

# DEVELOPMENT OF FRENCH AIRMAIL IN MOROCCO

1911 – 1923



# **DEVELOPMENT OF FRENCH AIRMAIL IN MOROCCO**

1911 – 1923

- 1911 – First experimental flight
- 1923 – Routes start becoming regular, airmail takes hold as means to move the mail from Morocco

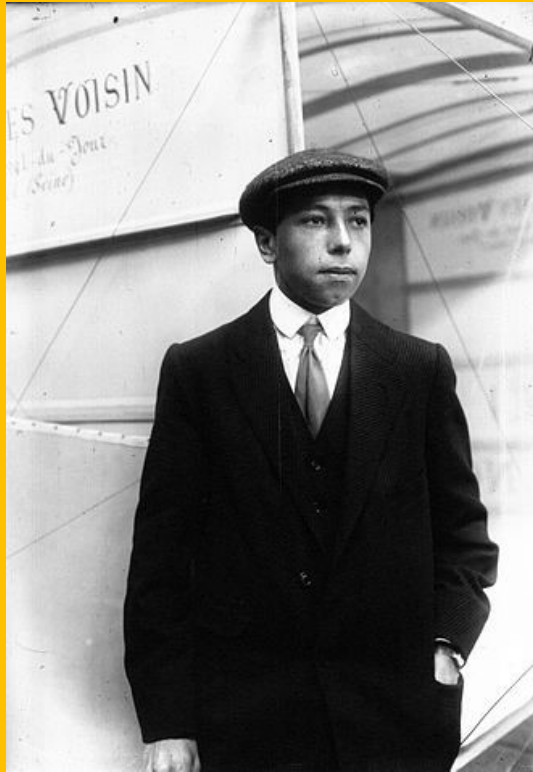
# THE FIRST FLIGHT

- Plane manufactured by Breguet in Douai, France
- Shipped in large box to Casablanca with help of French army and navy
- Nine day journey from Douai to Casablanca, arrived September 6, 1911
- Wings were removed during shipping
- Plane owned by *Le Petit Journal*, French newspaper

Replica of Breguet  
Model RU.1, No. 40



# THE FIRST FLIGHT



- Organized by *Le Petit Journal*
- Piloted by Henri Brégi
- Passenger was journalist René Lebaut
- Flew 90 km from Casablanca to Rabat in 55 minutes

Pilot Henri Brégi next to a Voisin plane, 1909

Photo from wikipedia.com



# THE FIRST FLIGHT

- Enthusiasm for air flights was common everywhere, not just in Morocco
- Until now, mail in Morocco was still entrusted to foot carriers called rekkas
- These early flights needed to prove that airmail would work

Illustration from *Supplement Illustrée du Petit Journal*



L'AÉROPLANE DU " PETIT JOURNAL " AU MAROC

## FIRST EXPERIMENTAL FLIGHT SEPT. 13, 1911

Casablanca Post Office (PTT)  
created 3-line commemorative  
cachet:

**AEROPOSTE**  
**DU >PETIT JOURNAL<**  
**☆BREGUET MILITAIRE N° 40☆**

- Flight preparation began at 6:45 AM with preliminary ceremonies
- Mail posted at 7:05 AM
- 250-300 letters and cards for three destinations



Postal rates:

Letters – 10 centimos

Postcards – 5 centimos



## CONTINUATION OF THE EXPERIMENTAL FLIGHT

- Lebaut made a circular rubber cachet
- Known in black and purple
- Text in French and Arabic,
- Sometimes includes date of departure of the stopover



The "Petit Journal" airplane on the beach at Casablanca

## CONTINUATION OF THE EXPERIMENTAL FLIGHT

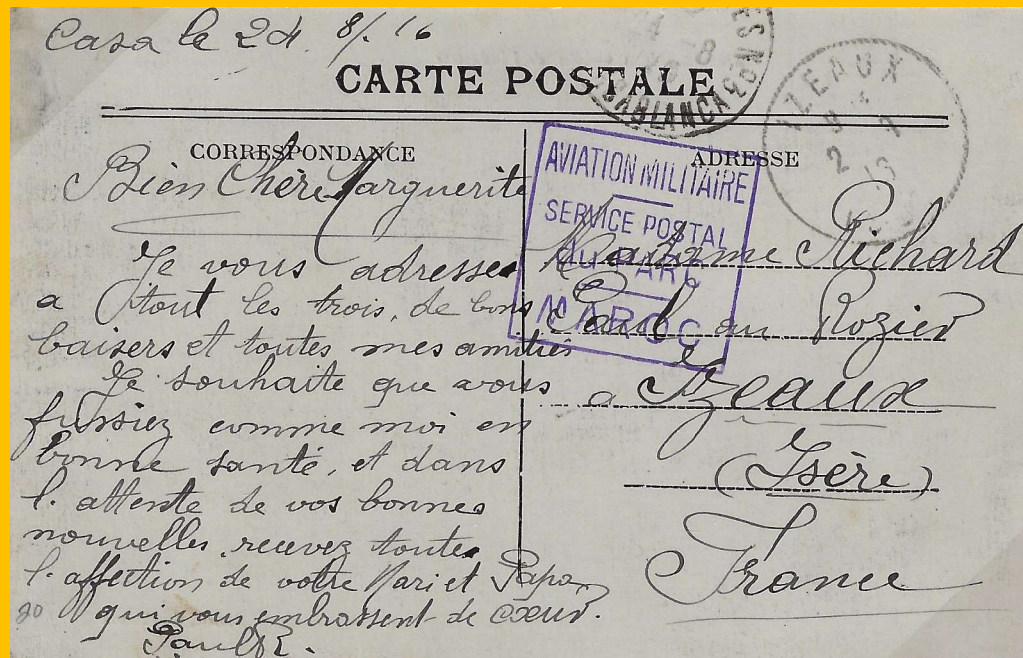
- Mechanical breakdown at Rabat
- Plan was to stop at Taza and Oudja
- Departed Sept. 19
- Dust clouds obscured route
- Brégi climbed above clouds, began using compass for navigation
- Ran out of fuel at Meknes, glided to safe landing
- Sept. 20 flew 60 km (35 minute) flight to Fez



**This experimental flight laid the groundwork for the next stages of developing airmail in Morocco.**



## WARTIME INTERRUPTION    MILITARY AVIATION



- August 2 1916 Casablanca to Izeaux France
- Cachet struck in violet
- Cancelled Tresor et Postes No3

- Dec. 24, 1918 Casablanca to Lyon France
- Cachet struck in black
- Cancelled Tresor et Postes No2 on picture side



## BEGINNINGS OF LATÉCOÈRE

### End of WWI

- Plane builders needed new customers
- Train travel almost impossible because of wartime destruction
- Commercial aviation was a developing market

### Pierre Georges Latécoère

- Father of Toulouse aircraft industry
- Founded Société des lignes Latécoère in 1918
- Company renamed Aéropostale in 1927

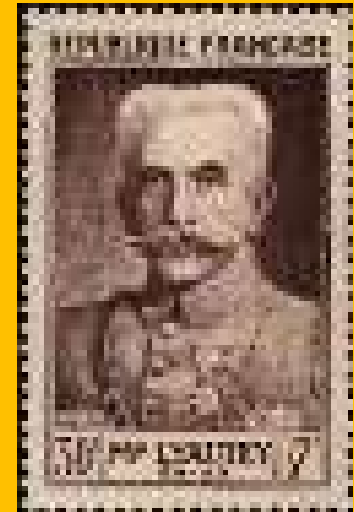
Pierre Georges Latécoère in 1925

[Wikipedia.com](#)



## LATÉCOÈRE'S EXPERIMENTAL FLIGHT

- March 8, 1919
- Latécoère piloted, co-pilot was Lt. Lemaître
- Flight legs – Toulouse to Malaga to Rabat to Casablanca
- Greeted by Marshal Lyautey (Resident General in Morocco) and many VIP's
- Result:
  - Agreement on July 7 with Moroccan Post Office
  - Subsidy and five year contract for Latécoère Company
  - Aero Post was born
  - Regular airmail service inaugurated in September 1919





## EXPLORATORY FLIGHT CASABLANCA TO TOULOUSE

- March 12, 1919, Latécoère left Casablanca for Rabat, Arbaoua, and Malaga, arrived about 5 PM
- March 13 – continued to Alicante and Barcelona, Spain.
- March 14 – unscheduled landing at Canet near Perpignan, France.
- 20 or so letters sent by train to Toulouse and Paris, arriving March 15.



**Flight's success resulted in Compagnie Generale d'Enterprises Aeronautiques (Latécoère, or CGEA) service from Toulouse Sept. 1 with return flight from Rabat Sept. 3**

## ANNUAL SUBSIDY

To move from the March 12, 1919, experimental flight to regular service, two problems had to be solved:

- Relations with Spain (not enumerated here)
- Relations with the French government

July 7, 1919 agreement with French government provided an annual subsidy for the mail:

“...the concessionary shall provide free of charge the transportation of mail to be picked up from or delivered to the P.O.'s of Toulouse or Rabat but the remuneration allocated by the postal administration may not exceed the total of the surcharges received.”

Other problems with Spain were settled by the Franco-Spanish convention of Aug. 28, 1919.

## 1st AIRMAIL SERVICE BEGINS SEPT. 1. 1919

- Experimental inbound flight, Toulouse to Rabat
- Official flights began October 1
- By end of 1920 14 planes in service, average mail weight up from 8 pounds to 34
- Small cabin required under-wing containers for mail



April 28, 1920, Noirmoutier (Vendée) to Casablanca  
Franked 1f 50.

Toulouse 4/30/20 transit and Toulouse Gare Saturday 5/1/20.  
Arrived Rabat May 2 and Casablanca May 4.



## RATE STRUCTURE-TWO STEP PROCESS



- **Rate Step 1: Letter rate from Morocco to final destination**
- **Rate Step 2: 1f 25 airmail surtax**
- **Foreign destinations required additional fees**
- Route: Rabat to Malaga to Alicante to Barcelona to Toulouse
- Overnight stop at Alicante
- Senders often added m/s instructions to envelope

*December 12, 1919, Casablanca to Paris*

*Franked 1f 40 = Letter rate 15 centimes + 1f 25 airmail surcharge*

*M/s "Par Avion Rabat – Toulouse"*

*Mail between Morocco and France considered domestic*

## RATE STRUCTURE – FOREIGN BASIC RATE 1919

- 1f 25 Airmail surtax applied only to Toulouse
- From Toulouse to Paris by express train and regular train to Belgium
- Additional airmail surtax required for airmail from Paris to Belgium (75c per 20g)



*Sept. 23, 1920, Casablanca to Antwerp, Belgium*

*Franked 1f 75 = Foreign letter rate 25c + registration 25c + airmail surtax 1f 25*

*Foreign letter rate and registry rate in effect from 1919 to April 1, 1921*



## 1919 TO LONDON – EXPRESS FEE



British Post Office delivered  
as Express mail, 8d due  
from recipient

- Airmail surtax to  
England was 3 francs  
as of Sept. 29, 1919
- P&T treated as surface  
letter due to  
underpayment (train  
and boat)

November 6, 1919, Casablanca to London, England

Franked 1f 75 = Foreign letter rate 25c + airmail surtax 1f  
25 + unknown 25c (not canceled)

Foreign letter rate in effect from 1919 to April 1, 1921



## SCHEDULING – PARIS EXPRESS TRAIN COORDINATION

- Rabat – Toulouse departures originally 3, 6, 10, 13, 17, 20, 24 and 27 each month
- February 1920 – departures delayed one day
- June 1920 – Tuesdays and Fridays
- **All arrived in Toulouse the next day in time for express train to Paris**

Letter at right missed Dec. 3 departure, made Dec. 6 flight



December 2, 1920, Rabat Residence P.O. to Grenoble

Franked 1f 50 = Domestic letter rate 25c + airmail surtax 1f 25

Reverse – Rabat RP (AM) transit, Toulouse transit

December 8, 1700 hours, Grenoble receipt on December 10

## NEW DOMESTIC BASIC RATES



August 20, 1920, Rabat to Paris

Franked 1f 50 = Domestic letter rate 25c + airmail surtax 1f 25

- P&T was subsidizing airline
- Raised domestic surface rates
- April 1, 1920 New rates:
  - 25c up to 20g
  - 40c - 20g to 50g
- Maximum weights:
  - Old limit – 200 g
  - New limits 1.5kg (letters)
  - 3 kg (printed matter)



## ROUTE EXTENDED TO CASABLANCA

- **Morocco airmail route origination point transferred from Rabat to Casablanca on December 1, 1919, effective July 13, 1920**
- This cover flew direct without transfer to Rabat



*September 23, 1920, Casablanca to Paris*

*Franked 1f 50 = Domestic letter rate 25c + airmail surtax 1f 25*



## FEZ TO PARIS VIA CASABLANCA



**Airmail originating in outlying cities was carried via regular overland routes to the base airline city (Casablanca) and included in the rate.**

*October 10, 1920, Fez to Paris*

*Franked 1f 50 = Domestic letter rate 25c + airmail surtax 1f 25*

*Surface transportation to Casablanca, then air to Toulouse*

## GEORGES GUYNEMER PRECURSOR

Georges Guynemer (1894-1917) was WWI French ace with over 50 kills  
Revered by French public, honored in many ways, including two stamps



1940



Georges Guynemer precursor label (1920)



2017



## GUYNEMER AIR MAIL LABEL REQUIREMENT

Once issued, Guynemer label was compulsory on all air shipments. It begins to appear on air mail in Morocco in 1921. Not used on every Moroccan airmail letter.



January 8, 1921, Rabat to Paris

Franked 1f 50 = Domestic letter rate 25c + airmail surtax 1f 25

Guynemer air label applied AND m/s "Correspondance par Avion"



## AIR MAIL BECOMES MORE IMPORTANT

Brequet's aircraft had no instruments (like all contemporary aircraft)

Navigation done by sight following coastlines

Latécoère obsessed that airmail be timely

Pilots reflected the company's dedication to timely service

Raymond Vanier, pioneer aviator,  
anecdote:

“One Sunday afternoon I came back from Rabat 24 hours late. At Montaudron airfield in Toulouse there was nobody but the guards. I had announced the breakdown and there was no one waiting for me, so I shouldered the two bags of mail and suitcase in hand I went to the tram stop and delivered my precious cargo to the main post office. Happy Days!”



Didier Daurat at left,  
Raymond Vanier at right  
(1971)



## REGISTRATION RATE CHANGE



- Domestic registered mail rate also increased April 1, 1920
- From 25c to 35c
- Foreign registered rate changed in 1921

October 11, 1920, Casablanca to Nice

Franked 1f 85 = Domestic letter rate 25c + airmail surtax 1f 25 + registered fee 35c

Guynemer air label



## NEW POSTAL FEE – POSTE RESTANTE

- UPU allowed fees for poste restante (general delivery)
- If the article is redirected or returned as undelivered, surcharge is canceled
- Fee was applicable only if destination country allowed it
- France imposed 10c fee



*October 11, 1920, Le Mans to Casablanca*

*Poste restante fee 10c, doubled because not prepaid*

*Le Mans to Toulouse by train, Toulouse Gare transit mark Oct. 12, by air to Rabat Oct. 16, overland to Casablanca, arrived Oct. 18*

## 1921 AIR MAIL SUBSIDY ADJUSTMENT



- Airmail volume increased rapidly
- 1919: **9,124** letters
- 1920: **182,061** letters
- Airmail rate dropped to 1 franc
- Mail volume helped justify government subsidy

September 8, 1921, Marrakech – Medina to Paris

Franked 1f 35 = Domestic letter rate 25c + airmail surtax 75c + registered fee 35c (25c on reverse as noted "voir au dos")

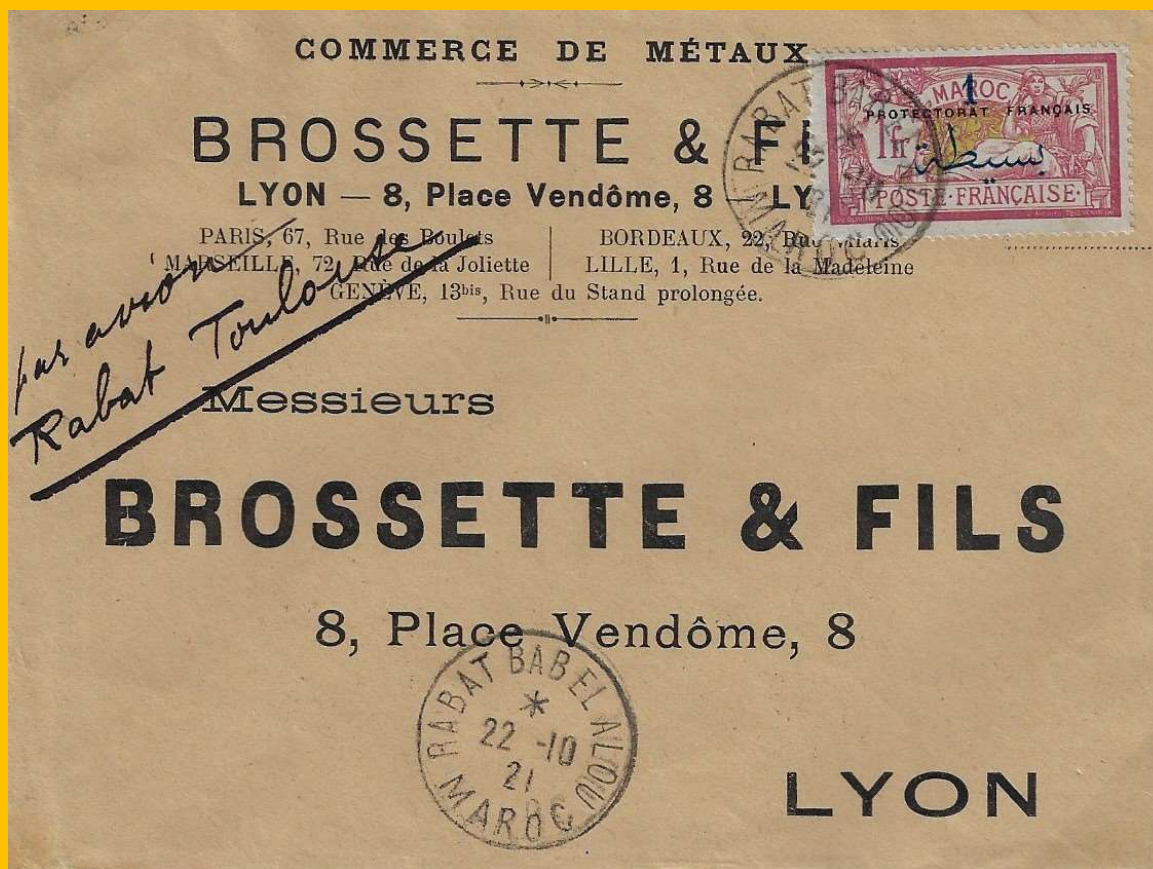
Guynemer air label

Arrived Casablanca Sept. 17, 1921



## SURCHARGE RATE REDUCTION-FEB. 1, 1921

- Airmail service at end of 1920 was Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays
- In February 1921, the airmail surcharge was lowered
  - 75c up to 20g
  - 1f75 for 20 to 100g.



*October 22, 1921, Rabat Bab el Alou to Lyon*

*Franked 1f 00 = Domestic letter rate 25c + airmail surtax 75c*

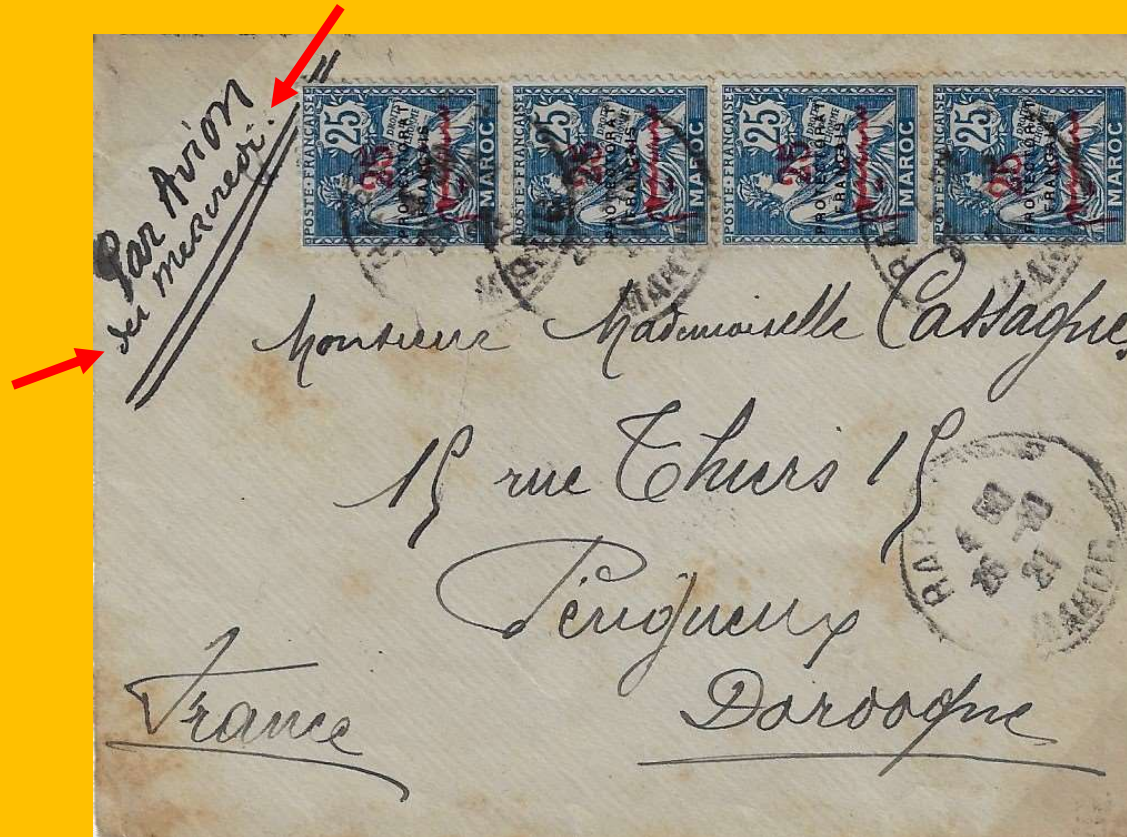
*Transferred to Rabat RP (main post office) Oct. 25 (actually Oct. 24)*

*Toulouse transit mark Oct. 25*

*Arrived Lyon Oct. 26*



## SURCHARGE RATE REDUCTION-FEB. 1, 1921



October 26, 1921, Rabat to Périgueux (Dordogne province)

Franked 1f 00 = Domestic letter rate 25c + airmail surtax 75c

M/s notation at upper left "du Mercredi," to be flown on correct airmail flight on Wednesday

## 1F COMBINED BASIC DOMESTIC RATE TO FRANCE



*November 25, 1921, Meknes to Bellegarde-sur-Valserine (Ain province)*

*Franked 1f 00 = Domestic letter rate 25c + airmail surtax 75c*

*Ground service (74 mi) Meknes to Rabat, missed Saturday flight, flew Monday, Nov. 28*

*Transit marking Toulouse Gare Nov. 29, received Nov. 30*



## 1922 FLIGHT VOLUMES INCREASE

- Collaboration continues between the Director General of Postes and Ligne Latécoère
- Flights increase from twice per week in 1919 to seven times per week in 1922
- Latécoère obsessed with service
- Collaboration allowed for considerable reductions in postal surcharges and a continuing expansion in service.

Source: *The History of Air Cargo*



March 15, 1921, Fez Ville-Nouvelle to Paris

Franked 1f 00 = Domestic letter rate 25c + airmail surtax 75c

Backstamped Rabat RP March 16

Arrived Paris March 23



# CIRCA 1922 LATÉCOÈRE BROCHURE

## AERIAL POST

### Additional charges

Frs 0.50 up to 1 oz.

» 1.00 from 1 to 3 oz.

Over 3 oz. Fr. 0.50 extra for every 3 oz. or fraction.

Maximum weight 1 lb. for sample parcels.

» » 3 lbs » letters.

» » 6 lbs » printed matter.

The postage, included the additional charges, is paid by ordinary stamps.

*Please mark on the correspondence :*

By air from Toulouse to Rabat (or Casablanca).

*For all enquiries, apply to :*

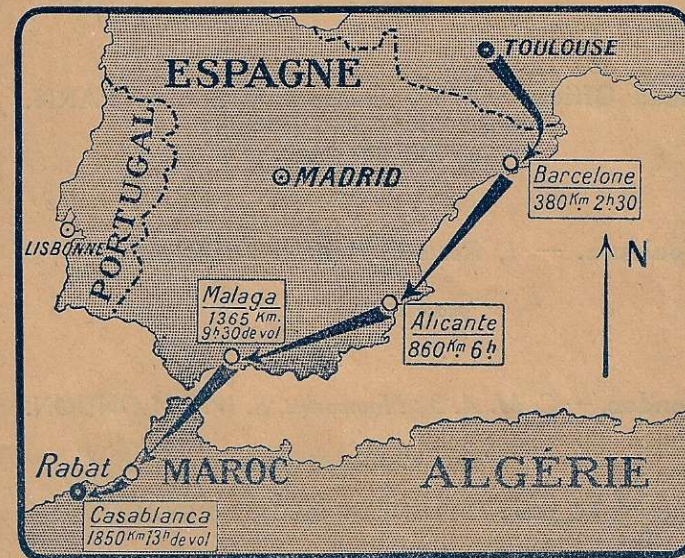
C. M. A., 32, Haymarket, London, S. W. 1.

General Agents of the **LIGNES AÉRIENNES LATÉCOÈRE.**

Phone : GERRARD 34-86



== Send your Letters ==  
= Go to MOROCCO =  
== by plane ==



1922 brochure showing complete air flight route Toulouse to Rabat and Casablanca promoting "Send your Letters by plane." Air mail charges listed on the back. Note the instruction "Please mark on the correspondence: By air from Toulouse to Rabat (or Casablanca)." Instructions inside include "Passengers must provide themselves with warm clothes (coats, helmets, and goggles)."



## JANUARY 1922 AIRMAIL SURTAX REDUCTION



- Airmail surtax reduced January 16, 1922
- Dropped from 75c to 50c (0 to 20g)
- Letter from Agence Vuillemin, which delivered luggage at home

1922, Casablanca to Zurich, Switzerland

Franked 1f 00 = Foreign letter rate 50c + airmail surtax 50c

"Service Transit" is internal department marking

## FIRST AIRMAIL STAMPS 1922

- Three values
  - 75 centimes
  - 1 franc
  - 2 francs
- Letter is second weight step
  - 50c letter rate (50-100g)
  - 1f 00 airmail surtax (20-100g)



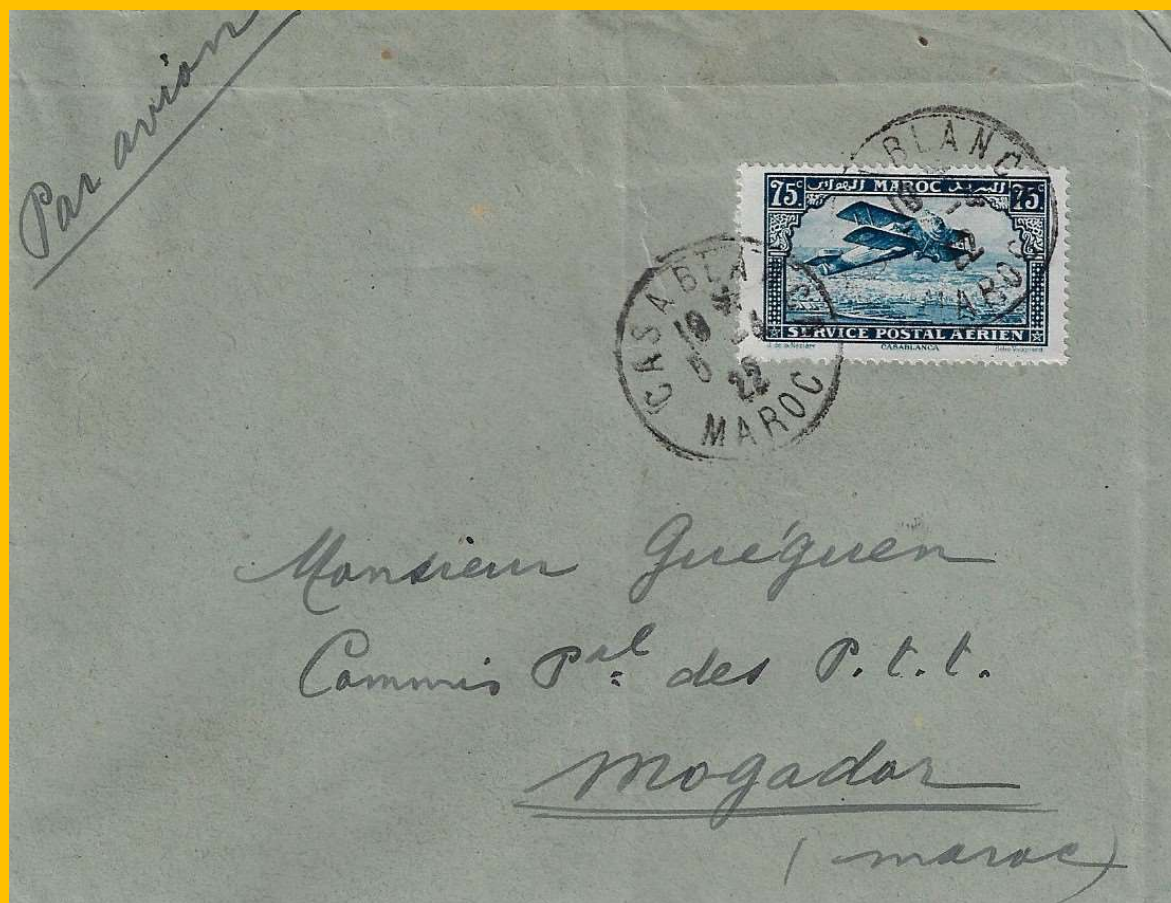
March 18, 1922, Sidi-Yahia to Chamonix (Haute-Savoie)

Franked 1f 50 = Domestic letter rate 50c + airmail surtax 1f 00

Sidi-Yahia is 15 miles from Rabat, Chamonix is 461 miles from Toulouse, carried by train



## FIRST FLIGHT CASABLANCA-SAFFI-MOGADOR APRIL 6.1922



*April 5, 1922, Casablanca to Mogador, Morocco*

*Franked 75c = Domestic letter rate 25c + airmail surtax 50c*

*Arrived in Mogador April 6, 1922*

- **Experimental flight by Compagnie générale d'entreprises aéronautiques (C.G.E.A.)**
- **One-day round trip from Casablanca to Mogador and back via Saffi**
- **Witnessed by M. Millerand, President of the French Republic.**
- **Preparation for adding Dakar to route**

## GENERAL SERVICE ENVELOPE – NO POSTAGE REQUIRED

- P&T Form No. 1417, no postage required
- Letter from Rabat postmaster to postmaster of the Paris 16<sup>th</sup> arrondissement office.
- Used to inquire about a lost registered letter or service problem.



*April 30, 1922, Rabat Residence to Paris*

*No franking required*

*May 1 Rabat RP transit marking on reverse*

*Guynemer label indicates airmail service*



## FRANCHISE MILITAIRE – FREE POSTAGE FOR SOLDIERS



- “Franchise militaire” allows soldiers to send regular letters without postage
- Vaguemestre (regimental postmaster) had to validate with handstamp or signature
- Soldiers had to pay airmail surtax, registered letter fees, etc. Posted Fez-Ville-Nouvelle 7/13/22 paying 50c the airmail surtax rate in effect at this time.

July 13, 1922, Fez Ville Nouvelle to Malemort du Comtat (Vaucluse)

Franked 50c = Domestic letter rate free + airmail surtax 50c

Guynemer airmail label and m/s airmail notation



## SOUALEM TIRS

- Soualem Tirs post office open Oct. 1921 to Sept. 1923 (reopened after 1930)
- Only known cover from this post office in this time period
- “13” in circle is factoring mark to identify postman if complaints about service



March 7, 1922, Soualem Tirs to Ghent, Belgium

Franked 1f 00 = Foreign letter rate 50c + airmail surtax 50c

Casablanca transit marking March 8 on reverse

Guynemer airmail label

## 1922 LATÉCOÈRE ENVELOPE



- Airmail envelopes created by Latécoère, free to customers
- “Affranchir par l’expéditeur” to inform postal inspectors that sender applied overfranking, not postal clerk

December 5, 1922, Mogador to Delémont, Switzerland

Over-franked at 4f 75

Casablanca transit marking December 6 on reverse

Arrived Delémont December 9



## 1922 LATÉCOÈRE ENVELOPE

- Reverse of cover
- Rates for the carriage of passengers, freight and mail.
- Lignes Aériennes Latécoère is one of several names for his air service





## AIRMAIL REGISTERED EXPRESS



- Express required delivery ahead of regular mail
- Sender indicates by air to Toulouse
- M/s note below Guynemer label indicates sender applied postage (overpaid)

April 12, 1922, Casablanca to Chiasso, Switzerland

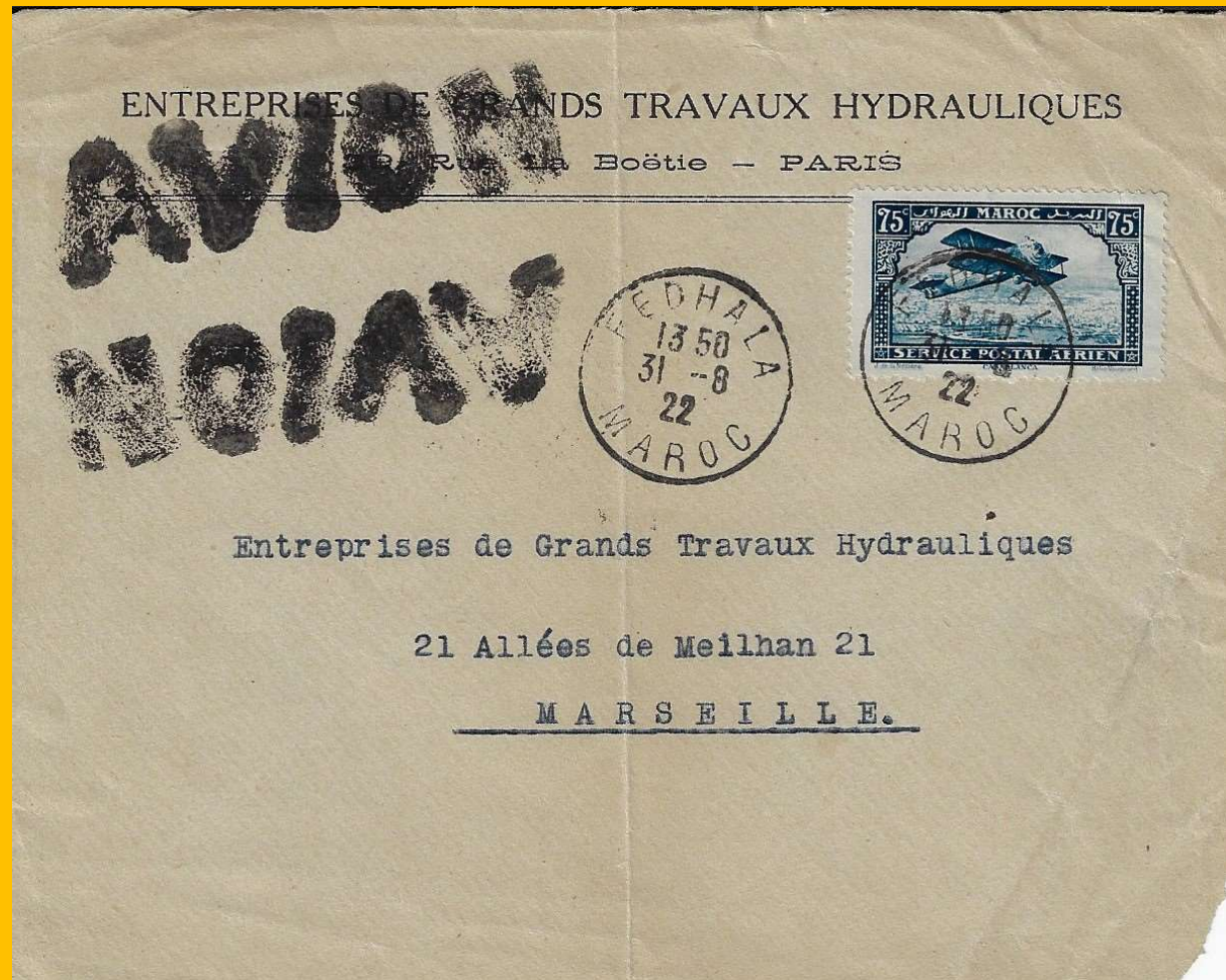
Franked 3f 75 = Foreign letter rate 75c (20-40g) + airmail 1f 00 (20100g) + registered 50c + express mail fee 1f 00 + **overpaid 50c**

Toulouse Gare transit marking April 13, Lyon-Gare transit April 14 on reverse

Arrived Chiasso April 16

## PRIVATE CACHET "AVION"

- Privately prepared handstamp  
"AVION" in black
- Intended to replace use of Guynemer label
- Use limited to Fedhala (1922-1941) and Taza Ville Nouvelle (1933-1938).

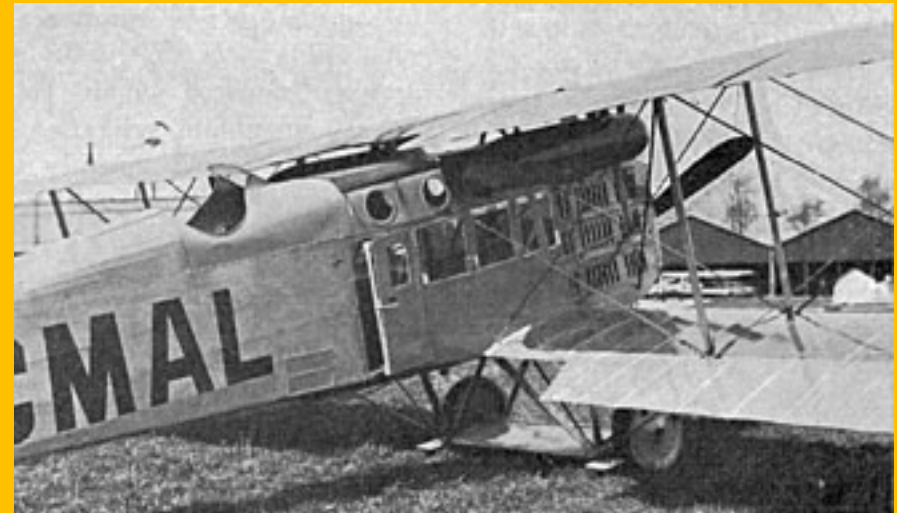
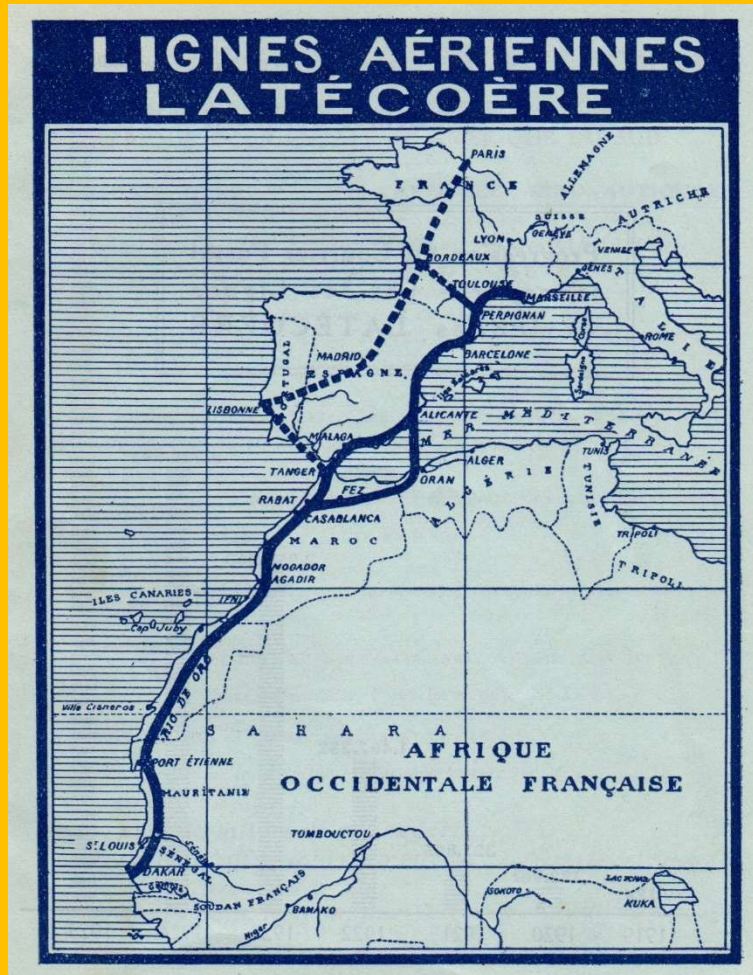


*August 31, 1922, Fedhala to Marseille*

*Franked 75c = Domestic letter rate 25c + airmail surtax 50c*



## NEW AIRMAIL ROUTE TO DAKAR



Bréguet 14T bis outfitted as ambulance – October 1921

Similar to three planes Bréguet specially modified for first flight from Casablanca to Dakar



## INAUGURAL FLIGHT CASABLANCA-DAKAR MAY 3, 1923



- May 3, 1923, three planes left Casablanca for Dakar
- Pilots were Delrieu, Cueille, and Ham
- Flights took two days (2,700 km)
- Special first flight cachet

May 2, 1923, Casablanca to Dakar, Senegal

Franked 75c = Domestic letter rate 25c + airmail 50c

Arrived Dakar May 5

## INAUGURAL FLIGHT CASABLANCA TO DAKAR-FORCED LANDING

- Ham ran out of fuel, landed at Cape Barbas, Mauritania
- Delrieu, rescued him and the 250 letters Ham's plane was carrying, proceeded to Dakar, arrived May 5.
- Delrieu's passengers already on board included mechanic Lefroit and journalist Louis
- Special privately produced air label for Lignes Aeriennes Latécoère



*May 2, 1923, Casablanca to Dakar, Senegal*

*Franked 75c = Domestic letter rate 25c + airmail 50c*

*Arrived Dakar May 6*

*Addressed to Ham, pilot of third plane*



## REGISTERED MAIL 1923 2<sup>nd</sup> STEP RATES DOMESTIC AIR



*February 2, 1923, Casablanca (Colis Postaux) to Marseille*

*Franked 1f 75c = Domestic second step letter rate 40c + airmail surtax 1f 00 + registration 35c*



## REGISTERED MAIL 1923 RATES FOREIGN AIR



December 8, 1923, Oudjda to Honegg, Switzerland

Franked 1f 50c = Foreign letter rate 50c + airmail surtax 50c + registration 50c

Inbound French air service terminus was Toulouse until 1924

## FIRST DAY COVER – 25 AND 50 CENTIMES AIRMAILS

### PRINT FLAW 25C VALUE

- Stamps issued January 1, 1923
- Print flaw in position 11 – elongated top line



*January 1, 1923, Casablanca to Paris*

*Franked 75c = Domestic letter rate 25c + airmail surtax 50c*

*Addressed to Theodore Champion, French stamp dealer*



## REVISED LATÉCOÈRE ENVELOPE



- Casablanca to Oran,  
Algeria, added as second  
route



- Reverse of envelope  
updated with new rates
- Space for sender's info  
added to front

May 13, 1923, Fez Ville Nouvelle to Paris

Franked 75c = Military airmail rate effective February 1, 1921

Vaguemestre validation at upper left



## PRIVATELY PRINTED ENVELOPE FROM LA SEMEUSE

- Envelope produced by La Semeuse, Casablanca printer
- Widely used for mail from Casablanca 1923-25
- No printing on reverse



May 6, 1923, Casablanca to Paris

Franked 75c = Domestic letter rate 25c + airmail surtax 50c

Another addressed to M. Champion, the stamp dealer

## PRIVATELY PRINTED ENVELOPE – EARLIER VERSION



- Also printed by La Semeuse
- More closely resembles Latécoère envelopes – airplane centered and address lines printed on front
- Includes La Semeuse street address

*January 10, 1923, Casablanca to Manchester, England*

*Overfranked 1f 50 = Foreign letter rate 50c + airmail surtax 75c, overpaid 25c*



# DEVELOPMENT OF FRENCH AIRMAIL IN MOROCCO

1911 – 1923

**The end of the program  
but just past the beginning  
of Moroccan air mail**

**Who has questions?**