

# BORDEAUX POSTAL MARKINGS BEFORE THE FRENCH REVOLUTION, 1690-1792 SYNOPSIS

The pre-revolution postal markings were in use in Bordeaux after 1701. Prior to 1701 only hand-written markings were applied. After the French revolution, the "Poste-aux-lettres" markings were replaced by linear hand stamps as the Poste-aux-lettres was now administered by the State.

Most of the markings of that period are built around the letter **B**, for Bordeaux. This **B** is crowned by a fleur-de-lys to indicate royalty and a crescent that is also a symbolic representation for Bordeaux. Bordeaux is called "Port de la lune" or "Moon-shaped harbor" as it is situated along a curve of the Garonne river. Here are the components of the design:



**B**, fleur-de-lys and crescent  
They combine to form:



Type A



Type B

Wear and tear were the main reasons for the many varieties of the design of this postmark that were in use for about 90 years. I have organized them in two distinct groups: Type A when the **B** crowned with a fleur-de-lys is surrounded by circle(s) and the B-type when there is no circle. Other sub-groups are based upon the size of the crescent as well as that of the letter **B**.

This exhibit presents an overall look at the major variations in the markings as issued up until 1792 at which point their use was ended as royalty had been deposed. In addition to the regular markings used on inland mail, some examples of maritime mail are exhibited and described. Note that the maritime markings are rare and often very difficult to acquire.

Many of the documents are commercial, usually related to wine purchasing transactions or lawyers' documents regarding the non-payment of a debt, or between government officials.

Note that the precise calculation of the fees is often difficult to ascertain since at that time it depended on the number of sheets the letter contained, and the distance between the origin and destination post offices. There were charges for delivery outside the city limits while maritime mail entailed a special "voie de mer" fee. In addition, these fees were usually paid in cash and only partially indicated on the letter.

For background information the following references were consulted and formed the basis of information used in preparing this exhibit.

- Pierre Dominique Rey, Jean-Pierre Lairaud, *Monographie postale du département de la Gironde. Des origines à 1876.*
- Jean Pothion. L'Oblitération Française. *La Poste aux Lettres*, 1976.
- Roger Wallart. Les tarifs de la Poste aux Lettres de 1759 et de 1792. *Les Feuilles Marcophiles*, no.273.
- Guy Maggay. <http://marcophilie.org/litterature-marques-postales-1.html>