

France & Colonies Philatelist



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Obock and Somali Coast.

By Edmond Queyroy



OBOCK
OBOCK

In 1862 the territory of Somali Coast became a French possession. Menelik, Negus of Ethiopia (miscalled "Abyssinia" among stamp people), sold this area to the French government for 50,000 francs. The capital was the port of Obock, on the west shore of the strait of Bab el Mandeb, entrance to the Red Sea, opposite Aden.

The French Colonies general issues were in use at Obock from 1862 onward. These are well known usages, comprising the Empire Laurated, Ceres, and Sage imperforate, and the Dubois or Commerce type perforated.

The railroad was constructed from Djibouti in the Somali Coast area to Addis Ababa in Ethiopia, prior to 1892. With its construction and completion, activity in the port of Obock ended. In 1892 Djibouti was made capital of Somali Coast by government order in 1892.

Up to this period we have only the general colonial issues. But in 1891-92 an authorization and instruction was given to each colony to surcharge all the stamps of the last general issue on hand with the colony name. This limited their use to the particular colony. It avoided any dealings in stamps between persons in the different colonies when the official exchange rates were not alike. For instance, stamps bought in Martinique could be sent to New Caledonia and there sold at a higher price in metropolitan French exchange. Late deliveries of stamps to some colonies were also involved.

Governor Lagarde, by official order of Feb. 1, 1892, had made two surcharges on the Commerce type.

The first is the curved type, on Scott Nos.

1
5F

DJ

1 to 11, and postage dues Nos. J1 to J4, made with a rubber handstamp. This handstamp shrunk in that hot desert climate; accordingly, when reprints were made of the due stamp, it gave a smaller imprint.

The second is the straight-line type, on Scott Nos. 12 to 20 and dues J5 to J18, made with a wooden handstamp.

Forgeries of these two surcharges exist. (See descriptions in F. & C. Phil., Vol. 2 No. 5, July-Aug. 1943).

The numbers of stamps issued in each denomination are not on record.

Meanwhile, beginning Feb. 29 and into April, 1892, surcharges to change the values were made over the stamps previously impressed with the wooden handstamp straight line colony name. Official orders of Feb. 29, March 25 and April 6, 1892, indicate that the quantities made were:

1c on 25c, Scott 21.....	8000 copies
2c on 10c, Scott 22.....	2000 copies
2c on 15c, Scott 23.....	3500 copies
2c on 15c in blue, Scott 23D.....	quantity unknown
4c on 15c, Scott 24.....	quantity unknown
4c on 25c, Scott 25.....	7000 copies
5c on 25c, Scott 26.....	7000 copies
20c on 10c, Scott 27.....	1000 copies
30c on 10c, Scott 28.....	1000 copies
35c on 25c, Scott 29.....	2000 copies
75c on 1f, Scott 30.....	1600 copies
5f on 1f, Scott 31.....	600 copies

These stamps supplied shortages in values needed for various rates, besides furnishing a new high value for a special service then inaugurated.

A Camel Post service was inaugurated between Obock and the different Somali Coast centers in 1892. The route specially served Djibouti, where the work of the railroad brought many persons. The rate for a letter of not over 50 grams weight was 5 francs, from Obock to Djibouti. For this service the 5f stamp, Scott 31, just mentioned, appeared on April 6, 1892. Only 600 copies were made. The supply was sold out rapidly, as collectors were aware of its scarcity. Users acted very few of them.

The Camel Post service is often spoken of as the "Mehara" Post, because of use of the local name. "Mehara" (pronounced May Hah Ra) for a camel.



Mail Bags carried on a Camel



Camel Post Service

Obock stamps now served, and continued to serve until 1894, for the whole Somali Coast territory.

Later in 1892 Obock received, and put into service in November, the Navigation and Commerce type stamps, uniform with those of all the other colonies. Mr. Mouchon's design runs in values from 1c up to 1f.

The next year saw two higher values, but the 1893 stamps are triangular imperforate pictorials. Both show the Mehara Mail Rider, a Somali on a

camel. These are the 2f, and the 5f. These stamps are curious in that they have apparent perforations, which are actually printed lines forming parts of the design.

In 1894 a pictorial set replaced the Commerce and Navigation set, showing the Somali Warriors on large rectangular stamps, again with imitation of perforation as design border but actually imperforate stamps. These run to 1 franc. But high values in triangular form, likewise imperforate, and likewise with perforation-style outer lines, provided values from 2 francs to 50 francs. These stamps were the first of such high



values issued for any French colony.

All these 1893-94 stamps were made at the Government Stamp Factory (Atelier de fabrications des timbres-poste) in Paris.

The head office for the colony was transferred from Obock to Djibouti, capital of the colony, in 1894. The catalogues indicate that Obock stamps were continued in use until 1901, but quite probably what happened was that the Obock stock on hand was used interchangeably with the new Somali Coast material until that date. At any rate, the later dates of use of these stamps are normally shown by Djibouti postmarks.

During shortages of low denominations at Djibouti, the large Obock pictorials were cut into halves, used as bisects for part of their value. Thus the 10c, Scott 50, served bisected for 5 centimes. The 25c, 30c and 50c were the other values thus bisected. But the 25 centime was not used for half value. The half with the 5 was used for 5 centimes. Later, in 1903, the left half, with the 2 of 25 alone showing, was sold as used as a 2 centime stamp.

The colony name was changed to Somali Coast in 1894.

Previous to the change of name, six Obock stamps were surcharged for Djibouti use in that year, when the head office was moved. Very small numbers were issued of these. Two of these had large bold DJ surcharges and no change of value, on 5c stamps. One of these, with line under DJ has been very deceptively counterfeited. These forgeries are so deceptive that competent expertizing is needed on any copy offered.

DJIBOUTI
25

DJIBOUTI

DJIBOUTI

Numeral 18 mm. above word

On the other four stamps, the word "Djibouti" is printed diagonally, as with the 1892 surcharges of the various colonies and with change of value in bold numerals on the Group Type, horizontally across bottom on the triangular camel stamps -- value changed also on one of these. These surcharges too have been counterfeited.

These early Somali Coast stamps are rather scarce on covers.

(To be continued)



Some of the scarce Obocks, as sold by Horamar Rooke, Nov. 5-7, 1947.

At the Collectors Club, New York, N.Y.
France & Colonies Night, June 6, 1951.

By careful timing, the France & Colonies Group packed 11 exhibits into one evening, taking exactly 1 hour 35 minutes for this extensive showing of samples of the huge variety of stamps that the French countries offer. The meeting was over at the usual time, 10 p.m., but the exhibits in the frames so interested the members of both the France & Colonies Group and of the Collectors Club who had packed the meeting room, that it was almost 11 o'clock ere the last frame could be emptied.

As guest exhibitors for the evening, the France & Colonies Group included among both exhibiting and non-exhibiting members present no less than fourteen Collectors Club members.

After some introductory remarks by Mr. Alan R. Fernald as President of the Group, Mr. S.G. Rich, who was the Group's M.C. for this evening promptly put on the exhibitors, most of whom had previously placed their material in the wall frames. The eleven exhibitors and their showings were:

Capt. William S. Delafield: The earlier French semi-postals shown used on everyday business or commercial covers of the period of issue.

Adrien Boutrelle, who was not present, sent an exhibit, which was explained by Mrs. Helen Stringham, immediate past Secretary of the Group for seven years. Mr. Boutrelle's showing was of varieties of French stamps, and some Colonials, mostly surcharged, with enlarging photographs to make every variety clear.

Miss Louise Clemencon's single frame of the highest spots of her Reunion collection, starting with stampless covers showing the period when old and present names of the island were both in use on postmarks, came right on to the authorized us of postage dues for regular postage, including even such use for a letter going to another French Colony.

Miss Agnes Burlingame, in addition to putting up two frames of the French Cathedrals on stamps, showed on the stand a number of "Maximum Cards" -- pictorial postal cards with same subject as stamp, and stamp used on the pictorial side of the card -- also the "Optimum" card, in which the cancellation shows the same subject.

John Weare, showing on the stand, gave succinctly the story of the two first stamps issued by France plus the change of color of the 1 franc 1849 to avoid confusion with the 40 centime stamp issued later that year. His few stamps shown illustrated the procedures fully, and his story was dramatically told.

Gustave Wittenberg, also showing on the stand, presented covers from the various French wars, starting with the pacification of Corsica under Louis XVI, through each and every war into World War 2.

Dr. Robert L. Wood occupied three frames with his beautifully arranged Somali Coast collection. The story of the factitious revenue use of the early high-value "diamonds" and the sudden cessation of the "crime wave" for pay to get those stamps used, was one of the evening's high spots.

Mr. Edmond Queyroy exhibited essays and proofs of recent French Colonial stamps, explaining their sequence, the manner of production and the status of each kind with the greatest clarity.

Mr. Charles Neidorf, showing for the first time at any stamp club or gathering, presented strikingly well arranged and mounted material on varieties of recent issues from Algeria, Morocco, and Tunis. Some of the varieties shown had never been reported in philatelic publications.

Mr. Yvan Labat showed comprehensively the Port de la Rochelle and Pont du Gard stamps of France, with not only the varieties of each as usually treated, but a well worked out showing of the successive printings by their different colors, based on copies showing date of use in the cancellations.

Stephen G. Rich showed French precancels, with special emphasis on the "Annulation pour les imprimés", the first type, used from 1869 to 1891, and again in 1902-05. Full journals in this usage and the scarce 1893 roller precancel type of Paris were featured.

In the absence of President Bohn and of Vice-President Britt of the Collectors Club, who had both had to leave, Secretary Haverbeck of that Club presented their certificates to each of the exhibitors.

A very nice touch was the Tricolor badge for every Group member, provided by two of our own ladies. The fine cordial friendship between the Group and the Collectors Club was conspicuous.

Censored Covers, World War 2

Supplementing my reports previously published on the censorship marks used in French Equatorial Africa, I can now report that I have received two World War 2 covers which have the "Commission F" postal control mark. Both are postmarked Fort Archambault, dated 1943 and 1944. One is a soldier's stampless cover; the other a personal or business letter.

I would appreciate hearing from any collector who has any covers from French Equatorial Africa with the "Commission D" postal control mark. Reach me at 14742 Center Ave., Harvey, Ill.

--- Everel E. Keys.



FRANCE—Five new stamps of the "coats of arms" series and one pictorial were issued June 21 and 25, according to Gimbels Stamp Dept. The pictorial shows a view of Arbois and is of the 30fr. denomination. The "arms" valugs are 2fr. (Touraine), 10 centimes (Artois), 50c. (Limousin), 1fr. (Bearn) and 3fr. (France-Comte). The 2fr. appeared June 21 and all others on June 25.

Courtesy Linn's Weekly Stamp News

Officers of the Group, 1951-52

At the annual business meeting, May 3, 1951, the following officers were elected for the year to May 1952:

President: Alan R. Fernald,
71 Washington Square South, New York 12,
N.Y.

Vice-President: Edmond Queyroy,
55 West 42 St., New York 18, N.Y.

Corresponding Secretary: Charles Bretagne,
P.O. Box 67, Poughkeepsie, N.Y.

Recording Secretary: Louise Clemencon,
30 Monroe St., B-H-5, New York 2, N.Y.

Treasurer: Robert L. Wood, M.D.
395 Clinton Ave., Brooklyn 5, N.Y.

Directors at Large:
Benoni Bureau, Raoul Lesgor,
Charles Neidorf, Stephen G. Rich
President Fernald made appointments at once:

Editor: S.G. Rich

Publicity Chairmen:

John Weare, 457 West 57 St.,
New York 19, N.Y.

Vice-President Queyroy.

SECRETARY'S REPORT
May 3 through July 1, 1951

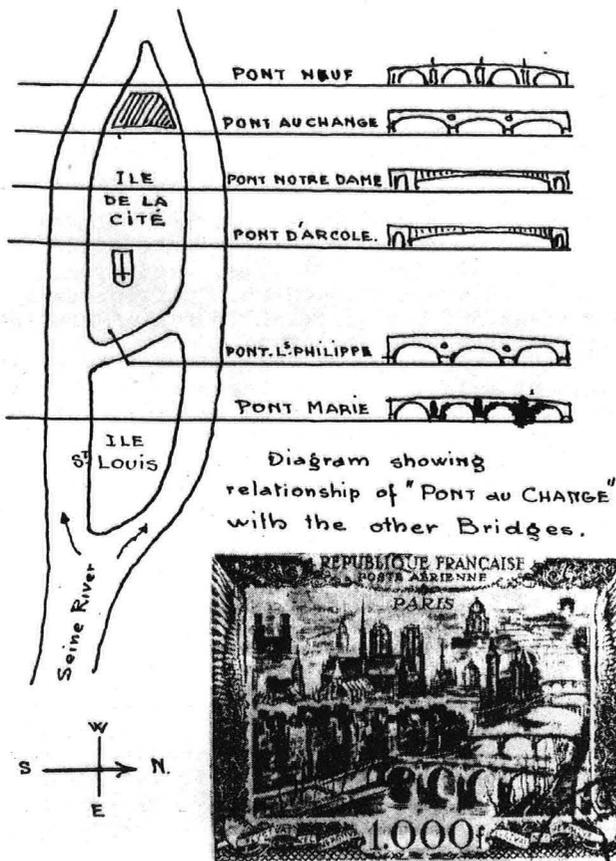


Diagram showing relationship of "PONT AU CHANGE" with the other Bridges.

Error of Fact on 1000f Air Mail
By Leon Arnal

If you look at the 1000f Airmail stamp issued in 1949 by France, you will discover that five bridges are shown between the islands and the north bank of the Seine. Yet there are six bridges there in the actual scene.

Which bridge is missing?

Each of the bridges has a character and style of its own. For instance, Pont Marie, nearest at hand in the view on the stamps, consists of four arches; Pont Louis Philippe, the next has three arches. Ponts d'Arcole and Notre Dame are large flat single arches. Pont au Change, the next, again is three arches--- and this is the missing one. For the sixth bridge, Pont Neuf, of four arches, is plainly in view on the stamp. To satisfy yourself of the correctness of my words, compare the map herewith and the picture of the stamp.

This omission does not appear to have been mentioned anywhere. Whether Mr. Decaris simply omitted it because it might seem to clutter the view, or accidentally missed it, is not yet known.

THE NEW SERVICE

Want and exchange notices only; members only; one or two insertions only; no charge. Those who reply will please offer only what is asked.

Wanted: France: 19th Cent. Paris post offices: Letters, Numerals in Stars on cover, and Ambulants. Please specify price when submitting. E. L. Rothschild, 3585 Van Antwerp Pl., Cincinnati 29, Ohio. (Member 402)

France No. 3 wanted with cancellations other than grill. Also covers or cards mailed at Paris between 18 Mars 71 and 28 Mai 71. Specify price of each, please. E. L. Rothschild, 3585 Van Antwerp Pl., Cincinnati 29, Ohio. (Member 402)

NEW MEMBERS: Welcome:---

474 Raymond, Lt. G. J., USAF, Box 907, Ellington, Texas (French America & Colonies, Postmarks and Covers)

APPLICATIONS PENDING:

Maurin, Emile, La Plaine, St. Denis, Seine, France.

Walter, Col. Mercer C., 305 Highland Ave., Johnstown, Penna.

DECEASED:

154 Holberg, Dr. Edmond A. Chicago, Ill.

CHANGES OF ADDRESS:

435 Oakes, Frank E. to P.O. Box 537, University, Alabama.

NEW APPLICATIONS RECEIVED:

Rosenthal, Saul C. 213 Seaman Ave. Rockville Center, L.I., N.Y.

DUES for the current year are still payable, if your membership number is listed here, please make check payable to France & Colonies Group and mail to Charles Bretagne, P.O. Box 67 Poughkeepsie, N.Y.
30, 41, 51, 66, 77, 81 107, 120, 134, 166, 187, 208, 209, 224, 231, 257, 269, 271, 272, 273, 274, 282, 312, 322, 324, 328, 343, 345, 349, 361, 367, 371, 372, 382, 389, 390, 396, 398, 400, 406, 407, 412, 413, 414, 423, 424, 425, 426, 430, 442, 444, 445, Milwaukee Chapter.

Members in the Armed Forces are requested to notify the Corresponding Secretary when they go on active service, and whether they want the Philatelist sent to their homes or to a service address; or wish to demit membership while in the services. Please keep us informed so you may avoid missent and lost numbers--especially, we repeat, keep us right on your address.

The Corresponding Secretary is:

Charles Bretagne

P.O. Box 67, Poughkeepsie, N.Y.

who is trying to equal the fine record that was made by Mrs. Stringham for the past seven years.

The French
Anchor Cancellation
on U.S. 3c 1861

(Western Stamp Collector,
June 19, 1951)

* Some time ago the anchor in lozenge of dots cancellation which is so highly regarded by specialists in stamps of France was illustrated here and soon afterward Thomas H. Meikle, M.D., of Troy, Pa. wrote to ask if that cancellation was ever found on U. S. stamps.

It seems he has a copy of the 3¢ stamp of the U. S. 1861 series (Scott's No. 65) which is clearly cancelled with an anchor in lozenge cancellation identical with the one which denotes seapost usage when it is found on stamps of France.



Dr. Meikle sent us the stamp and we are reproducing it here to show that the collector who keeps his eyes open will run across many interesting items. It's not a fine copy, but the interest of the cancellation more than offsets its defects. The cancellation specialist can seldom afford to be a condition crank, for many of the finest cancellations just don't exist on fine copies of stamps. To be sure the cancellation specialist prefers the finest possible examples of both stamps and cancels, but he does not pass up a desirable example of a cancellation just because it isn't perfect, for far too often he may never see another specimen in any condition.

The cancellation on Doctor Meikle's 3¢ 1861 is clearly a French seapost cancellation. It may be safely assumed that a letter bearing U.S. stamps was mailed on a French ship and received the cancellation in the ship's post office.