# THE WESTERN FRONT

LUXEMBOURG

On 1 August 1914, at the beginning of World War I, German forces entered the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, where they remained during the entire war period, eventually being required to withdraw under terms of the armistice of 11 November 1918. The occupation was a light-handed one, with all administrative functions continuing to be performed by the local officials. In fact, the degree of collaboration between the government and the occupying power was sufficient that after the end of the war, Grand Duchess Marie Adelaide was pressured to abdicate in favor of her sister, Charlotte, on 15 January 1919.

K.D. Feldpoststation No. 1
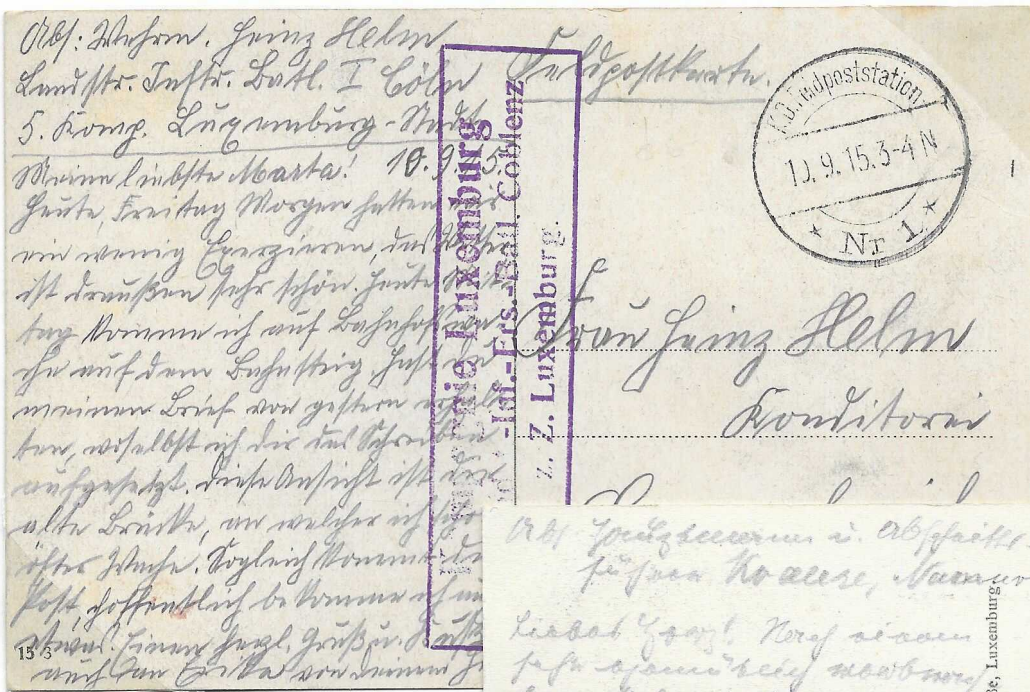
Appropriately, the fieldpost station that was opened in Luxembourg City for the use of the German garrison was designated as No. 1. The above picture postcards of the city were sent without payment of postage by soldiers who wrote "Feldpost" at the upper right. This military franchise was confirmed by the application of unit cachets, with two different ones that were used in Luxembourg being shown above.

During the German occupation, civil postal service in Luxembourg continued to operate normally. However, mail addressed to destinations outside the Grand Duchy was routed through a military censorship office in Trier, Germany, as in the case of the two registered covers shown above.

BELGIUM

In accordance with the long-term war plan developed by Count von Schlieffen, chief of the German general staff from 1891 to 1906, an attack on France would avoid a direct advance through the difficult Ardennes Forest by sweeping across Belgium and outflanking the main French defenses. This plan was set in motion on 4 August 1914 when German troops crossed the Belgian frontier. Although the Belgians resisted, the Germans entered Brussels on 20 August and on the 22nd captured Namur, the last fortress barring the Meuse route into France. Except for a small corner in the southwest, the Germans occupied essentially all of Belgium until the war's end.

Brüssel
Antwerpen

Official cachets of various military units and agencies were widely used during the long occupation period, as indicated by the examples shown above for the two largest cities of Brussels and Antwerp.

COMITÉ PROVINCIAL DE SECOURS ET D'ALIMENTATION POUR LE BRABANT

Avenue Galilée, nº 3
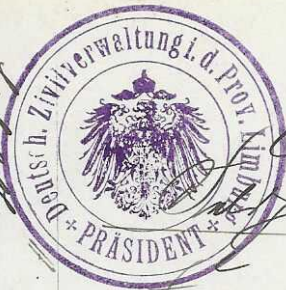
Monsieur le Président de

URGE

DER PRESSEDELEGIERTE BEIM PRÄSIDENTEN DER ZIVILVERWALTUNG

FÜR DIE PROVINZ OSTFLANDERN – GENT.

Presse-Zentrale

üssel

Military governorships were established for the various Belgian provinces. Each of these had their own political structures and offices. Examples are of official mail from the Provinces of Brabant, East Flanders and Limburg.
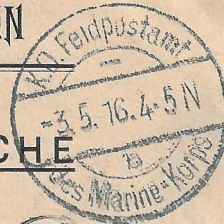
PROVINCIAAL BESTUUR VAN WEST-VLAANDEREN

STAATSDIENSTSACHE

(197)

Aan het Bestuur der Burgerlijke Godshuizen van

Brussel.

Militärgouvernement der Provinz Luxemburg.

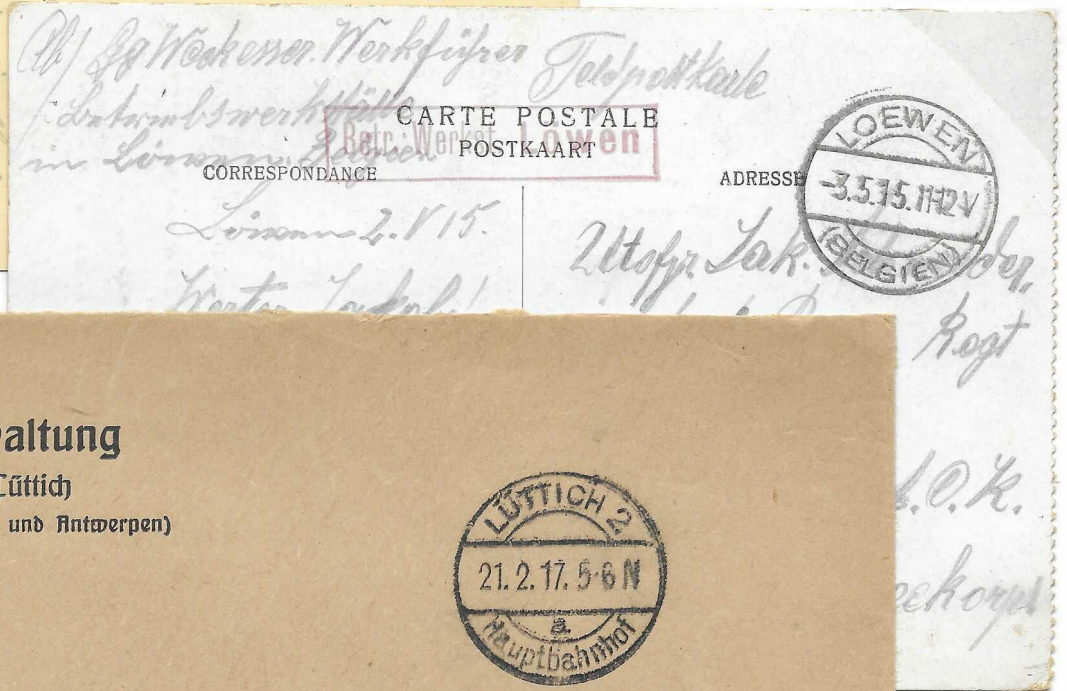An

Namur den 6.2.1915

CARTE POSTALE
CORRESPONDANCE   ADRESSE

Official mail from the Provinces of West Flanders, Luxembourg (not to be confused with the Grand Duchy, which was separated from Belgian Luxembourg in 1831) and Namur.

Official mail also exists from many Belgian cities and towns during the occupation, of which some representative examples are shown above.

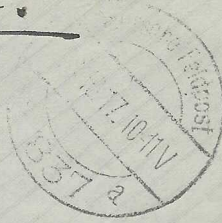Additional examples of official mail from smaller towns.
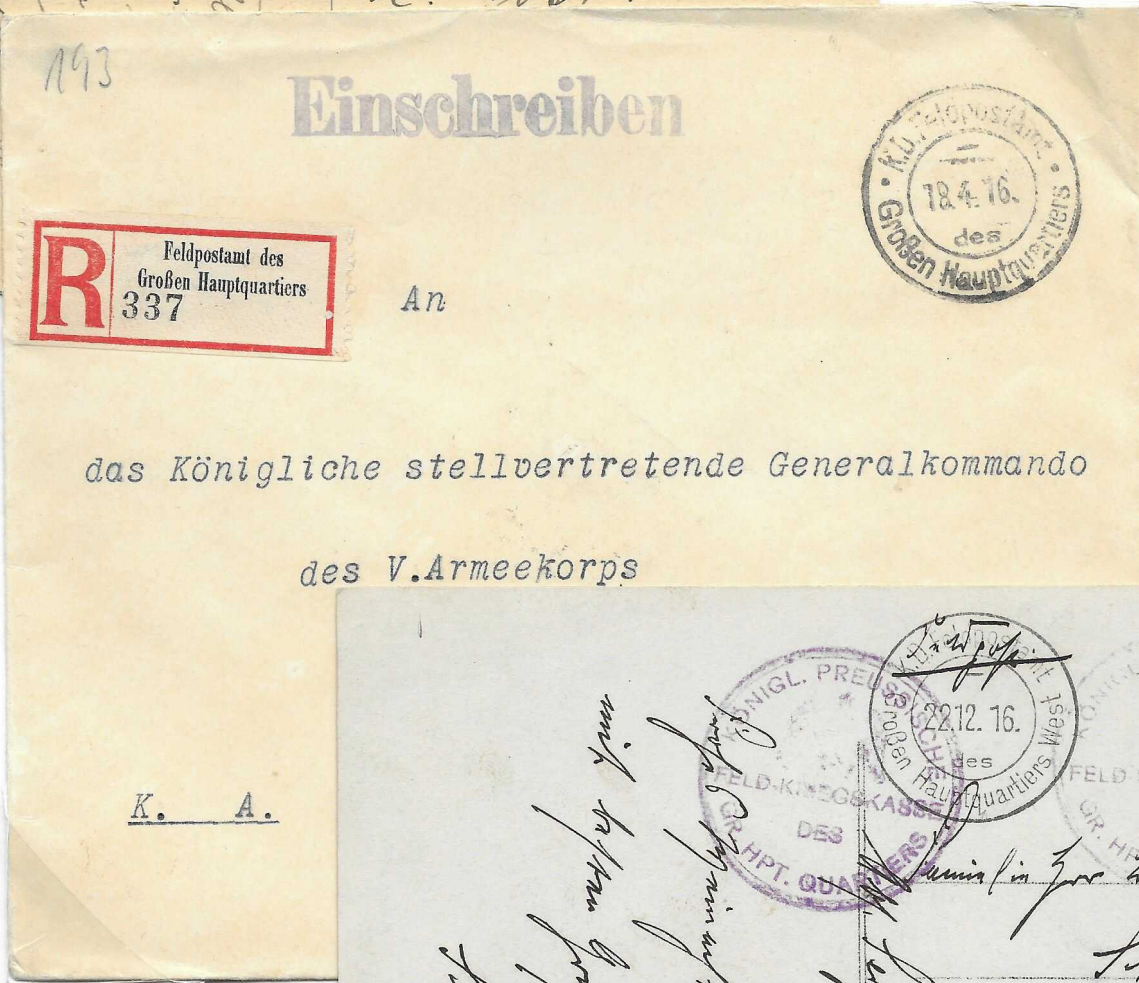
The German supreme military headquarters was established in Belgium, located at Spa for most of the time. There were three special postmarks for mail originating at this HQ, shown above. The later version has "West" added to the terminology, to distinguish this activity from Field Marshal von Hindenburg's HQ in East Prussia.

German naval vessels patrolled the English Channel from bases in occupied Belgium, especially the port of Ostende. Above examples show cachets of units operating out of Flanders, including seaplanes, torpedo boats and submarines, i.e. "U-Flotille Flandern."

Postal card plus two values of the overprinted set cancelled on the first day of issue.

Within two months of the invasion, civil mail service was restored in the areas of Belgium occupied by the Germans. On 1 October 1914 a set of nine stamps of the "Germania" series was overprinted "Belgium" and new values in Belgian centimes and francs. This series has "Centimes" spelled out and high values stated as "_Fr. _C."

Postal stationery was also overprinted for use in Belgium. Above examples show letter card as well as single and double postal cards with the 1914-15 overprints. The latter comes in two versions, one both German and French.

In 1916, a new longer series of overprints was issued. This time the currency overprint is abbreviated "Cent." and the high values as "_F. _Cent." Not all values were issued simultaneously, so philatelic "set" covers show a mixture of the first and second issues.

The rarest of all of the occupation stamps in genuinely used condition is the 75 Cent. on 60 pfennig. There was a large supply of the earlier 75 Centimes stamp in stock, and the new version was not offered at the post offices until the former was depleted. Thus, the new issue did not come into use until just before the end of the occupation. Many cancelled to order stamps are available, but specialists seek them on registered covers, of which only a few dozen exist. This example has a receiving backstamp in Berlin on Armistice Day.
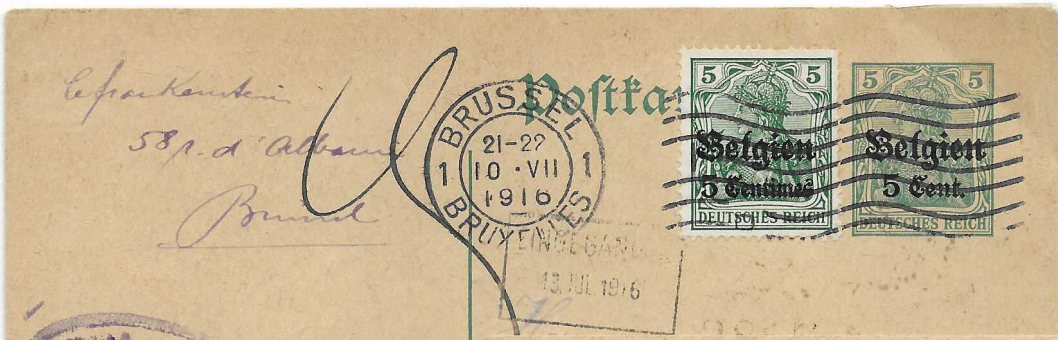
Second overprint (Cent. abbreviated) postal cards issued in 1916 exist in two types. The initial version had "Postkarte" printed to the right of the centerline and the second had it above the centerline.

Double postal cards with attached reply cards were also issued with the 1916 overprints.

The final postal cards for Belgium were a provisional issue. There was an excess inventory of 8 centimes cards without country name (issued for use in northern France). A small supply of these was reoverprinted "Belgien" in 1918. However, the name didn't line up with the denomination the same as on the earlier issue. Both single and double cards were so overprinted but, since Michel does not price the latter in used condition, they may not exist.