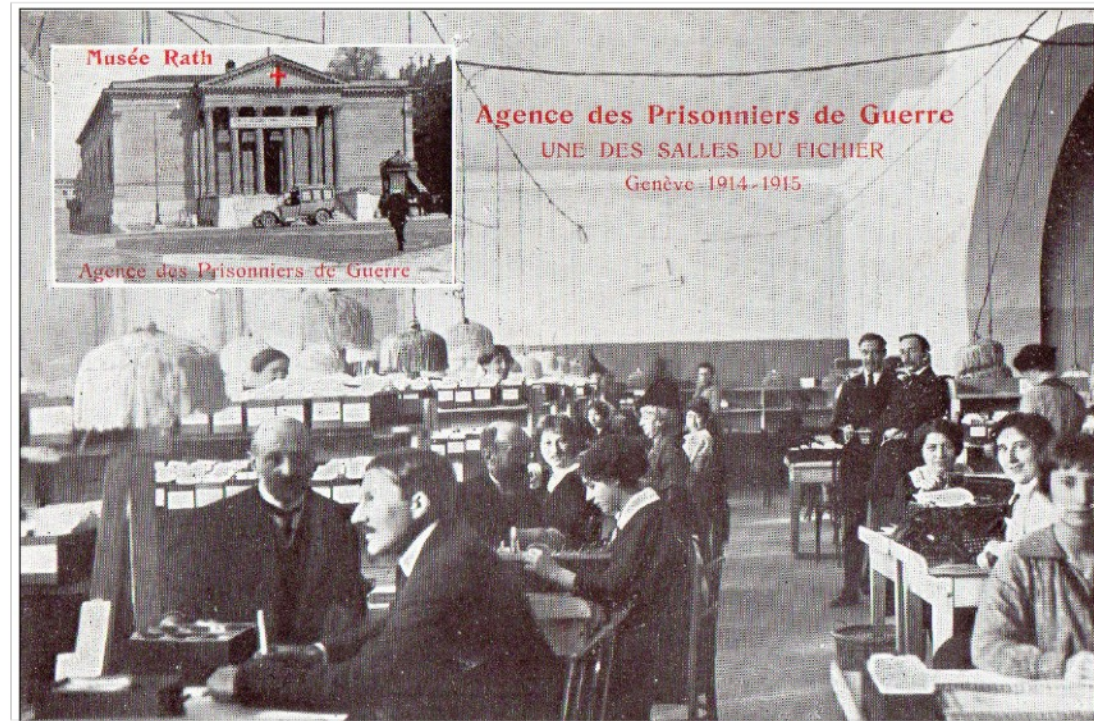
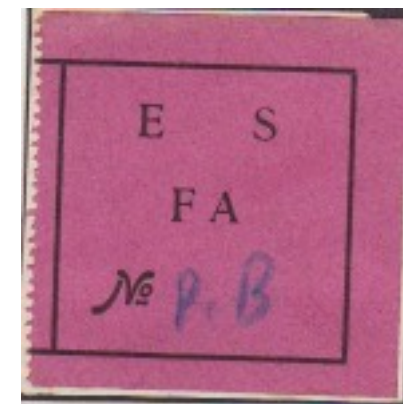
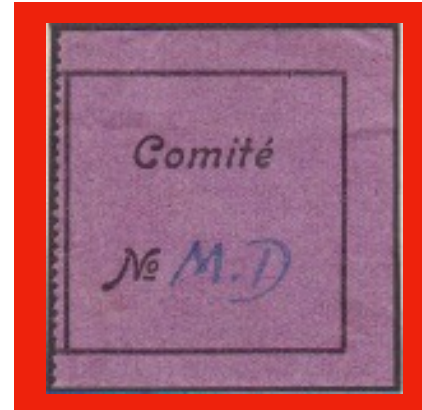
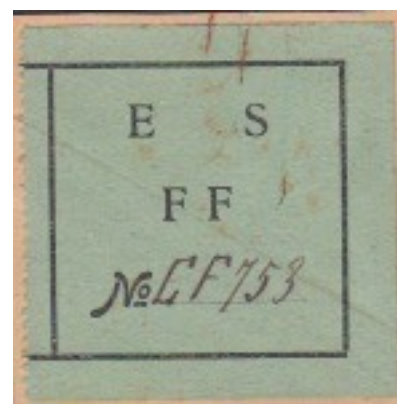


# The Red Cross Tracing Agency 1914-1994 and the Search for Missing Persons Due to War



International Committee of the Red Cross Tracing Service located in Geneva at the Rath museum, circa 1915 postcard

## TRACING ETIQUETTE LABELS OF THE ICRC



Used to facilitate faster and more efficient communication with enquirers. Written codes match the newly created file systems of matching missing soldiers and civilians. The label colour quickly lets staff send the enquiry to the appropriate division as they represent different belligerent countries and committees. The Comité label is very scarce.

### Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this exhibit is to illustrate the tracing systems created by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to find soldiers and civilians who have gone missing as a result of global conflicts from 1914 to 1994.

### Organization

The exhibit is ordered by international conflicts in a chronological order from World War I through to the Yugoslavian civil war. Within each war the nations involved and their tracing procedures will be highlighted.

### Legend

Important or unusual items are framed in red.

Primary research on the part of the exhibitor is noted by the icon



Less than one month after the outbreak of world war one, on 21 August 1914, the Red Cross opened the "International Agency of Relief and Information for the Prisoners of War". Initially comprised of a committee of 8 people, a secretary and a student volunteer, it would swell to a size of 1200 within the year.

With an average of 5000 information requests per day the agency devised a reply label system to facilitate efficient communication, and a file system that would eventually contain five million file index cards of the missing. Etiquette label usage seems to have been limited however, as these labels are rarely seen on correspondence. For an unknown reason, nearly all known labels were used in 1915. They were generally produced in a se-tenant pair with the left half having the instructions for use.

The Agency closed its operations on December 31, 1919. A similar system would reoccur only 20 years later with the outbreak of World War Two.

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