

## Window Number

Customers desiring out-of-the-ordinary postal services handed their letters over the counter to a clerk at one of the post office's windows. Determining which clerk was to blame in the event of errors was no problem in small post offices where the staff size was small. In large post offices, like the Saigon's main post office, properly attributing responsibility was more problematic. To solve this accounting problem, clerks were assigned numbers that corresponded to their window number. The letter "G" stood for "guichet," meaning window or counter position. In this case, the clerk at window number 6 applied his handstamp to the registration label.

# G 6



### POSTAL MARKINGS

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 5-11 31  
airmail label  
registry label

## Window Number

The window numbering system remained in effect through World War II. The format for the numbers changed as demonstrated by this example in a rectangular frame, which was handstamped on the registration label.

G9



### POSTAL MARKINGS

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 11-3 43

registry label

"9" in circle

### REVERSE

VISÉ PAR LA DOUANE

BANGKOK G.P.O. 16 • 3 • 43

## Window Number

For this 1951 version of the indicator for window G1, the outer boundary is a circle.



### POSTAL MARKINGS

HA-NOI VIET-NAM 3-41951  
registry label  
"G1" in circle

REVERSE

PITHIVIERS LOIRET -4 1951

## Mobile Mailbox Sept Pagodes Tonkin

Not all mailboxes were at fixed locations. Some were located on mail wagons, on trains and aboard boats. When post office employees emptied these boxes, they handstamped the contents with a "BM" marking to indicate "BOITE MOBILE".

The earliest mobile mailbox marking consisted of the letters BM in a 24 by 16 millimeter oval.



### POSTAL MARKINGS

SEPT PAGODES TONKIN 2 MARS 98  
large oval mobile mailbox handstamp

### REVERSE

HAIPHONG TONKIN 13 MARS 98  
VESOUL HAUTE-SAONE 2 AVRIL 98

Mobile Mailbox  
Sontay, Tonkin

Even though the large oval BM handstamp generally disappeared after the turn of the century, it did see occasional use for many years. This usage from 1926 is a late example of the large oval marking.



POSTAL MARKINGS  
SONTAY TONKIN 18-12 26  
large oval mobile mailbox handstamp  
REVERSE  
HANOI TONKIN 18-12 26

Mobile Mailbox  
Haiphong, Tonkin

The large oval Boite Mobile marking was succeeded by a smaller marking that retained many of the same characteristics. The dimensions of the small oval are 19 millimeters wide by 11 millimeters high.



POSTAL MARKINGS

HAIPHONG TONKIN 21 MARS 06  
small oval mobile mailbox handstamp

Mobile Mailbox  
Viettri, Tonkin

In use well into the 1920s, the small oval BM marking was the most commonly used mobile mailbox marking in Indochina.



POSTAL MARKINGS  
VIETTRI TONKIN 20-8 20  
small oval mobile mailbox handstamp

Mobile Mailbox  
Thainguyen, Tonkin

A variation from the oval markings was one that employed a rectangular shaped frame. Like the large oval type, its letters were sans serif.

BM



POSTAL MARKINGS  
THAINGUYEN TONKIN 5 OCT 26  
small rectangular mobile mailbox hand stamp  
REVERSE  
HANOI TONKIN 5-10 26



Too Late  
Hanoi

When a sender posted his letter too late to be processed before departure of the French mail packet, it was handstamped "APRES LE DEPART" meaning literally "after departure." This marking served to explain to the recipient why a letter had experienced delay in delivery by conveying the message that the sender had posted it "Too Late."

The earliest marking of this type consisted of three lines of text surrounded by a rectangular frame.

APRÉS  
LE  
DÉPART



POSTAL MARKINGS

TONKIN CORPS EXPEDITRE 27 OCT 94  
HANOI R.P. TONKIN 27 OCT 94  
framed too late handstamp

REVERSE

HAI-PHONG TONKIN 31 OCT 94

Too Late  
Cap Saint Jacques, Cochinchina

Posted from Cap Saint Jacques, this postcard was addressed to a soldier in Saigon. The card arrived on the 20<sup>th</sup> of October. The S.S. Oceanien had departed Saigon on 19 October 1908.

Why the three-line "Too Late" marking was handstamped on the postcard is uncertain. Perhaps it was in error or possibly it was known that the addressee had shipped out although there is no evidence of forwarding instructions. In this case, the letter "R" in "APRÉS" was underinkied.

AP ÈS  
LE  
DÉPART



POSTAL MARKINGS

CAP ST. JACQUES COCHINCHINE 18 OCT 06  
SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 20 OCT 06  
framed too late handstamp

REVERSE

CAP ST. JACQUES COCHINCHINE 18 OCT 06

# Too Late Tuyen-Quang, Tonkin

A later variety of the "Too Late" marking consisted of two lines in the same size 19-millimeter wide by 11-millimeter high frame.

APRÈS le  
DÉPART

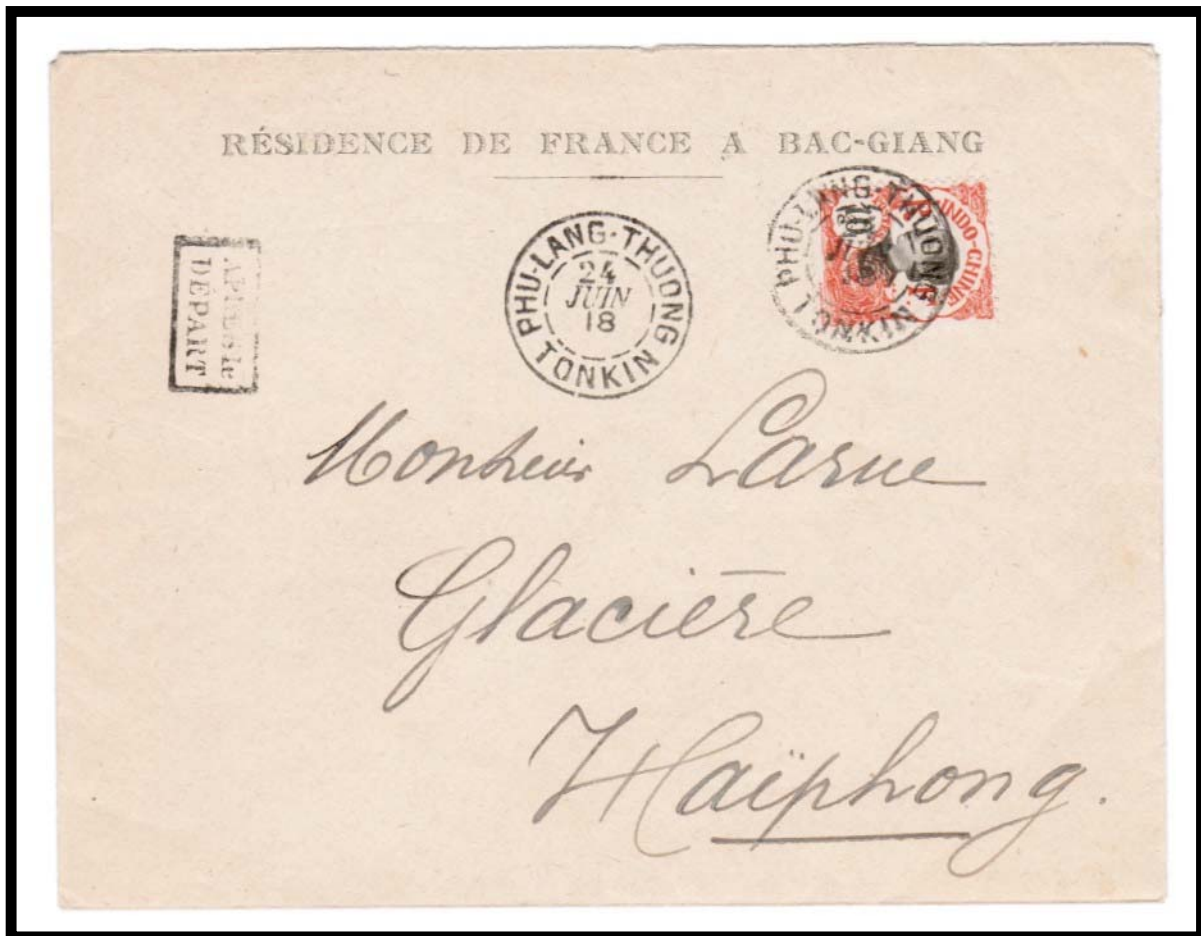


POSTAL MARKINGS  
TUYEN-QUANG TONKIN 20 OCT 15  
framed too late handstamp  
BIOGLIO 30 11 18

Too Late  
Phu-Lang-Thuong, Tonkin

The "too late" marking was handstamped on a 1918 mailing from Phu-Lang-Thuong to Haiphong. Presumably, the letter missed the last mail wagon of the day as the backstamp indicates that it arrived at Haiphong one the day after posting.

APRÉS le  
DÉPART



POSTAL MARKINGS  
PHU-LANG-THUONG TONKIN 24 JUIN 18  
framed too late handstamp

REVERSE  
HAIPHONG TONKIN 25-6 18

Too Late  
Hue, Annam

Originally prepared to alert customers that a letter had "missed the boat," the "APRÉS le DÉPART" handstamp remained in service to handle the same situations for airmail. Because this airmail letter missed the plane's departure, it took three weeks to reach France.

APRÉS le  
DÉPART



POSTAL MARKINGS

HUE ANNAM 29-12 31  
framed too late handstamp

REVERSE

SAIGON CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 1-1 31  
MARSEILLE-GARE B<sup>CHES</sup> DU RHONE 19 • I 1931

## Too Late Hue, Annam

With the advent of airmail service, problems with missed connections did not go away. The same postal marking that was initially used for missed ship departures was employed for missed flights. Here an airmail letter took 20 days to reach Marseille.

APRÉS le  
DÉPART



### POSTAL MARKINGS

HUE ANNAM 9-2 32

airmail label

framed too late handstamp

route indication

### REVERSE

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 12-2 32

MARSEILLE-GARE B~~CHES~~ DU RHONE 29 II 1932

Too Late  
Hue, Annam

The sender had posted his letter on 25 February 1938 and it reached Hanoi on the 27<sup>th</sup>. Despite carrying 37 cents postage for airmail service, the letter missed the plane. It was handstamped with the framed "APRÈS le DÉPART," with slightly larger lettering than earlier versions. The mailing reached Paris on 7 March – a total transit time of 15 days.

APRÈS le  
DÉPART



POSTAL MARKINGS

HUE ANNAM 25-2 38  
framed "TOO LATE" handstamp

REVERSE

HANOI R.P. TONKIN 27-2 38  
PARIS VII RUE DE CLER 7 • III 1938

Too Late  
Haiphong

The separated “AP RES” wording along with the distinctive format of Haiphong’s “Too Late” handstamp marks it as a locally fabricated product.

AP RES  
LE  
DEPART



POSTAL MARKINGS  
HAIPHONG TONKIN 10 NOV 04  
framed “AP RES LE DEPART” handstamp  
REVERSE  
HANOI TONKIN 11 NOV. 04



Too Late  
Quangtri, Annam

Quangtri's locally fabricated handstamp consisted of "APRES DEPART" in large, irregular letters. The mailing took two days to reach the major city of Tourane, Annam.

APRES  
DEPART



POSTAL MARKINGS

QUANGTRI ANNAM 11-11 15  
"APRES DEPART" handstamp

REVERSE

TOURANE ANNAM 13-11 15

Too Late  
Quinhon, Annam

With the passage of time, the former framed markings were replaced with plain, straight-line markings. Here a Bank of Indochina letter was posted too late for the weekly flight to France.

APRÈS LE DÉPART



POSTAL MARKINGS

QUINHON ANNAM 7-1 38  
airmail label

straight-line too late handstamp

REVERSE

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 8-1 38

## Too Late Saigon

The handwritten routing instructions on this cover specified that the letter was to go to Bangkok and there connect with KLM air service to France. Since it missed the initial flight from Saigon, it took 15 days to reach its destination, twice the normal time.

### APRÈS LE DÉPART



#### POSTAL MARKINGS

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 19-3 38  
straight-line too late handstamp

#### REVERSE

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 19-3 38  
DINARD ILLE ET VILANE 2 AVRIL 38

Too Late  
Qui-Nhon, Annam

The "Too Late" marking was normally applied with black ink. In this case, the postal clerk used blue ink for both the handstamped marking and the postmarks.

APRÈS LE DÉPART



POSTAL MARKINGS

QUI-NHON ANNAM 10-3 33  
straight-line too late handstamp (blue)

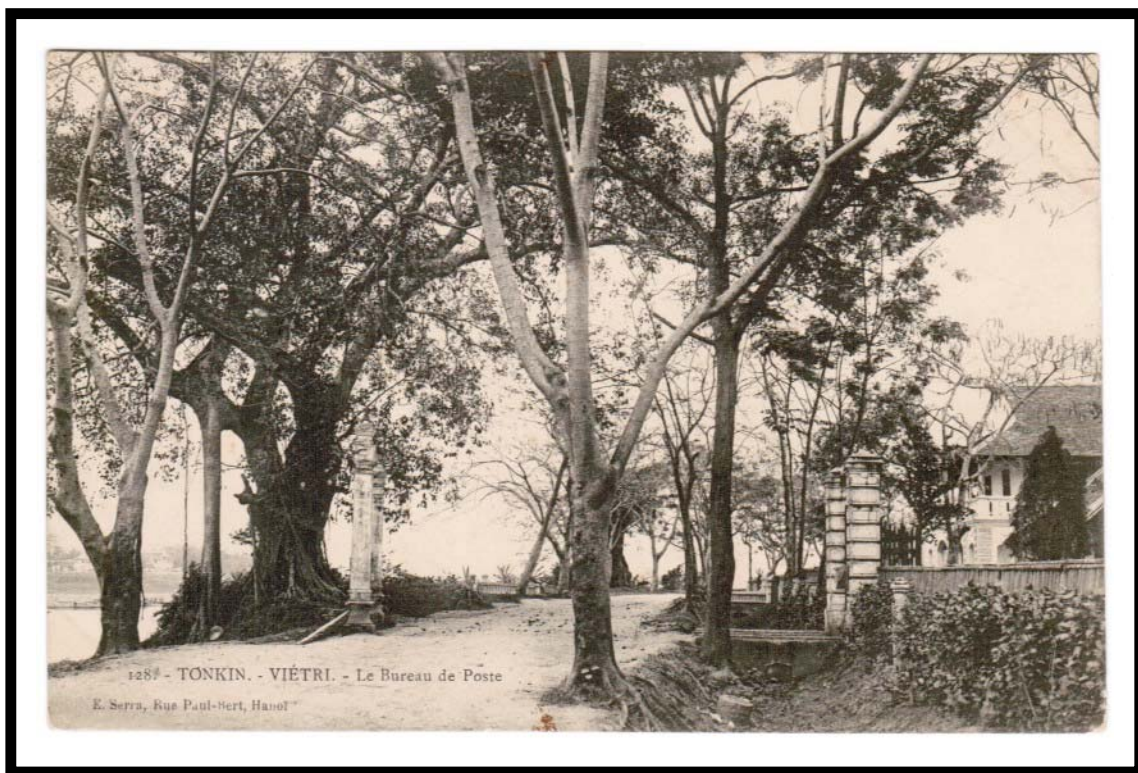
REVERSE

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 13-3 33

## Found in the Box

When a postal clerk found a problematic letter that had been collected from a mailbox, he would sometimes handstamp it "Trouvé à la Boîte." This marking, which literally meant "found in the box," alerted the recipient that there was a problem with the mailing that was not the fault of the post office. Because the letter had been deposited in a mailbox rather than handed over the counter, the post office had had no opportunity to notify the sender about the problem. Typically, the marking was applied to underpaid letters.

Presumably, the "box" is the collection box or what would today be called the mailbox. An early twentieth century picture postcard shows the post office at Viettri. It really looks like just a wide spot in the road. Immediately at the side of the road is a structure. More massive than today's counterparts, could this be an early version of the roadside mailbox?



Several types of "Found in the box" markings are known from Indochina. The earliest employed cursive lettering while later varieties used standard block lettering.

*Trouvé à la Boite*

TROUVÉ À LA BOITE

TROUVÉ  
A  
LA BOITE

Trouvé à la boite

## Found in the Box Cursive Variety

The earliest type of marking employed cursive lettering. In this case, the handstamp was applied to this internal cover in 1893.

Cursive lettering was very rarely used for postal markings because it was more difficult to read than block lettering. In any event, the marking remained in use for almost a half century. In fact, for a number of years, it remained in service in parallel with the block printing variety of the Found in the box marking.

*Found in the Box*



POSTAL MARKINGS  
SOCTRANG COCHINCHINE 18 FEVR 93  
T in triangle  
Found in the Box handstamp

Found in the Box  
Cursive Variety on Registered Mail

With another 25 centimes worth of postage affixed on the reverse and the "Recommandé" instruction written at the top, the post office apparently followed the sender's wishes even though the letter had simply been dropped in the collection box.

*Found in the Box*



POSTAL MARKINGS

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 3-7 14  
framed R with manuscript registration number  
cursive Found in the Box handstamp

REVERSE

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 3-7 14  
CLICHY-LA-GARENNE SEINE 1-8 14

Found in the Box  
Cursive Variety

With 40 cents worth of stamps on the reverse, sufficient postage had apparently been paid for airmail delivery of this 1933 letter to India. The "Found in the Box" marking was not accompanied by any indication of postage due. It is possible that a postal clerk applied the "Found in the Box" Handstamp before noticing the stamps affixed to the back of the envelope.

*Found in the Box*



POSTAL MARKINGS

VINHLONG COCHINCHINE 22-4 33  
cursive Found in the Box handstamp

REVERSE

VINHLONG COCHINCHINE 22-4 33  
SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 23-4 33  
KARAIKUDI 27 AP 33



Found in the Box  
Cursive Variety

Posted from Hanoi in 1935, this mailing received a number of directional markings. The letter reached its originally intended destination in 8 days, but was forwarded from there.

*Found in the Box*



POSTAL MARKINGS

HANOI TONKIN 4-5 35

Hanoi-Marseille routing instruction

T in triangle

cursive Found in the Box handstamp

REVERSE

PARIS R.P. AVION 12 • V 1935

AMIENS R.P. SOMME 13.V.35

Found in the Box  
Cursive Variety

Because the airmail postage had been underpaid when this 1936 envelope to Bordeaux was dropped in the mailbox, the post office at Cap Saint Jacques applied the marking with blue ink.

*Found in the Box*



POSTAL MARKINGS

CAP SAINT-JACQUES COCHINCHINE 9-5 36 (blue)  
framed Saigon-Marseille route marking  
plain T due marking  
cursive Found in the Box handstamp (blue)

REVERSE

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 9 MAI 36  
MARSEILLE-GARE-AVION B<sup>CHES</sup> DU RHONE 17 • V 1936  
BORDEAUX GIRONDE 18-5 36

Found in the Box  
Cursive Variety

Although the "Found in the Box" marking was used only sparingly, it was in service over a long period of time. A 1938 airmail letter from Cap Saint Jacques to Germany was franked with 45 cents worth of postage when 48 cents would have been required. Because the sender had underpaid the required postage, a clerk applied the "Found in the Box" handstamp. There is no indication of an attempt to collect any postage due.

*Found in the Box*



POSTAL MARKINGS

CAP SAINT-JACQUES 11-2 38  
cursive Found in the Box handstamp

REVERSE

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 11 FEVR 38

## Found in the Box Block Printing Variety

In 1908, a picture postcard was mailed from France to Indochina and was handstamped with a "Found in the Box" marking. There is no indication that the postage on the card had been underpaid resulting in a postage due citation.

TROUVÉ À LA BOITE



### POSTAL MARKINGS

MYTHO COCHINCHINE 9 OCT 08

Found in the Box handstamp

### REVERSE

LYON A GRENOBLE A 12-9 08

## Found in the Box Block Printing Variety

Supposed to be liable for underpayment charges, this cover was initially handstamped with a framed "Found in the Box" marking as well as a "T in triangle" postage due marking. At some later point, it was determined that the 66 cents postage was indeed correct and the latter marking was obliterated.

TROUVÉ À LA BOÎTE



### POSTAL MARKINGS

LANG-SON TONKIN 9-5 32  
airmail label and framed Saigon-Marseille routing instruction  
block printing Found in the Box handstamp  
T in triangle

### REVERSE

HANOI R.P. TONKIN 9-5 32  
NANTES R.P. LOIRE INFRE 24 • V 1932

Found in the Box  
Block Printing Variety

Handstamped with the plain "Found in the Box" marking as well as the plain "T" postage due marking, postage was evidently underpaid for airmail service from Saigon to Marseilles in 1933.

TROUVÉ À LA BOÎTE



POSTAL MARKINGS

HANOI TONKIN 26-7 33

Saigon-Marseille routing instruction  
block printing Found in the Box handstamp

REVERSE

MARSEILLE-GARE-AVION BCHES DU RHONE 10 • VIII 1933  
AJACCIO CORSE 19 VIII 33

Found in the Box  
Block Printing Variety

A much-forwarded mailing from Saigon in 1934 was underpaid. The "Found in the Box" handstamp was one of three makings tying the stamp to the cover.

TROUVÉ À LA BOÎTE



POSTAL MARKINGS

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 3-3 34

Saigon-Marseille routing instruction

"T" in triangle and block printing Found in the Box handstamp

ASNIERES SEINE 15-5 34

REVERSE

MARSEILLE-GARE-AVION BÔCHES DU RHONE 12 • III 1934

"T" in triangle and block printing Found in the Box handstamp

## Found in the Box Manuscript marking

In 1929, a 5-cent Native Scenes envelope was deposited in the collection box at Ha-Dong without any address whatsoever. A manuscript "Found in the Box" notation was applied with blue ink. In red ink, a clerk noted the absence of an address and directed the mailing to the dead letter office.



### POSTAL MARKINGS

HA-DONG TONKIN 21-10 29  
manuscript Found in the Box  
manuscript "no address – dead letter office"



Found in the Box  
Three-Line Variety

A third variety of the "Found in the Box" marking places "TROUVÉ" with serif letters at the top of a three line format. Perhaps the unusual franking of 7.4 cents confused the clerk who first handled the letter and caused him to cite it for postage due. This is the discovery cover for the three-line marking.

TROUVÉ  
A  
LA BOITE



POSTAL MARKINGS

HAIPHONG-DOCKS TONKIN 4-7 28  
T in triangle  
three-line Found in the Box handstamp

REVERSE

T in triangle  
three-line Found in the Box handstamp  
ASNIERES SEINE 5 VIII 28  
ASNIERS-CHANZY SEINE 7-8 28

Found in the Box  
Serif Lettering

An underpaid letter from a mission at Plei-Ku in 1932 was cited for postage due. Differing in typestyle from others of the period, the "Found in the Box" marking was a local fabrication.

Trouvé à la boîte



POSTAL MARKINGS

PLEI-KU ANNAM 15-3 32

T in triangle and Found in the Box handstamp

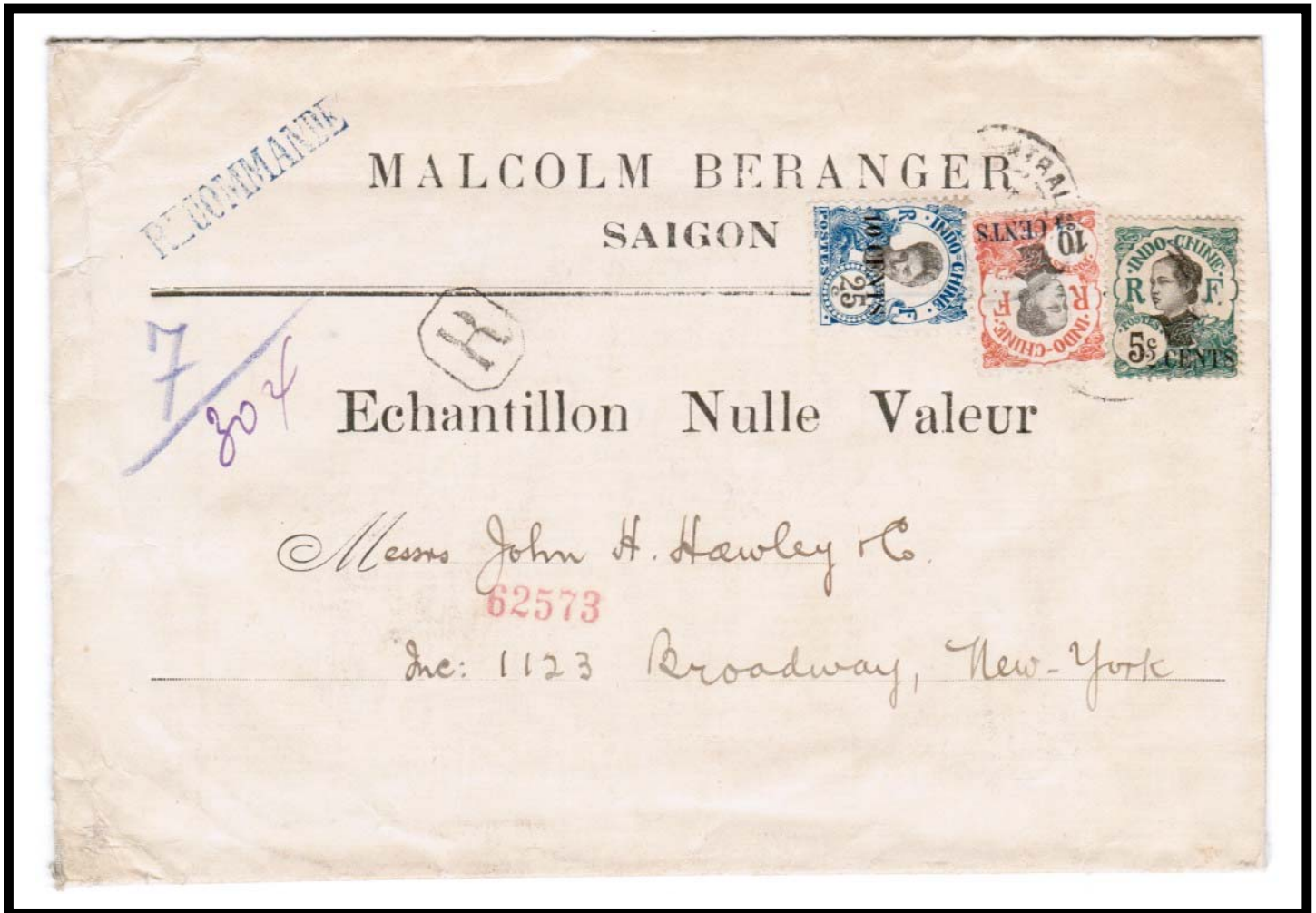
SAINT CHAMOND LOIRE 1-4 32

REVERSE

QUI-NHON ANNAM 15-3 32

Sample Without Value

Sending samples must have been a common practice for Saigon businessman Malcolm Beranger. His stationery was imprinted "Echantillon Nulle Valeur."



POSTAL MARKINGS

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE  
framed R with manuscript registration number  
handstamped registration tracking number

REVERSE

REGISTERED G.P.O. HONG KONG 29 JA 20  
NEW YORK, N.Y. REG'Y DIV. 3-9 1920

# Sample Without Value

A heavy 1932 letter to France with fabric samples ("Echantillons de tissus sans aucune valeur.") was franked with a total of 4\$50 in high value postage stamps. Likely the fabric samples were being sent to France for the sender's relative to make a selection for a hand-made article of clothing.



## POSTAL MARKINGS

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 28-1 32  
registration label  
framed Saigon-Marseille routing instruction (red)

## Mourning Stationery

Early in the twentieth century, it was common practice to use black-bordered envelopes to signify a state of mourning.

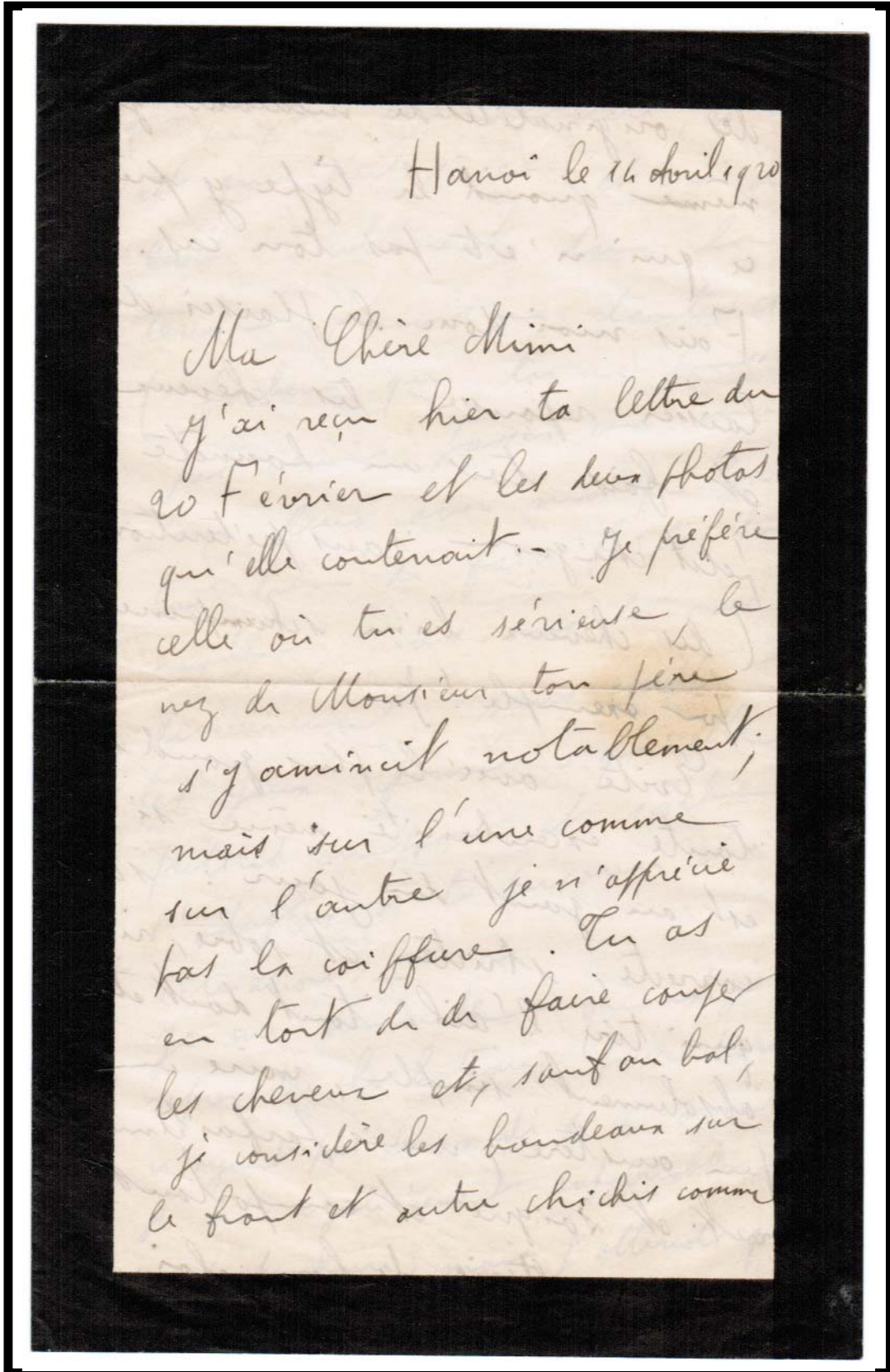
This envelope was franked with 6 cents worth of stamps to prepay the postal charges for service to Indochina. There was no special rate for mourning letters.



POSTAL MARKINGS  
HANOI TONKIN 14-4 20

## Mourning Stationery

The practice of using a wide black border to denote a state of mourning applied to writing stationery.



## Mourning Stationery

Mourning stationery extended from letter sheets down to smaller cards.

