WW II, from October 4, 1944 till April 13, 1945 it was obliged to mention on the cover in which language the letter was written.

**the original text of this label was: "parti pour" or "vertrokken naar" (moved to). This label was withdrawn in 1961 as it was not allowed anymore to mention the new address of the addressee to the sender. This label was replaced with the text as now mentioned under nr. 835.

The following selection of labels illustrates the above:



Figure 5.



Figure 6.

Continued from page 9

In the official instruction 5.2.0.1 VII-13 from December 16th 1983 a new label no. 143 was announced to replace the labels with the most common reason: 130, 133, 137, 138, 140 and 141. The label is bilingual and printed in sheets of 32 labels. The postman marks the reason and puts his signature or number on the label. The trilingual labels remain in use. See Figure 6 on the prior page.

There was a lot of testing with multi-reason labels; See Figure 7.

Figure 7.

Finally, the final layout was found. See Figure 8.

Figure 8.

Believe it or not, there is nothing lasting forever in this world and after a couple of years we are back at the single reason labels. See Figure 9.

Receipt Cards

On January 2, 1919, a method was introduced to collect money from customers via the postman.

In case collecting failed, the receipt card was returned to sender provided with a label informing him the reason why. Next to the standard labels some new three-language ones were introduced:

Figure 9.

832: Niet eens (does not agree)

833: Zal op het kantoor komen (will report in the office)

834: Reeds betaald (already paid)

836: Vruchteloze aanbieding (offered without success)

837: Zal aan de trekker betalen (will make payment)

???: geen geld (no money)

Figure 10.

Source: -FISTO-STUDIE no. 84 by "Filatelistische Studiekkring Oost-Vlaanderen" and the authors' collections.

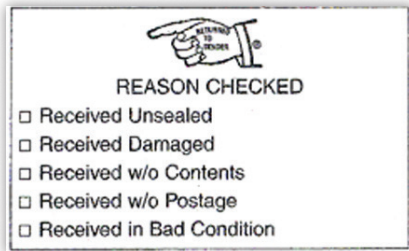
Newly Found Format of “Without Contents” Marking

by Douglas B. Quine, PhD and Otto E. Bergman

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THE UNITED States Postal Service (USPS) and the (previous) Post Office Department have been understandably very concerned about maintaining the integrity of mail entrusted to them. When the USPS finds empty envelopes, the envelopes are marked to document they were received without contents. Like so many auxiliary markings, the exact wording and formats vary from one handstamp to another. There have been nine reports across 6 articles of “WITHOUT CONTENTS” handstamps in the twenty-year run of our Auxiliary Markings Newsletter. I thank Dennis Ladd for his extraordinary index enabling me to find the reports at www.postalmarkings.org/newsletter.html—our free AMC newsletter article archive (Volume/ Number/ Page):

- II/3/3 [#1 handstamp available to order in 1909]
“Received without contents at _____”
[#2 handstamp available to order in 1923]
“Received without contents at”
- III/1/11 [#3 with a pointing finger and checklist]



- III/2/13 [#4 with a pointing finger]



- III/3/5 [#5-7 two text and one with pointing finger]

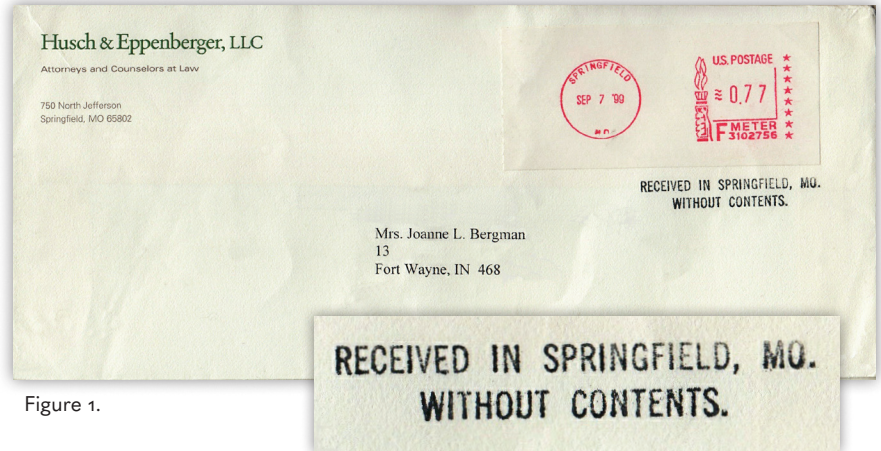
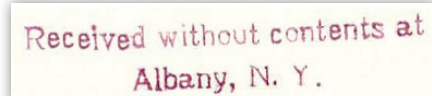
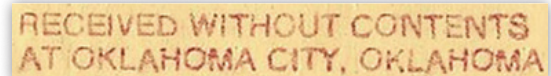


Figure 1.

- XIII/1/3 [#8 DBQ's first day cover without a filler]



- XVI/3/8 [#9 when the USPS found the contents, they added a “REMATCHED” marking to the envelope; the original published image detail spelled out the state name “Oklahoma” in full which was not shown on the original cover]



Here we report a newly found format discovered by Otto Bergman's wife as she was sorting through old paperwork in the basement and found an envelope (Figure 1) mailed from Springfield MO to Ft. Wayne IN. The USPS observed the contents were missing at the origin. The order of the “RECEIVED IN SPRINGFIELD, MO. WITHOUT CONTENTS.” message is reversed from previous handstamps. Here the city name is placed in the middle of the message and the text is slightly changed. The wording is altered to say the envelope was received “IN” the city rather than the previously reported markings which were received “AT” the city.

This is a particularly nice example because it was a heavy mailing from a legal office which therefore received a postage meter strip at the 3-ounce rate (33¢ + 22¢ + 22¢). The contents of such a mailing would likely have been important so the fact that they were missing from the envelope was especially imperative for the USPS to document. The glue on the envelope flap remains mint but a narrow piece of Scotch tape was applied suggesting the mailer did stuff the envelope with a bulky document and attempted to secure it – but the document was missing upon arrival at the Springfield MO office. Almost a quarter century later, exactly what happened isn't known.

Undeliverable Airmail to Sweden

by Dennis W. Ladd

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AT RIGHT is an airmail cover from the U.S. to Sweden that was undeliverable, apparently because the recipient had moved. The cover, front and back, shows a variety of Swedish auxiliary marks.

The cover front is marked with the phrase “äter avsändaren” which means return to sender. Easily visible is a label with the familiar “RETOUR” and the Swedish “RETUR”, or return.

The back of the cover is marked with two different check boxes. Swedish terms are paired with the French equivalents. The label on the left reads:

inconnu / okänd = unknown

déménagé / flyttat = moved

adresse insuffisante / ofullständig adress = insufficient address

refuse / vägrad = refused

non réclamé / ej efterfrågad = unclaimed

The large handstamp on the right reads:

adressaten = addressee

okänd (är okänd = unknown

flyttat = moved

Adressundersökningen = the address search

The small handstamp under address: Åter avsändaren = return to sender



AMC at the Great American Stamp Show

WE HAD a lively Auxiliary Markings show-and-tell at GASS in Cleveland. Over a dozen collectors participated, sharing interesting markings from their collections and helping each other decipher some mystery markings. And AMC may have even recruited a new member or two. Thanks to all who participated. (Next time your Editor will circulate a sign-in sheet so we can recognize participating members by name!)



Want to host an AMC show-and-tell at your show? Contact AMC President John Hotchner at jmhstamp@verizon.net.