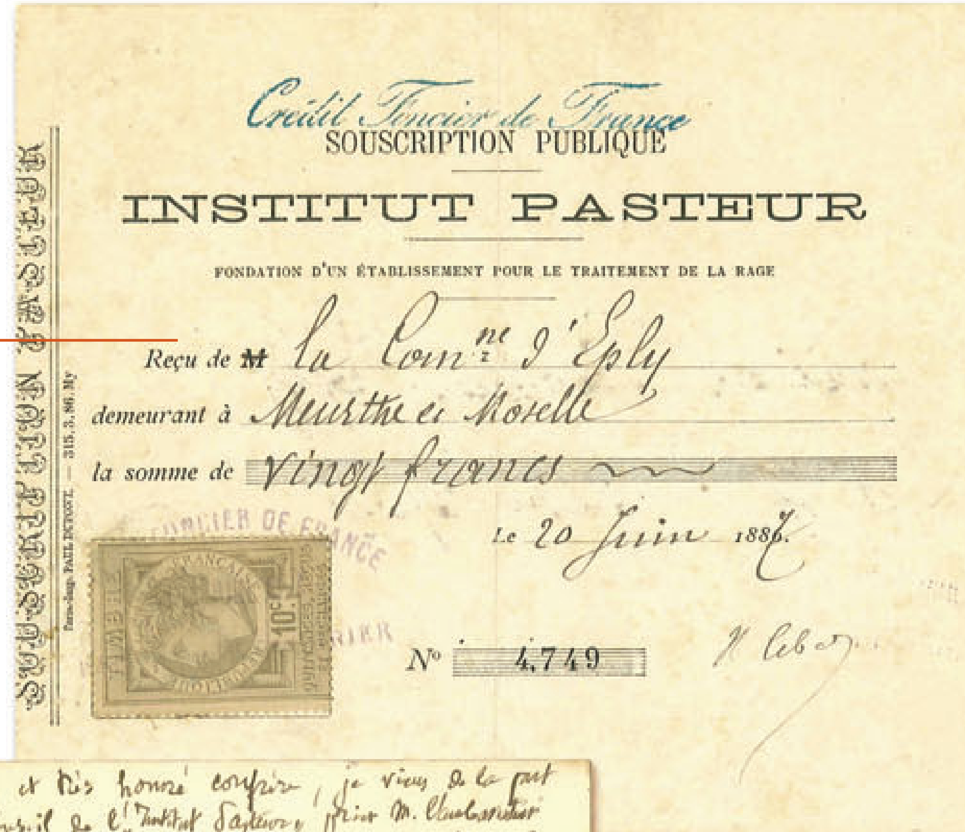
FROM THE VAULT Treasures

SELECTIONS FROM THE FISHER (PASTEUR MEMORIAL) COLLECTION

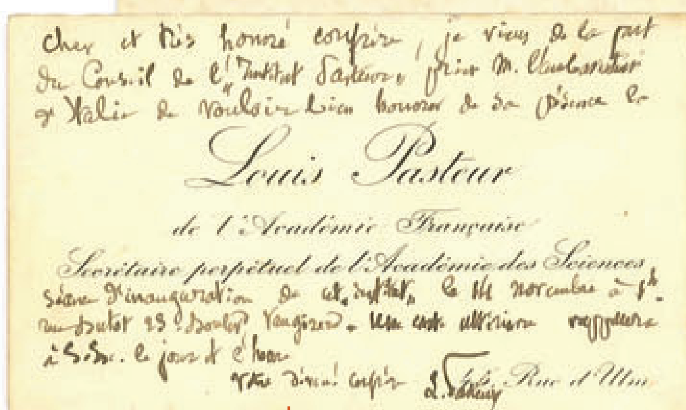
c. 1880s (stamps, 1922 and 1936)
Gift of Fisher Scientific International
Accession 2000.001.291

Although the Fisher Collection at CHF is best known for its outstanding collection of alchemical paintings and sketches, it also contains a significant amount of ephemera related to Louis Pasteur (1822–1895), including letters, notebook pages, calling cards, and commemorative stamps. Chester Garfield (C. G.) Fisher, the founder of Fisher Scientific International, started collecting scientific artwork in the 1920s. After Fisher's death in 1965, his children continued to acquire pieces for the collection. On one particularly memorable visit to the Pasteur Institute in Paris, the Fishers were given a tour by an elderly man who turned out to be Joseph Meister, the first recipient of Pasteur's rabies vaccine. Meister was devoted to Pasteur's memory and eventually became gatekeeper of the Pasteur Institute. A photograph of Meister is included in the collection.

As James Fisher, C. G.'s son, later recalled, "From the start, C. G.'s idea was to use the collection . . . to help the scientist [and] laboratory worker gain a sense of history, heritage, and pride in the profession they had chosen." The documents displayed on these pages provide a snapshot illustration of Pasteur's continued influence, both in the laboratory and in French culture. **-AW**


Crédit Foncier de France
SOUSCRIPTION PUBLIQUE
INSTITUT PASTEUR
FONDATION D'UN ÉTABLISSEMENT POUR LE TRAITEMENT DE LA RAGE
Reçu de la Comne d'Eply
demeurant à Meurthe et Moselle
la somme de vingt francs
Le 20 Juin 1886
N° 4,749

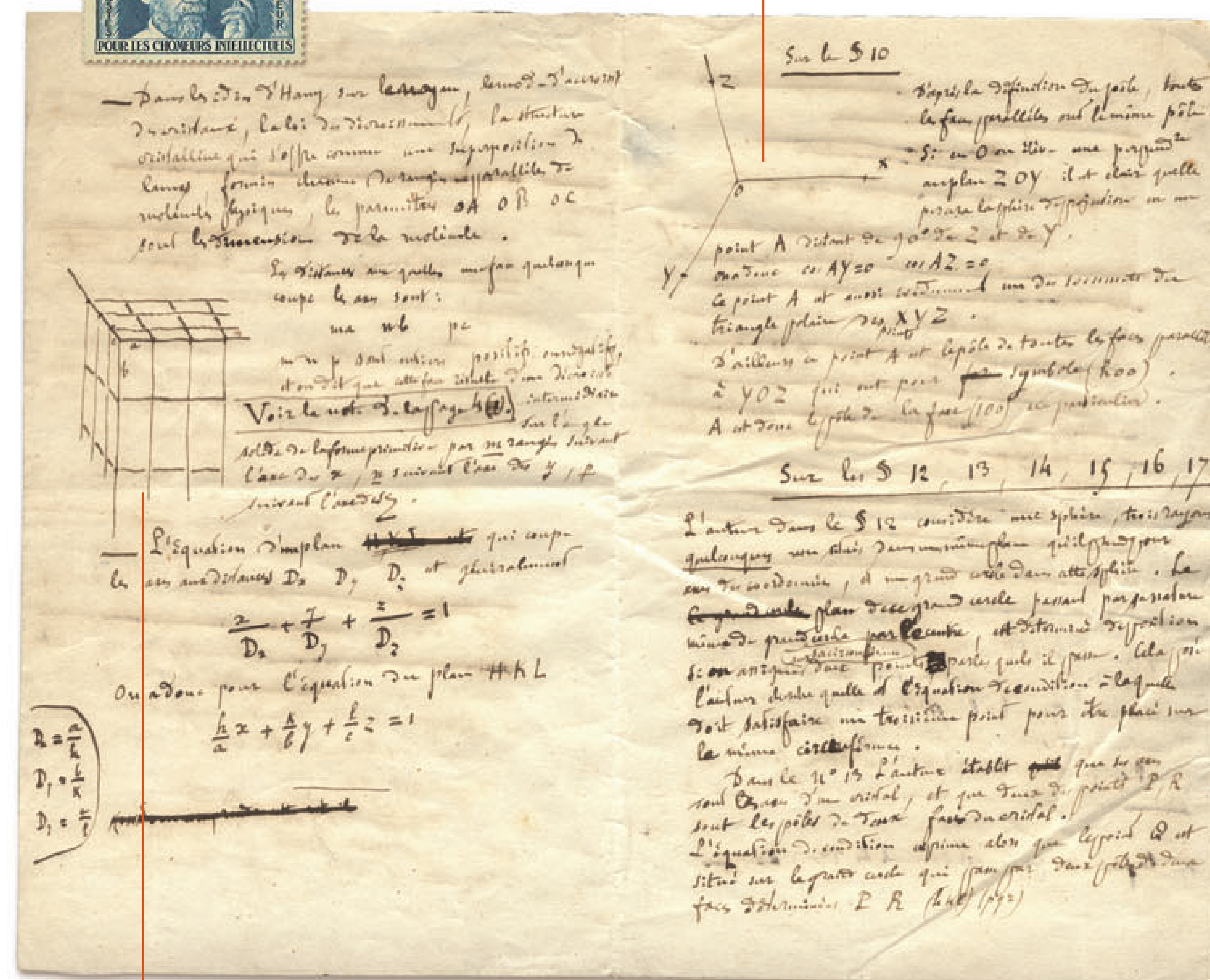
RECEIPT FOR A CONTRIBUTION TO THE PASTEUR INSTITUTE. In 1881 Pasteur asked the French government to create a state laboratory for the production of his rabies vaccine. Public contributions eventually totaling more than 2 million francs poured in when the first successful treatment was announced in 1885. This receipt acknowledges a donation of 20 francs from the peasant community of Eply.


Louis Pasteur
de l'Académie Française
Secrétaire perpétuel de l'Académie des Sciences
Rue d'Ulm

INVITATION TO PASTEUR INSTITUTE OPENING. The opening celebration at the Pasteur Institute on 14 November 1888 was a grand affair attended by many of the leading lights in French society. Here Pasteur extends a handwritten invitation on his personal calling card to the Italian ambassador to France.

COMMEMORATIVE STAMPS. The French postal service issued several commemorative stamps honoring Pasteur's life and work. The two smaller stamps pictured here were issued in 1922 to recognize the 100th anniversary of Pasteur's birth. The larger stamp, issued in 1936, included a 50 centime surtax for the relief of unemployed intellectuals.

DETAIL, LECTURE NOTES. Pasteur's first major scientific achievement was the discovery in 1848 of enantiomorphism (left-handed and right-handed asymmetry) in tartrate crystals. One form of tartrate crystals rotated polarized light in one direction when dissolved, while the other form produced the same amount of rotation in the opposite direction. French scientists had been aware that the crystals of some substances exhibited both electrical polarity and optical activity for some time, but they had been unable to explain the cause or source. In the sketch and notes below, Pasteur explores this issue in terms of planar geometry.



DETAIL, LECTURE NOTES. Pasteur's early crystallization work was based on the theories of Abbé René Just Haüy (1734–1822). As historian Seymour Mauskopf explains, Haüy believed that crystals were composed of small polyhedra created from smaller molecular units known as *molecules intégrantes*. Researchers building on Haüy's theories pointed to modifications at the extremities of the underlying unit, particularly edges and faces, as a potential source of crystalline asymmetry.