



France & Colonies Philatelic Society

The Most Beautiful Bridge in Paris

By Tom Broadhead

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The Most Beautiful Bridge in Paris

Paris, France – the “City of Light” is also a city of bridges. Straddling the Seine River, the French capital is connected above ground by 37 bridges (in French – *ponts*), including 5 pedestrian spans (*passerelles*). A bridge across the Seine is documented from Roman times, and bridges today represent construction from the 16th to the 20th centuries.

This exhibit shows French stamp and postal stationery designs that include images of Parisian bridges. It focuses on the late 19th century French and Russian friendship that led to the construction of the most beautiful bridge in Paris – the *Pont Alexandre III*.

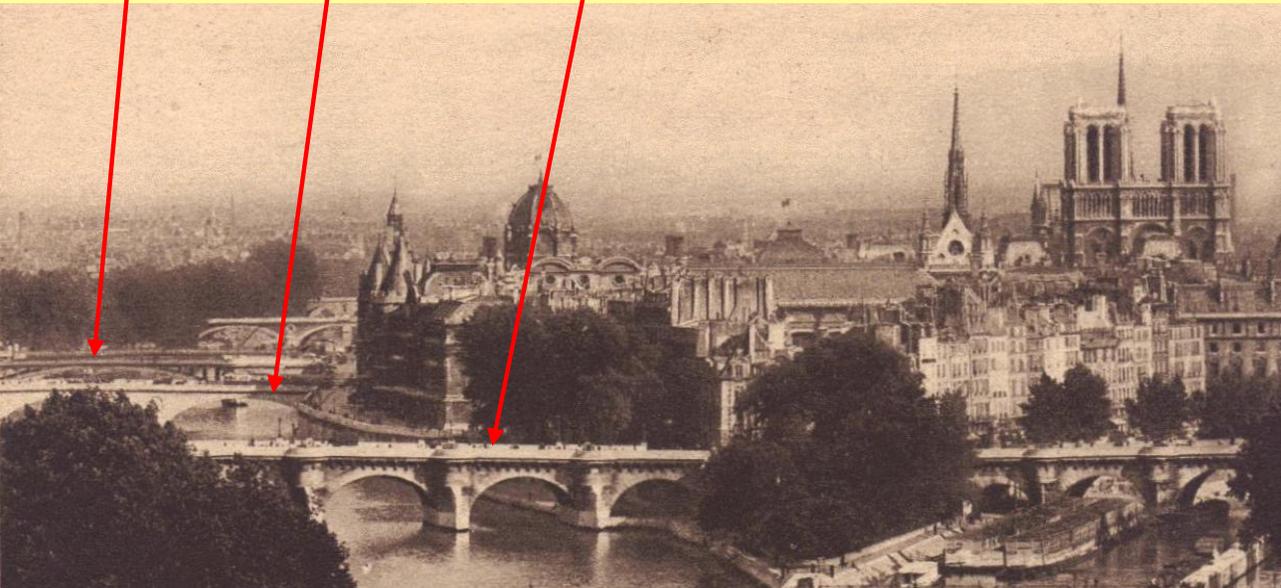
Paris Olympics - 1924



*Pont
Notre
Dame*

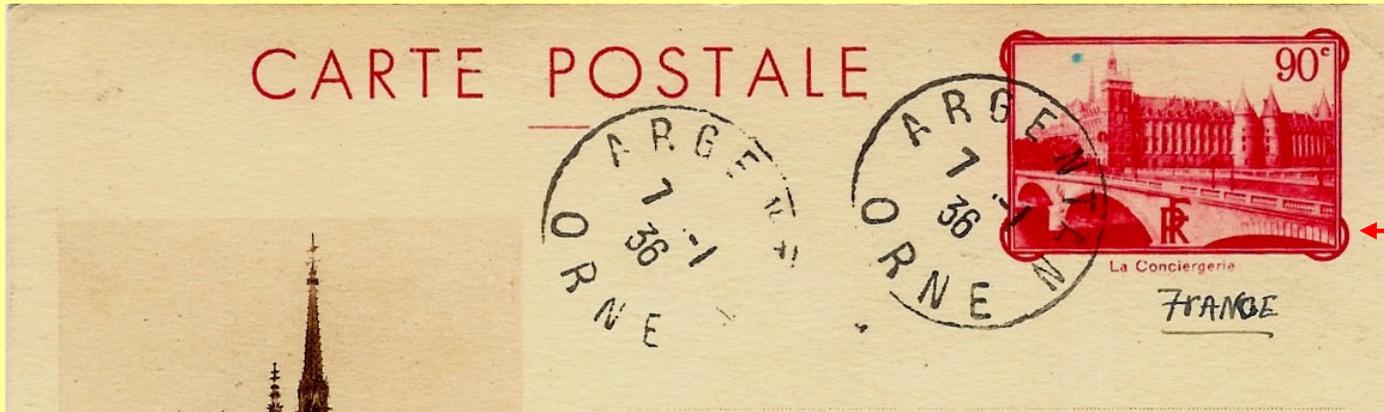
*Pont au
Change*

*Pont
Neuf*

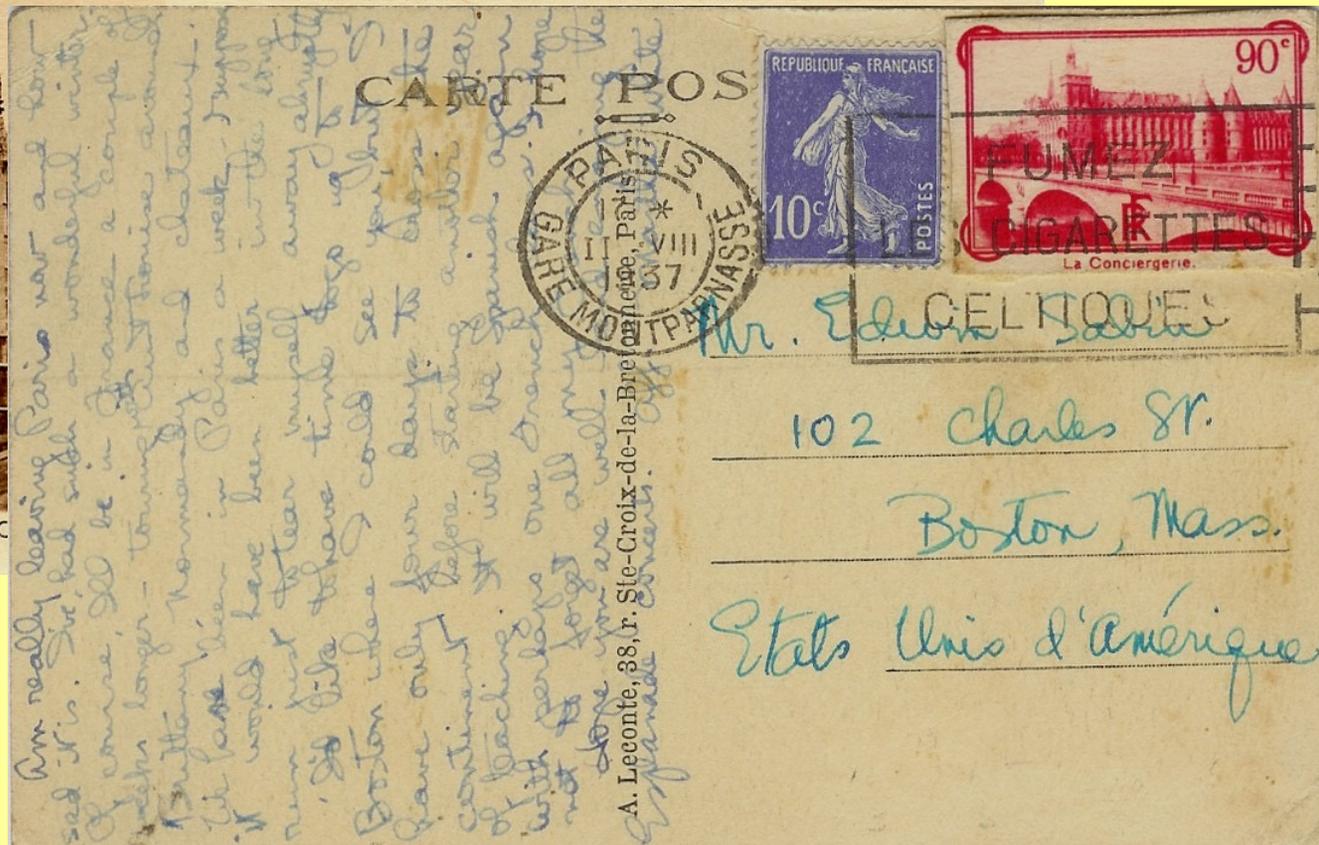
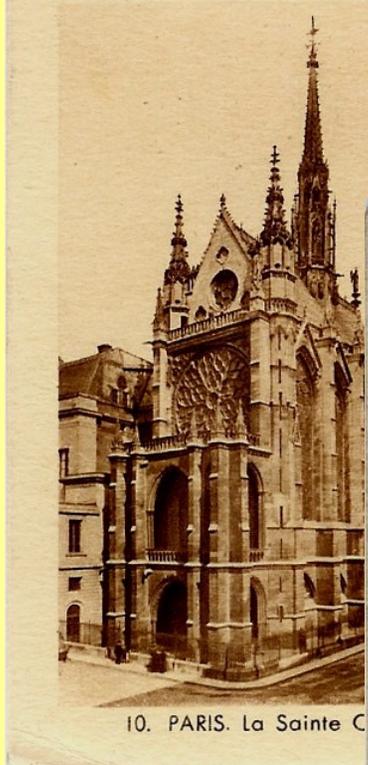


The 25 centime stamp in the 1924 Paris Olympic series was the first to show bridges in Paris, and the first to show a scene of Paris.

Illustrated Postal Card - 1935



Pont au Change



Illegal cut-out used with stamp for the 1 franc postcard rate.

Illustrated Postal Cards - 1935



Two cards in the 1935 illustrated series featured non-stamp images of Paris bridges.



Pont de la Tournelle

Pont de la Concorde

1936 Airmails

The 1936 airmail design, “Airplane over Paris,” shows many identifiable monuments, but only one Seine River bridge. The bridge’s five low arches suggest the *Pont d’Iéna* and a view looking toward the northeast..



Pont d'Iéna



The same design as the airmail series above was repeated at a smaller size as the vignette for the high denomination airmail stamp also issued in 1936.

1947 – the UPU issue

Four regular postage stamps, two showing bridges, and a large format airmail stamp were issued in 1947 to commemorate the 12th Universal Postal Union Congress held in Paris.



Pont au Change



Pont Neuf

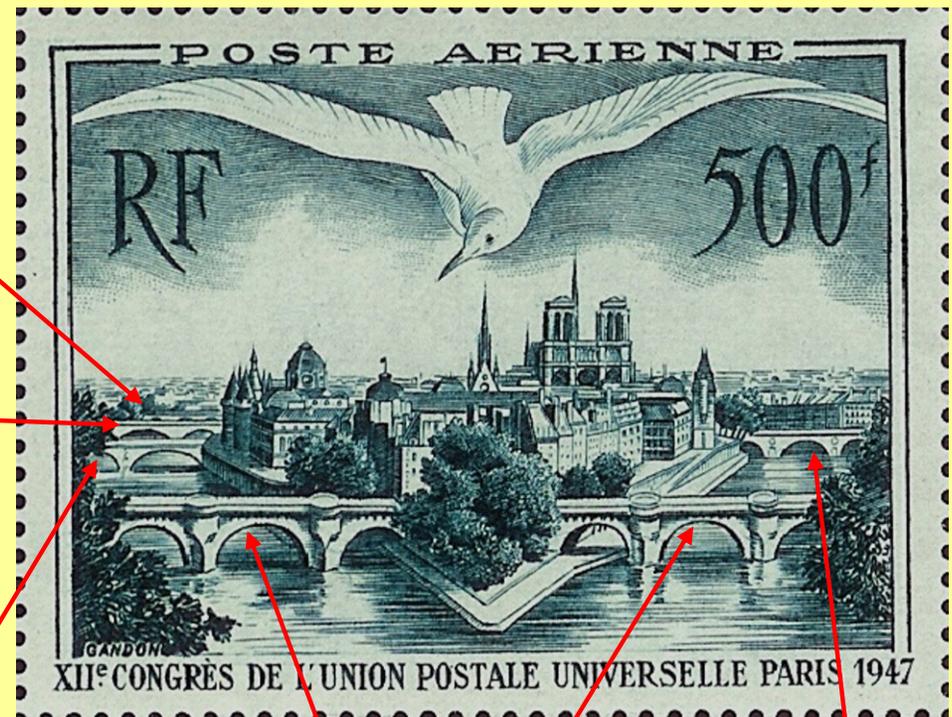
*Pont
Louis-
Philippe*

*Pont
Notre
Dame*

Pont au Change

Pont Neuf

Pont Saint Michel



1947 – UPU Panorama Design



The design of the 500 UPU airmail, attributed to Henri Gandon, is nearly identical to the design by René Cottet of the postcard and cinderella issued in 1943 for the Paris Philatelic Exposition. The cloud pattern is different, as are the plane and bird.

French City Views – 1949-1950

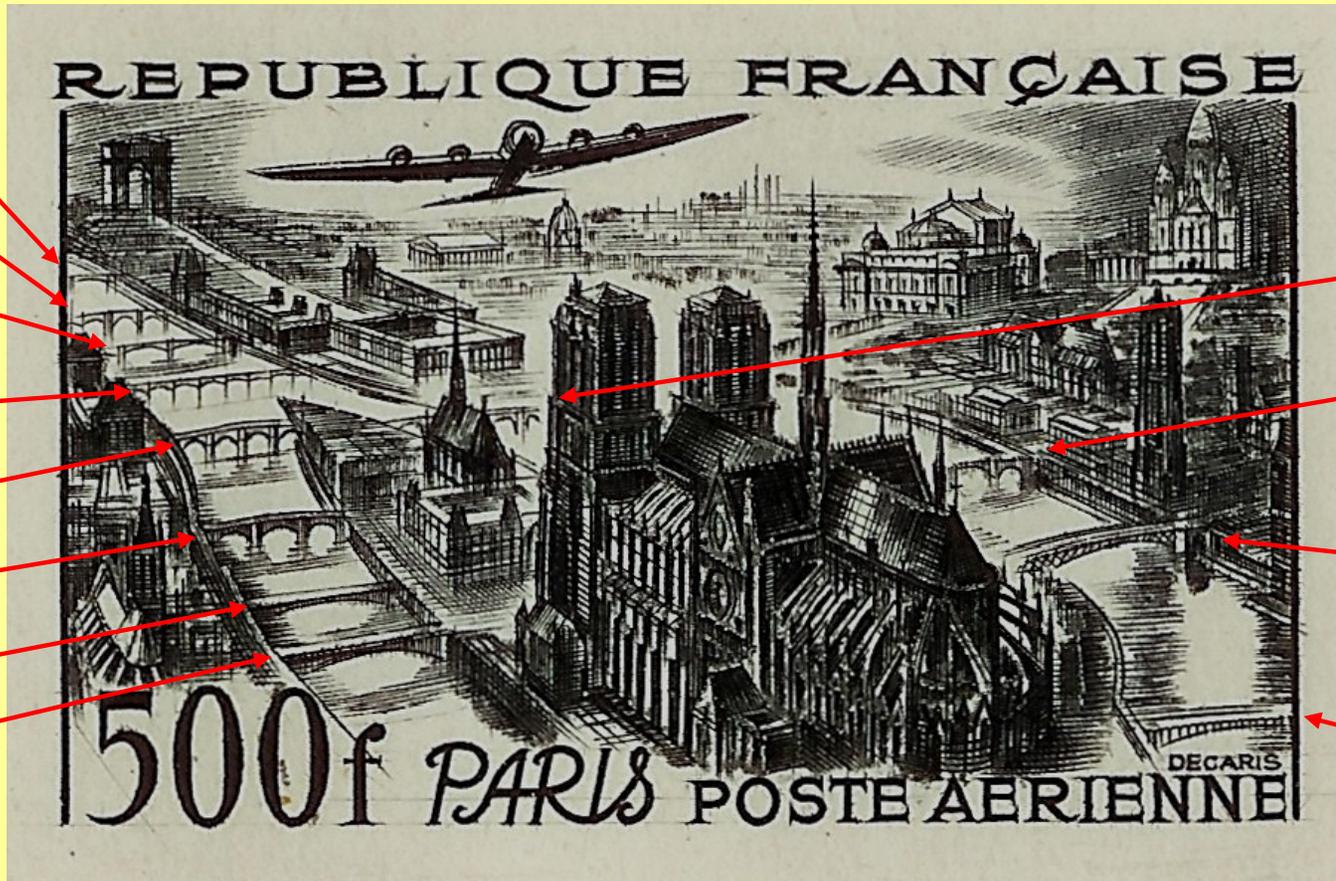
High denomination definitive air mail stamps were issued in 1949-1950 showing aerial views of major French cities.



Engraved proof of the essay of an unadopted design by Albert Decaris with hand notation “non emis” (not issued) and signed by the artist.

French City Views – 1949-1950

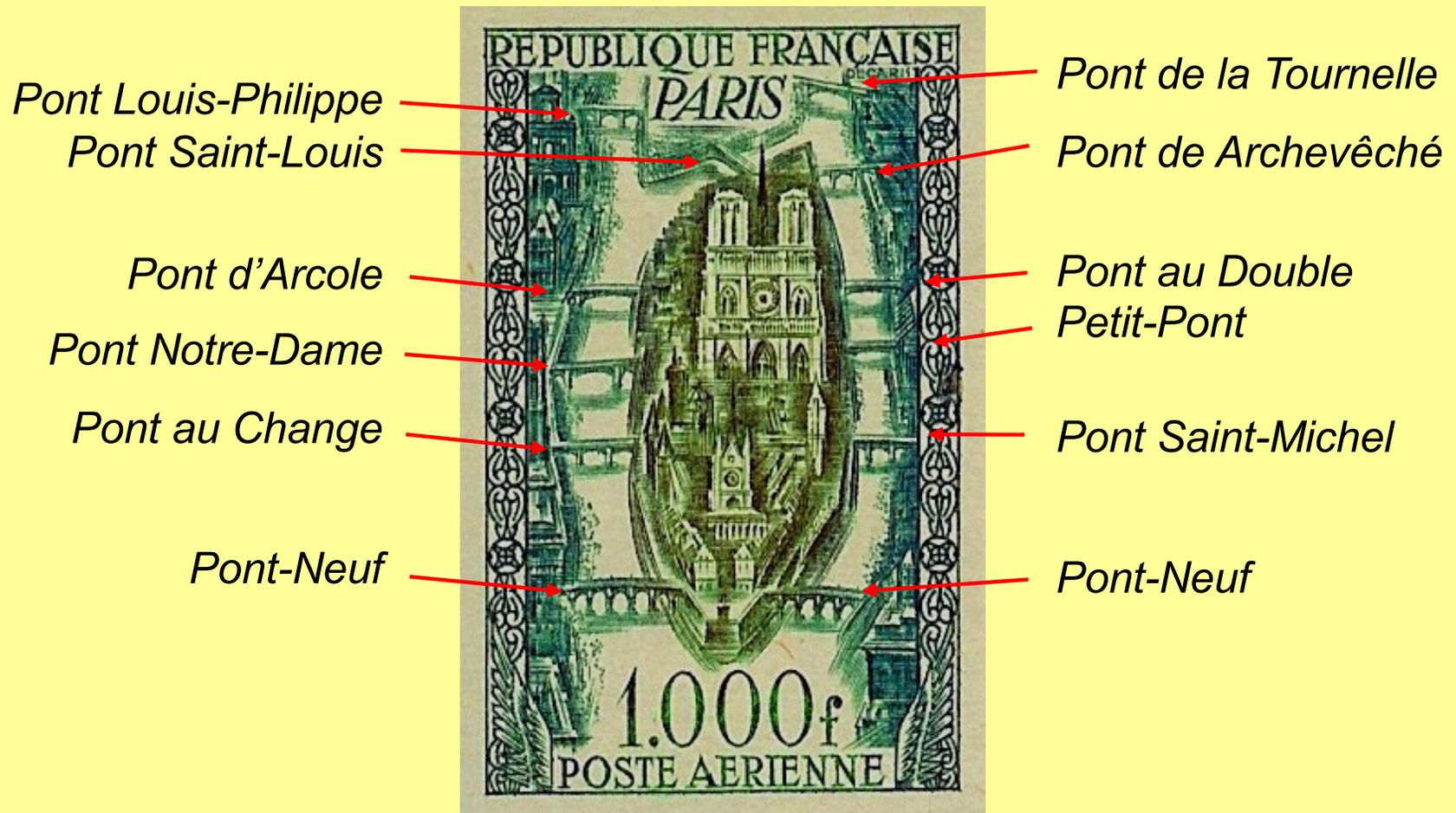
*Pont de la
Concorde
Pont Royal
Pont du
Carrousel
Passerelle
des Art
Pont Neuf
Pont Saint-
Michel
Petit Pont
Pont au
Double*



*Pont Neuf
Pont au
Change
Pont
Notre-
Dame
Pont
d'Arcole*

Enlarged image of the essay shown on page 8, the unadopted design by Decaris featuring 12 identifiable Paris bridges.

French City Views – 1949-1950



Essay of another unadopted design by Albert Decaris depicting a nearly overhead view of the Île de la Cité with 12 identifiable bridges.

French City Views – 1949-1950

The adopted design by Albert Decaris shows ten identifiable Paris bridges. The distinctive single span of the *Pont Alexandre III* is at the top. An unidentified bridge with three piers appears near the top. The three-arched *Pont au Change* is missing.

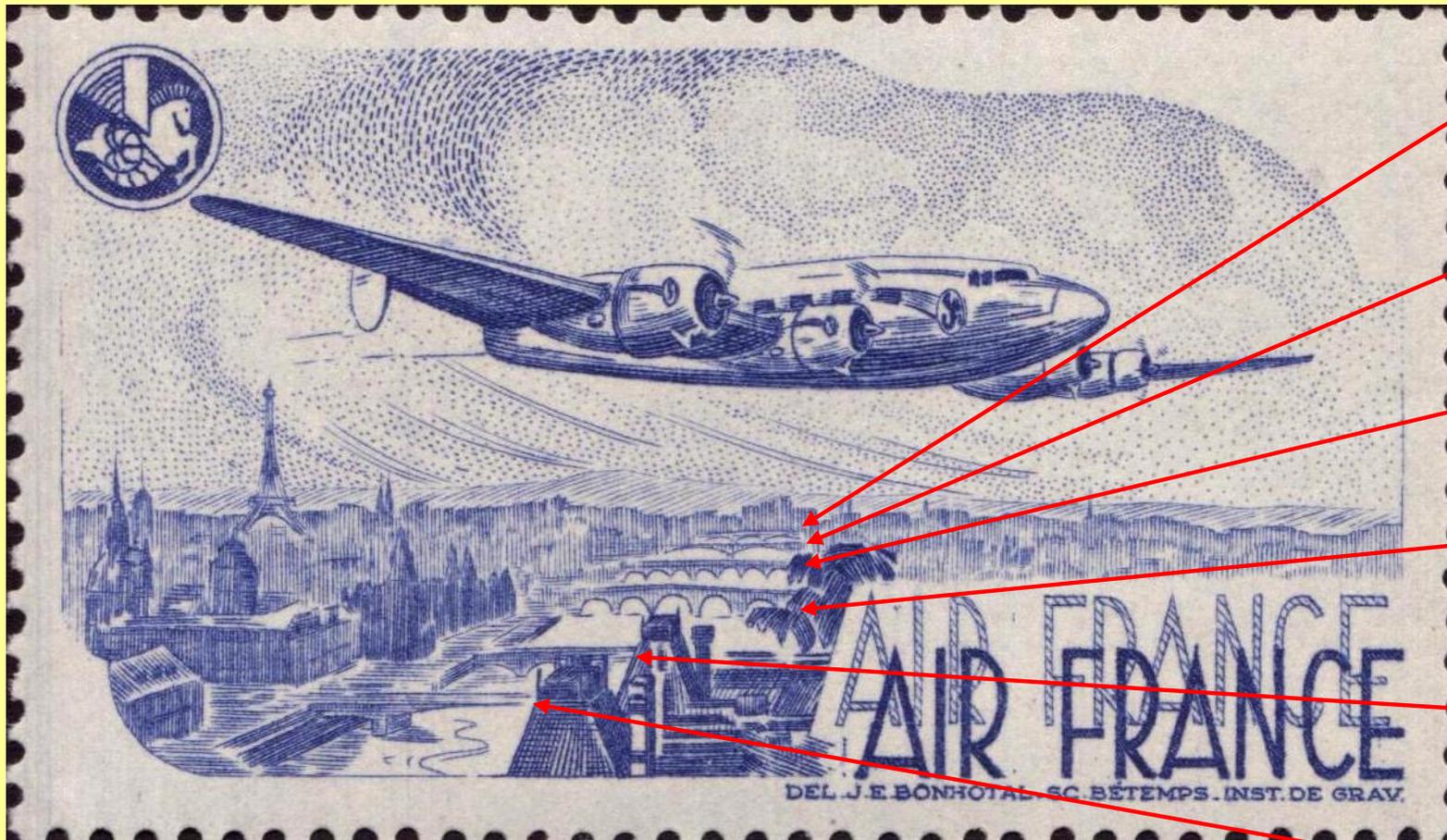


- Pont Alexandre III*
- Pont de la Concorde*
- ?
- Pont Royal*
- Pont du Carousel*
- Passerelle des Arts*
- Pont-Neuf*
- (*Pont au Change*)
- Pont Notre-Dame*
- Pont d'Arcole*
- Pont Louis-Philippe*
- Pont Marie*

View looking west

Air France Series – 1950's

Four nondenominated essays appeared in the early 1950's, intended for use on air mail to various destinations. The "low value" showed a view of Paris.



*Pont du
Carrousel*

*Passerelle
des Arts*

Pont Neuf

*Pont au
Change*

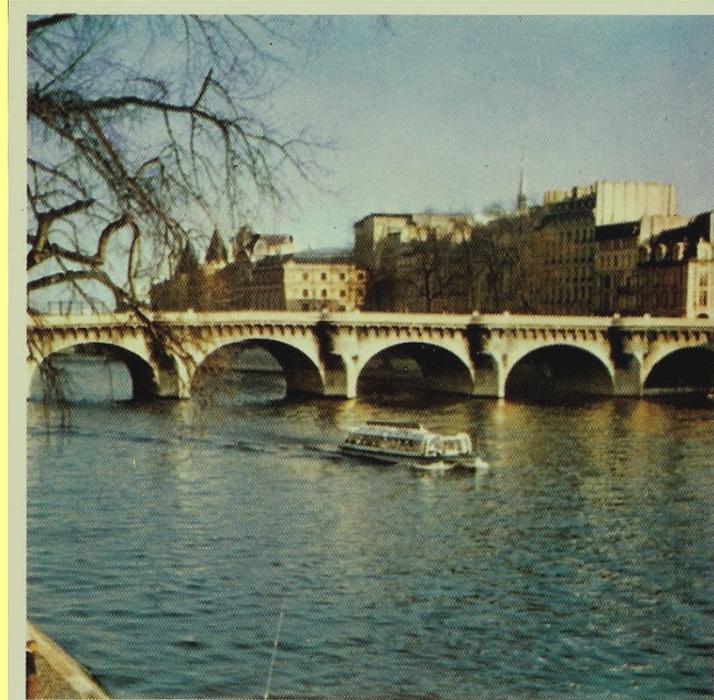
*Pont
Notre-Dame*

*Pont
d'Arcole*

The stylized representation includes exaggerated numbers of arches in the *Pont au Change* and *Pont Neuf*.

Recent Bridge Stamps

Three more recent stamps have featured Paris bridges.



Pont Neuf (1978), built in 1578, is the oldest bridge in Paris. Maximum card, first day cancel.



Passerelle des Arts (1978), built in 1804, rebuilt in 1984



Passerelle des Arts (2005) with *Pont Neuf* in the background

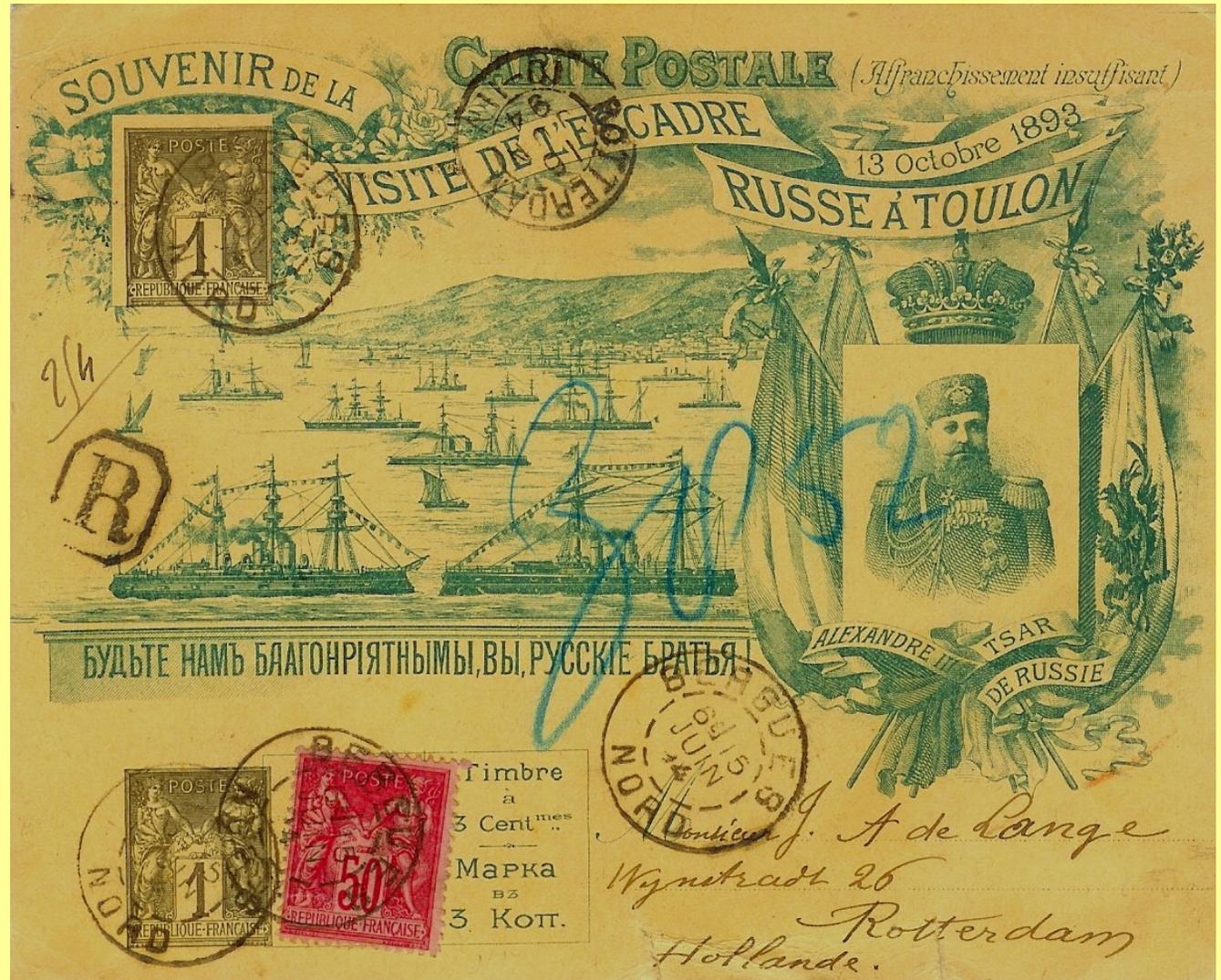
French-Russian Friendship

The *Pont Alexandre III* is tangible evidence of French-Russian friendship in the late 19th century.

Diplomatic relations between France and Russia were especially good in the 1890's.

A formal military alliance was signed in 1892. Navy squadrons visited each other's ports in 1891 and 1893.

France issued a postal card featuring Czar Alexander III to commemorate the visit to Toulon by the Russian naval squadron in 1893.



Death of Alexander III

The unexpected death of Czar Alexander III, 1 November 1894 was commemorated in France by a mourning postal envelope that showed the date and place of his death.



Privately produced mourning post card with pictures and the death dates of Czar Alexander III and the assassinated French President Sadi Carnot.

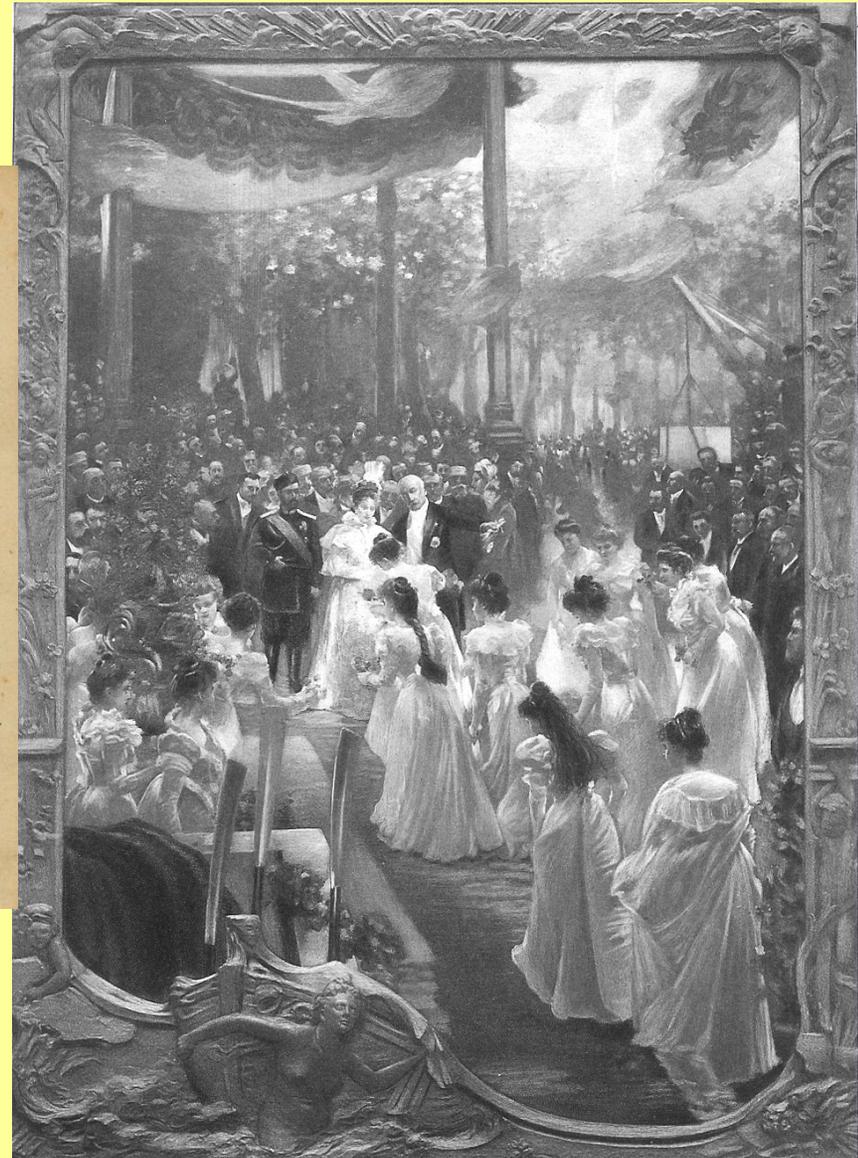
Czar's visit to Paris - 1896

Czar Nicholas and Czarina Alexandra paid a state visit to Paris on 6-8 October 1896, reaffirming friendly relations and to honor the czar's late father.



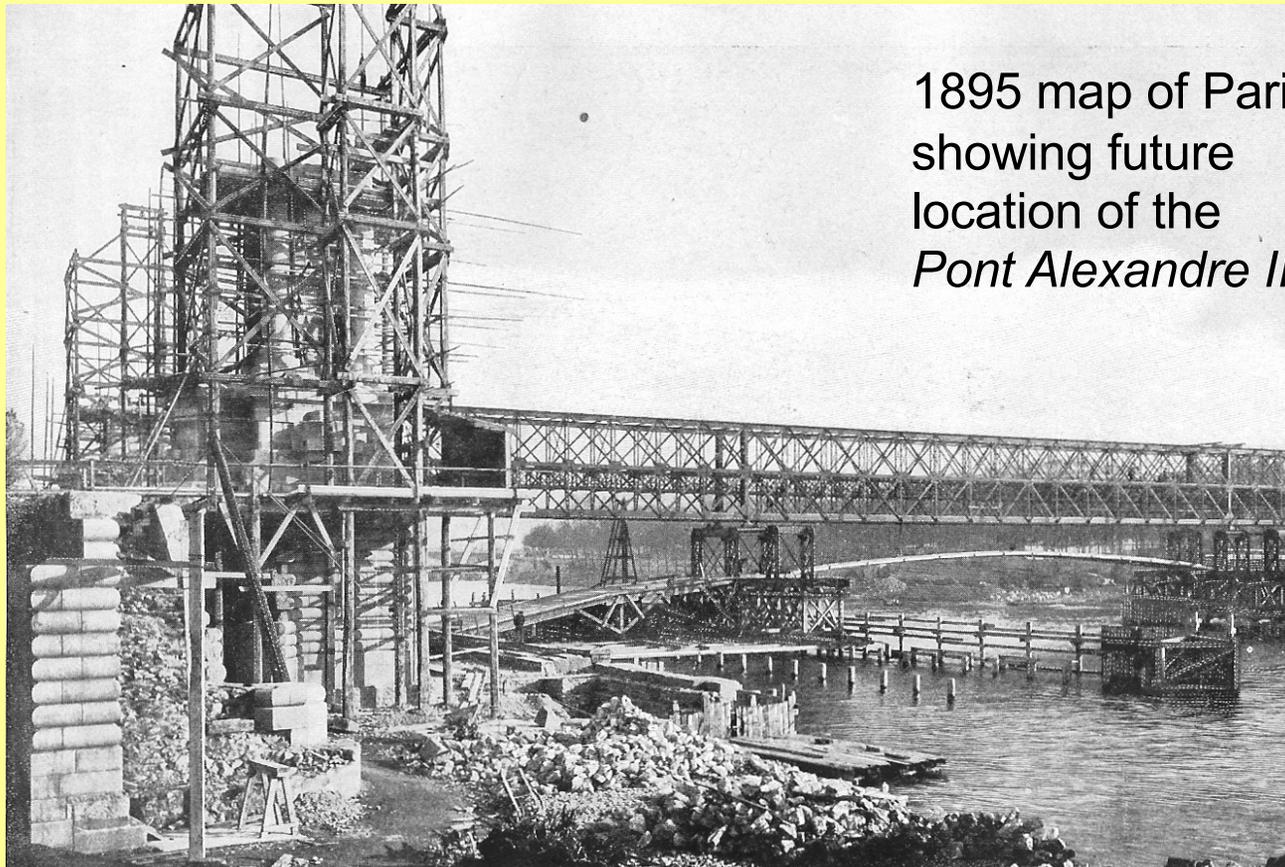
Printed to private order commemorative postal card

Laying the cornerstone for the *Pont Alexandre III*,
7 October 1896

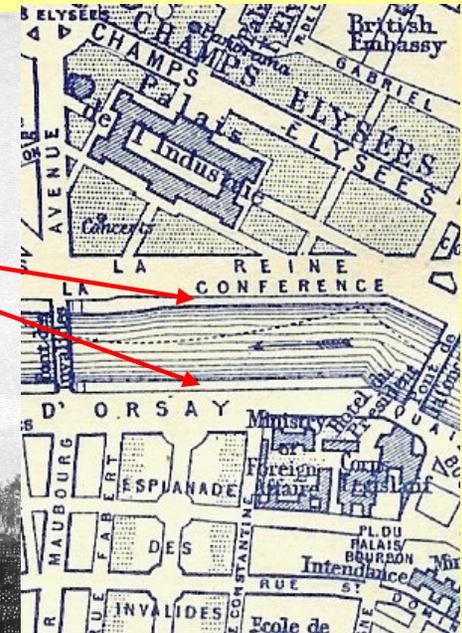


Construction of the *Pont Alexandre III*

Construction lasted three years, and the distinctive 109 meter single span was designed by four architects and decorated by the works of 13 sculptors.



1895 map of Paris showing future location of the *Pont Alexandre III*



This engineering and artistic marvel, completed in 1900, was not recognized in a stamp image until 1949.



Inauguration - 1900

The *Pont Alexandre III* was inaugurated at the Exposition Universelle in 1900 and has been a major Paris landmark for more than a century.



Commemorative post card from the exposition showing the *Pont Alexandre III*, with the imprinted image of the Russian pavilion and Czar Nicholas II

Stereo photo of the inauguration of the *Pont Alexandre III* at the Paris exposition



Poster Stamps

The first philatelic depictions of the Pont Alexandre III were on poster stamps or Cinderellas, produced in the 1920's and 1930's.



View looking north toward the Petite Palais, circa 1925
Printed by Helio Vaugirard



Decorated for the Paris 1937 Exposition Internationale to feature illuminations by the Dutch company, Philips Gloelampen Fabrieken

Pont Alexandre III stamp

Almost 50 years after its completion, the *Pont Alexandre III* appeared on an airmail stamp issued in 1949 to commemorate the International Telecommunications Conference (C.I.T.T.).

Designed and engraved by Pierre Gandon, the stamp shows a view of the north end of the bridge with the Petite Palais in the background.



No plating varieties or errors are reported for this stamp, which exists perforated and imperforate.

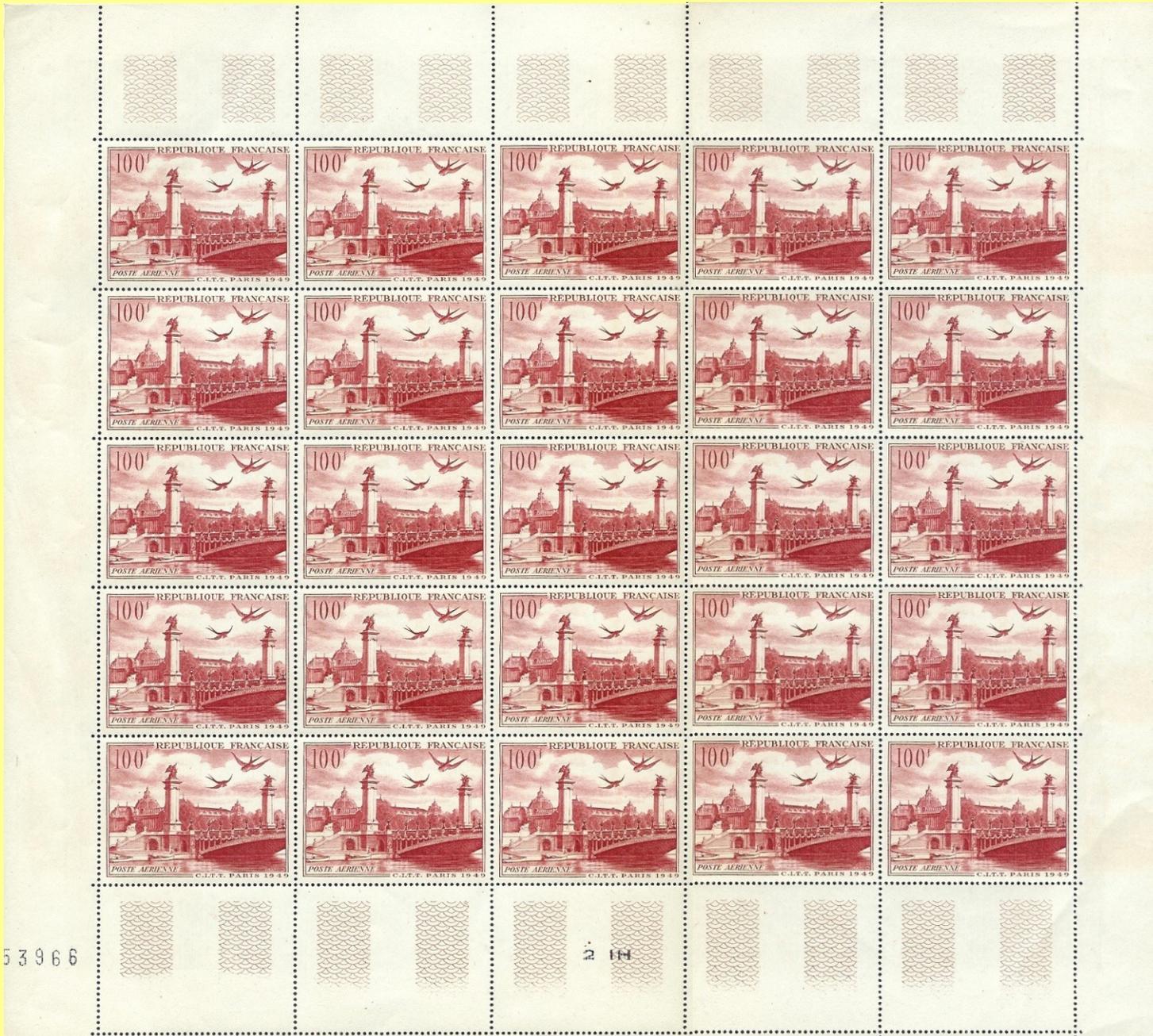
Pre- and post-production proofs are shown on pages 22-25.

Pont Alexandre III stamp

The 100 franc airmail stamp was issued in panes of 25 stamps.

Panes contained printing press numbers in the selvage, but did not have the printing dates (*coin dates*), which were used only with definitive issues.

The total printing was 1,625,000 stamps.



53966

Artist's Proof



The artist's proof in black is a pre-production proof.

Deluxe Proof



The deluxe proof, printed in the issued color and signed by the artist, Pierre Gandon, is a post-production proof prepared for dignitaries and collectors.

Maximum card



Maximum Card – first day cancel, 13 June 1949

The perspective view of the card is to the right of the view shown on the stamp.

Postal History

The 100 fr value did not fulfill a specific postal rate.

Single use on registered airmail envelope to the United States, 26 August 1949.



Foreign Letter	25 fr for up to 20 g
Registration	35 fr
Airmail Supplement	18 fr for each 5 gm to North America (x 2)
Total	96 fr for 10 gm letter – overpaid by 4 fr

Postal History

Combination use on first flight airmail envelope to New Zealand, 1 February 1957.



Foreign Letter	30 fr for up to 20 gm
Registration	45 fr
Airmail Supplement	65 fr for each 5 gm to New Zealand
Total	140 fr for 5 gm letter

Resurrection - 2004

TRÉSORS EN TAILLE-DOUCE



Phil@poste

An engraved sheet was issued featuring classic French air mail stamps of 1936-1949 in advance of a set of prepaid (prêt à poster) postal envelopes.

Prepaid Envelope - 2004



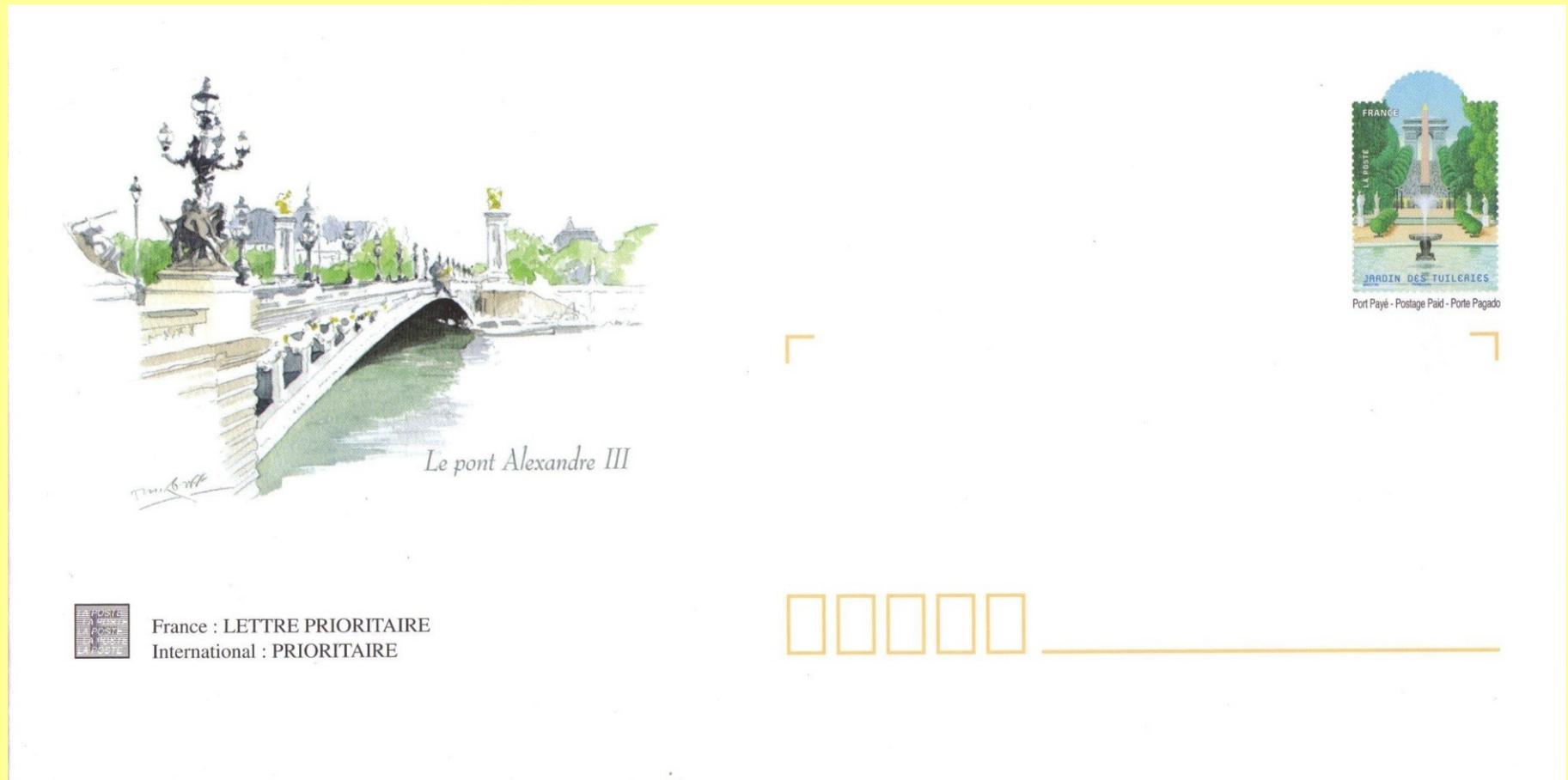
The prepaid illustrated envelope (prêt à poster) featured an image of the 1949 CITT stamp. Prepaid postage was for a 20 g letter sent within metropolitan France or to overseas departments and territories, and most countries of continental Europe.

Prepaid Envelope - 2004



Only changes in the inscriptions were required to adapt Gandon's classic image of 1949 to the prepaid envelope of the 21st Century.

Prepaid Envelopes – 2004, 2007



A prepaid illustrated envelopes (prêt à poster) issued in 2004 and 2007 included photographic and watercolor images of the Pont Alexandre III as pictorial cachets.

Pictorial Issues – 2008, 2009

Commemorative stamp showing the northern part of the Pont Alexandre III with setennant label for the 81st Congress of the Federation Française des Associations Philatéliques.



Self adhesive stamp, part of a pane of 20 showing views of Paris. This is the first photographic image of the Pont Alexandre III on a French postal indicium. The view is to the south toward the Hôtel des Invalides.

2008, 2010 – Computer Printed



Computer printed postage showing the *Pont Alexandre III* were issued in 2008 to commemorate the Salon du Timbre and the 81st Congress of the Federation Française des Associations Philatéliques and in 2010 for the annual Salon du Timbre.



Treasures of Philately - 2015



C.I.T.T. PARIS 1949

Reprenant le succès du timbre « Ile de la Cité » émis pour le Congrès de l'U.P.U. en 1947, c'est cette fois, à l'occasion du Congrès International des Télégraphes et Téléphones de Paris en juin 1949, que le Petit Palais et le Pont Alexandre III ont été honorés.



Pictorial Issues – 2015, 2017



Pont Neuf

Pont Alexandre III

Pont de la Concorde



Paris PhilEx – 2018



21st Century – Other Countries



Guinea-Bissau and Kyrgyzstan have both issued stamps showing parts of the *Pont Alexandre III*.

It's Just Not The Same!

There are many bridges in the world.



St. Petersburg

Volga River, Russia

Au Revoir!

