

# MAIL BETWEEN USA AND FRANCE IN WORLD WAR II (1939-1945)

Synopsis for the INDYPEX 2025 Jury  
(September 2025)

**Treatment:** This six-frame postal history exhibit documents the postal relations between USA and France from the beginning of World War II in September 1939 through August 1945 when service between the two nations was fully resumed.

The status of German forces in France provides the organizing principle for this exhibit. Their presence in a particular region determined whether mail service was available, regardless of whether USA was a neutral or belligerent country. For example, service to/from occupied France during the time when USA was neutral (1940-1941) was not permitted. However, mail to/from neutral Vichy France (1939-1942) after USA entered the war was allowed.

According to the US *Postal Bulletin* (PB 18278) mail service to 44 departments and portions of an additional 14 departments in occupied France was officially suspended, effective September 5, 1941. [*De facto* suspension began shortly after the fall of France in June 1940.] The exhibit shows examples from a wide geographic distribution in order to emphasize this important point. Numerous examples from geographic areas throughout Vichy France are provided in order to make the same point. These multiple examples should therefore not be considered redundant.

Each section of the exhibit differs in length depending on the complexity of the postal history. For example, in the Occupied France 1940-1944 section, because suspension of postal relations was well publicized in USA and France, little mail was attempted after September 5, 1941 when postal relations were officially suspended (PB 18278). Thus, this section is relatively short. The section on resumption of mail service is longer due to the complexity caused both by the time period and the types of mail permitted. Here the *Postal Bulletin* published no fewer than 17 directives over an 11-month period, each coming in the wake of retreating German forces.

**Personal study:** The US *Postal Bulletin* directives regarding resumption of mail service provide the names of towns, cantons, and departments, the majority of which have little geographic meaning to most collectors. However, these regions, when placed on maps, reveal an immediate logic for the resumption of service in the wake of retreating German forces. For example, the first directive is illustrated below:

**RESTRICTED RESUMPTION OF MAIL SERVICE TO CERTAIN AREAS IN FRANCE**  
ORDER No. 25851; DATED SEPTEMBER 4, 1944.  
A limited mail service will be resumed to France as follows:  
Effective at once, nonillustrated post cards in English or French, on personal or family matters, shall be accepted for delivery to civilians in Creully, Cantons of Douvres, Bayeux, Ryes, Tilly, Caen, Balleroy, Trevieres and Isigny-sur-Mer in department of Calvados as well as Cantons north of and including St. Malo-de-la-Lande, St. Sauveur-Landelin, Coutances, St. Jean-de-Daye, Periers and St. Clair-Sur-l'Elle in department of Manche.  
The postage rate applicable for these cards shall be the same as was in effect prior to suspension of service to France (3 cents each).  
As stated above the service is limited for the present to ordinary post cards exclusively.  
The foregoing applies to mail originating only in the continental United States (excluding Alaska).



Sites of the June 6, 1944 Normandy landing

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## Purpose and Scope

This postal history exhibit illustrates the impact of World War II on transmission of the mails from the United States to France and from France to the United States. It emphasizes interruption, suspension, and resumption of service in both directions. Included are air and surface letter mail, printed matter, special services mail, and transit mail to and from France passing through the New York exchange office. Coverage starts from the beginning of the War in 1939 and ends with full resumption of service in August 1945.

## Importance

France was one of three overrun countries in World War II in which postal relations with the United States occurred in the presence of occupying German forces (Italy, France, The Netherlands). This exhibit, which spans the entire War, examines a complex postal history resulting from challenges posed by a nation first partitioned into an occupied zone and a neutral zone (Vichy), and later into a fully occupied country.

## Organization

The exhibit is divided into five sections based on the status of German military forces in France. Covers appear in roughly chronological order within sections.

## Key items

Covers of special philatelic or historical note have been bordered in red **and annotated in bold.**

## Plan

### I. Pre-Occupation

USA to France  
USA to Monaco  
France to USA  
Monaco to USA

### II. Occupation

USA to France  
France to USA

### III. Vichy France

USA to France  
USA to Monaco  
France to USA  
Monaco to USA  
French colonies to USA

### IV. Suspension of Service

USA to France  
USA to Monaco  
USA to Switzerland  
France to USA

### V. Resumption of Service

USA to France  
France to USA