

Boule de Moulins By Emmanuel Gps



As mail using this means was previously centralized in Moulins where they were fabricated, these balls were said "of Moulins."

The Boules de Moulins, 55 total sent, were filled with 400 to 500 letters each then immersed in the Seine largely upstream of Paris. "Driving" on the bottom of the river, they had to cross the lines of the Prussian army and hopefully be recovered near the capital.

The process turned out to be a total failure, as no Boules de Moulins reached Paris before the end of the siege (28 January 1871), even though more than half of them had since been recovered.

As the Boules de Moulins were found anywhere for months after the siege up into the 1960s, legal battles raged as to who "owned" the contents - the French postal service, the finder (water wreck), descendants of the letter writer or descendants of the inventor.

Hundreds of the covers (probably thousands) entered the philatelic market.

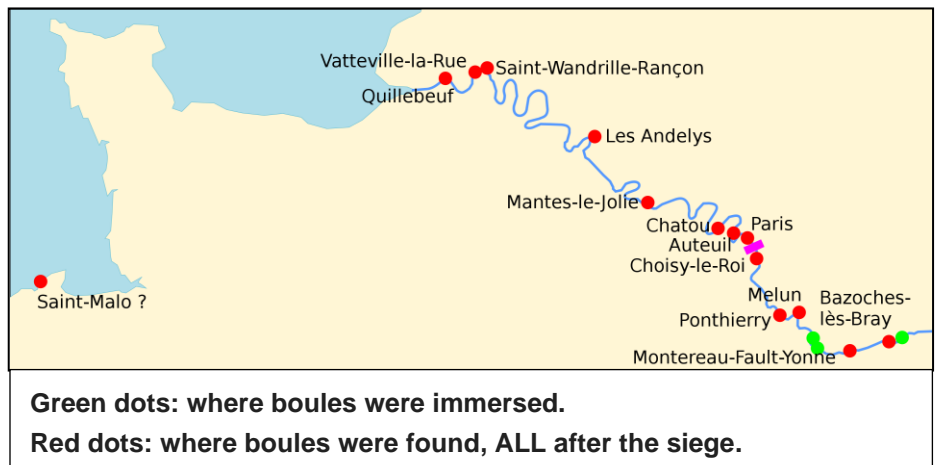
Reference: ¹ <https://sites.google.com/site/moulinsvuparreneguillot/curios/boules-de-moulins>

Emmanuel GPS, a native Frenchman, is a past Director and life member of <https://www.rotaryonstamps.org/> and the lead person of the Inverness (California) stamp club where he resides. He owns the cover shown with authenticity certificate "sent from London on 28 December 1870, placed in a boule 2 January 1871 without a receipt cancel." See <https://www.stampsrhistory.com/iverness.html>

A Boule de Moulins (Moulins ball) was an attempt to transport mail from outside the city during the Siege of Paris during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871.

According to the three inventors "it was a hollow zinc sphere, about the size of a human head and fitted with fins which would have rolled on the bottom of the Seine, passing under the nets of the Prussians."¹

Pigeons, hot air balloons and floating devices had been tried but shot down or intercepted.



Covers like the one I have can be found at auctions for between \$500 and \$3,000 depending on the various cancels and marks on them.