Railway Mail in the French African and Indian Ocean Colonies

By William M. Waugh

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FOREWORD

This study exposes a comprehensive summary of a somewhat obscure subject that will greatly interest the numerous collectors of French colonial postmarks. The author has assembled the scattered information in the literature and augmented it with new data from his and other collections. It is reprinted with a few addenda from a serial article that appeared in the France and Colonies Philatelist from January 1986 to April 1987 especially to make it conveniently available to collectors who were not members of the France and Colonies Philatelic Society. This publication is No. 7 in the series supported by the Vaurie Memorial Fund of the France and Colonies Philatelic Society. — R.G.S.

Railway mail service in the French African and Indian Ocean Colonies was a natural outgrowth of the convoyeur service in France. In France there was AMBULANT service on main lines—mail cars with brigades of clerks sorting the mail—and CONVOYEUR service on branch lines and some main line locals in which postal service was conducted from a compartment reserved for postal use. On both types of service clerks cancelled the mail with distinctive cancelling devices. And many people took their mail to the train to mail it there.

Almost all of the French convoyeur postal markings are easy to recognize because of their wavy (undulated) outer circle. Most, but not all, of the French Colonial convoyeur markings are also of wavy-circle types with the termini of the line spelled out in capital letters without accent marks. Some are of the exact same types used in France, but there are many local variations and distinct types.

For when the French started building railroads in their African and Indian Ocean Colonies, they did the normal thing and started postal convoyeur service on most of the lines, adapting it to local conditions.

If you start collecting this material, you will find that covers are extremely elusive, even of the less scarce markings. Most of what you find will be in the form of marks on detached singles. And do not spurn partial or faint strikes; for many lines you will be very lucky to find even these.

Principal sources are in French and date back many years. Henri Tristant's 1955 article is still the most complete work on the subject. Langlois and Bourselet 1927 and 1937 is still very useful. Reunion has been well studied up to the close of its convoyeur service in 1956. Students in England and France have done much to update Madagascar, and this effort is continuing. But in general much of the post WW II story remains to be discovered.

The dates of the various postmarks are approximate, based on reported usages from various sources. Unreported earlier or later dates are likely to occur for many markings.

The illustrations of postmarks are original size but the covers are rereduced.

I am greatly indebted to Henri Tristant for furnishing numerous photocopies of marks and covers which considerably enhanced my documentation. Editor R. G. Stone assisted me with loan of literature and illustrations.

Thanks to Colin Spong for his assistance on the Madagascar section and to Martin Bratzel, Jr. for his help on the Togo and Cameroun sections, and to Edward Grabowski for ilustrations. Also to J. M. McCrea.

Senegal

A.

B.

C.

D.

E.

F.

CONVOYEUR DAKAR A KAYES

G.

H.

Senegal has two principal railway lines and several branches. The main lines are St.-Louis to Dakar 252 kilometers, and the long line inland from Dakar to Bamako and Koulikoro in present Mali (ex-French Soudan) which extends 1288 kilometers. Branches from the second line extend from Guinguinée to Kaolack 22 kilometers and from Diourbel to Touba; and off the St.-Louis to Dakar line from Louga to Linguère. Thies is the junction point between the two main lines.

Planning of the St.-Louis to Dakar line started in 1878. Its construction in the early 1880's led to fighting with the Wolofs of Kayor who did not

want the railway going through their land. However, the line was completed in 1885 and convoyeur service started in 1887.

St.-Louis, although in Senegal, was the capital of Mauritania from 1906-19. Mauritanian stamps are frequently found postmarked St.-Louis and might occur with the St.-Louis Dakar convoyeur marking. Convoyeur markings exist on French Colonies general issues stamps and on the stamps of French West Africa, as well as Senegal and Soudan.

ST LOUIS A DAKAR-SENEGAL DAKAR A ST LOUIS-SENEGAL (Fig. A) in 24 mm undulated circle, 1887-

ST LOUIS A DAKAR-SENEGAL DAKAR A ST LOUIS-SENEGAL similar to above, but with 26 mm undulated circle, 1902-

ST LOUIS A DAKAR DAKAR A ST LOUIS (Fig. B) 24 mm unlulated circle, 1899-

DAKAR A ST LOUIS (return not reported) 26 mm undulated circle, 1913-

SAINT LOUIS A DAKAR DAKAR A SAINT LOUIS 24 mm undulated circle 1925-

ST LOUIS A DAKAR DAKAR A ST LOUIS 24/13 mm double circle with no undulations, 1939-

DAKAR A ST LOUIS (probable in opposite direction) (Fig. C) 32 mm undulated circle with round inner circle dating from 1950's

CHEMIN DE FER DE DAKAR A ST. LOUIS /*(Senegal)*/(in center:) MEKHÉ/(date) large 35 mm double circle, 1906

The long line eastward from the coast was finally completed and connected with the existing system in Soudan (Upper Senegal and Niger). Convoyeurs operated from Thies, the junction with the St-Louis to Dakar line, to Kidira on the Soudan border and on to Kayes in Soudan.

THIES A KAYES KAYES A THIES (Fig. D) 25-26 mm, 1918-

DAKAR A KIDIRA/SENEGAL KIDIRA A DAKAR/SENEGAL (Fig. E), 26 mm, 1934-

DAKAR A KIDIRA 24/13 mm double circle with no undulations and with inner circle of dashes, 1939-

CONVOYEUR DAKAR A KAYES (Fig. G), straight-line marking, 1950's. There is a branch line to Kaolack.

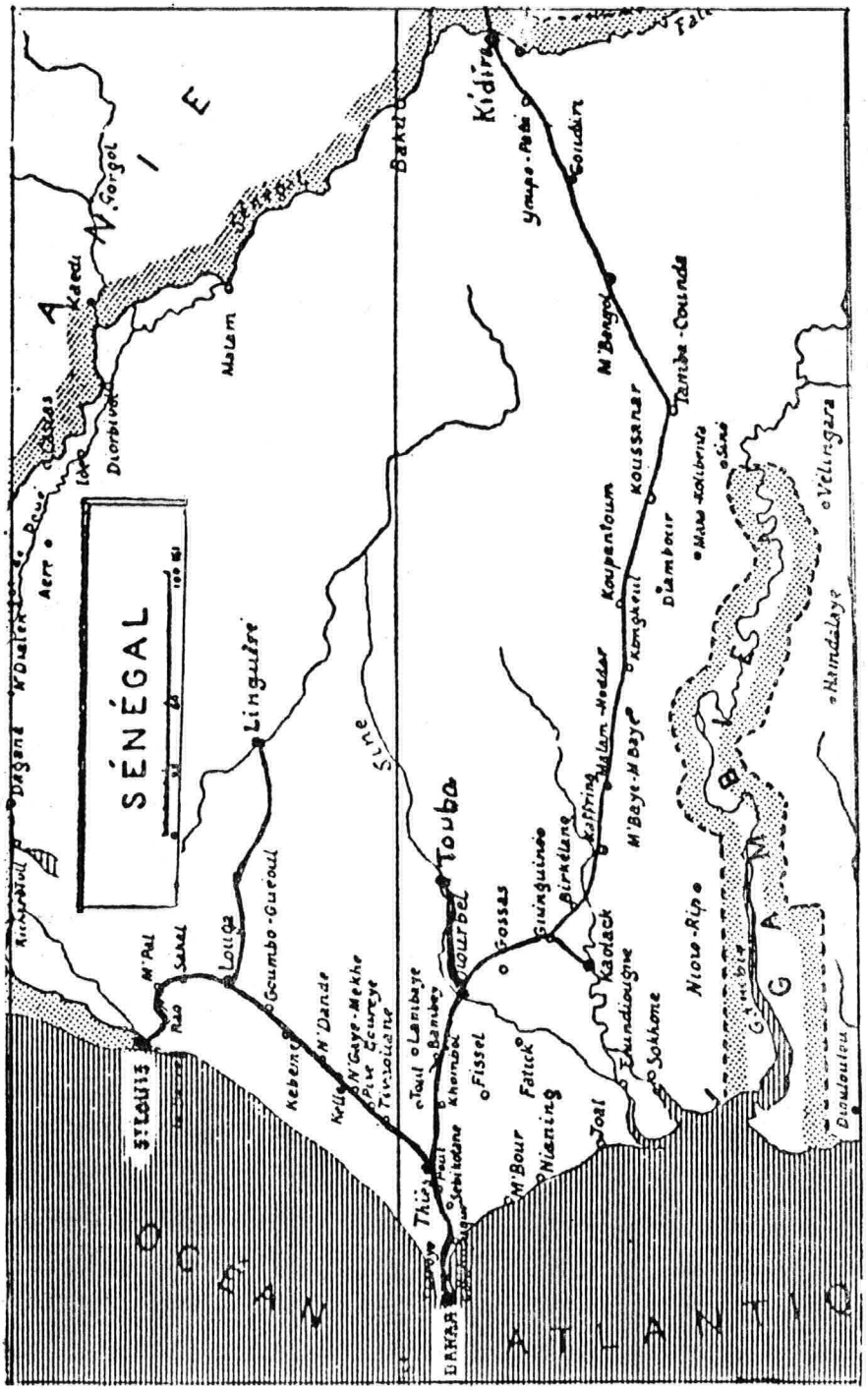
THIES A KAOLACK KAOLACK A THIES 26 mm (Fig. F), 1920-38.

DAKAR A KAOLACK 24/13 mm double circle with no undulations and with inner circle of dashes, 1939-

CONVOYEUR DAKAR A KAOLACK straightline marking similar to Fig. F, 1950's.

Marking introduced from 1939 on are rare, the straight-line markings being very rare. Earlier Dakar-Kidira line markings are also rare. Thies-Kayes line markings are scarce. Thies-Kaolack line markings are semi scarce. Many of the earlier Dakar-St-Louis line markings are very frequently seen, although rare on French Colonies general issues.

The Chemin de Fer de Dakar a St. Louis, Mehké, marking is a recent discovery reported here for the first time—seen on a 1906 pictorial post card. It does not cancel the stamp (which is postmarked at N'Gaye-Mehké, half way between Thies and Louga. Apparently an administrative cachet of the Mehké railroad station; the card is signed by the "Chef de Gare" of the station.


SÉNÉGAL
Linguère
Louga
Gumbo-Gureoul
Kebemer
N'Dande
Touba
Tivaouane
Thiès
Tout
Lambaye
Bambey
Khombole
Fissel
Gossas
Fatick
Nianing
M'Bour
Joal
Sokhone
Kaolack
Kahone
Guinguinéo
Birkélane
Malem-Hodar
M'Baye-M'Baye
Kaffrine
Koungueul
Koupentoum
Koussanar
Diamboir
Tambacounda
N'Bengol
Goudiri
Kidira
Bakel
Matam
Dagana
Podor
Saint-Louis
Rao
M'Pal
Richard-Toll
Dagana
Aere
Diourbel
Kaedi
Sorgol
Falémé
Gambie
Niokolo-Koba
Niokolo-Rip
Velingara
Kounkané
Kounkané
Diamoulou
Sine
Saloum
Gambie

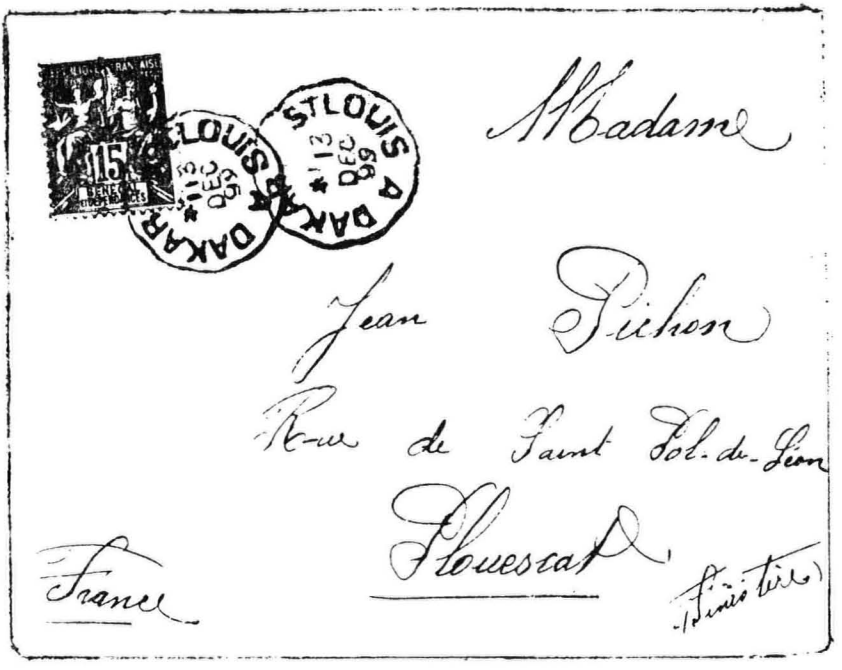


Fig. B. On cover of 1899.

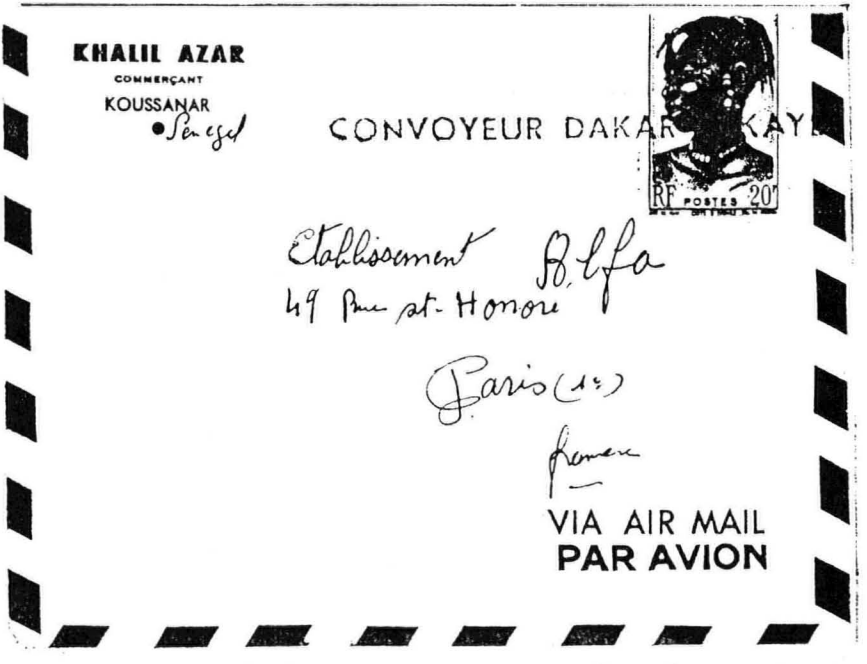
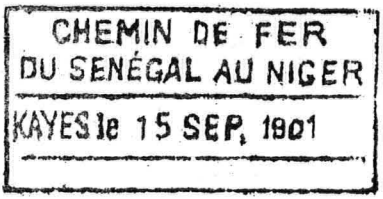


Fig. G. On cover from Koussanar, Senegal.


CHEMIN DE FER
DU SENÉGAL AU NIGER
KAYES le 15 SEP. 1901

A.


KOULIKORO A KAYES
7
AVRIL
15
A

B.


KOULIKORO A KAYES
22
FEV
29
B

C.


BAMAKO A KAYES
8
JUIL
25

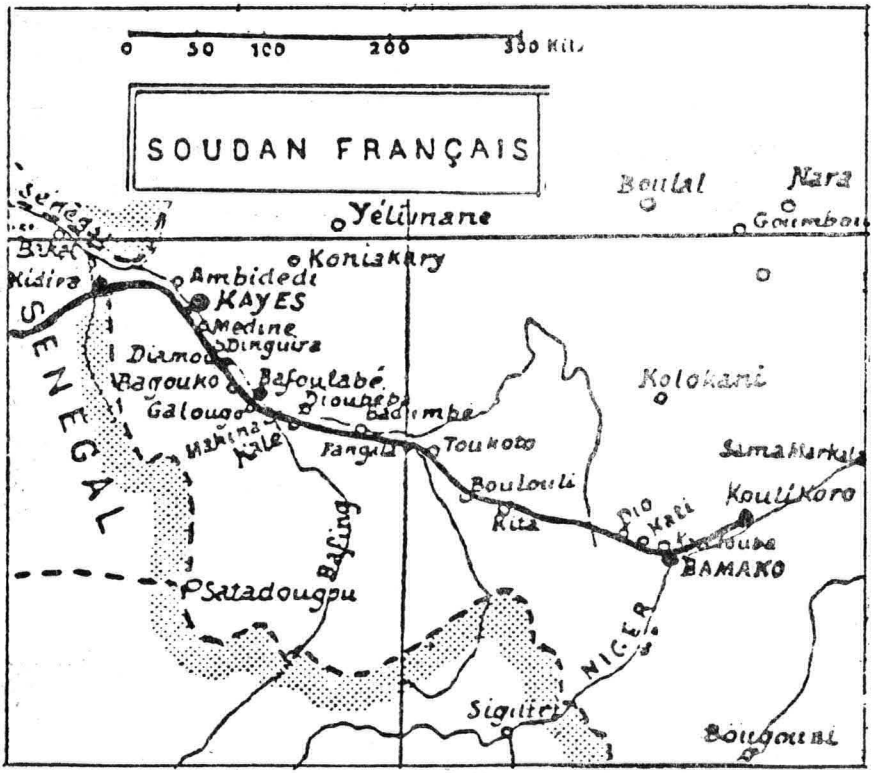
D.


KIDIRA-BAMAKO
31
OCT
36
SOUDAN-FRANÇAIS

E.


BAMAKO A KAYES
8
MAI
41
SOUDAN-FRANÇAIS

F.


0 50 100 200 300 Kil.
SOUDAN FRANÇAIS
Boulal
Nara
Yélimane
Koniakary
Kidira
Ambidedi
KAYES
Medine
Dinguira
Diamou
Bagouko
Bafoulabé
Galougo
Diouneba
Badumbe
Toukoto
Fangala
Boulouli
Kita
Kolokani
Sima Markala
Koulikoro
BAMAKO
Satadougou
Bafing
SENEGAL
NIGER
Siguiri
Bougouni

French Soudan

The first railway construction was to build an inland railway line to link the upper part of the Senegal River with the upper part of the Niger River. Rails, etc., were shipped up the Senegal River during the navigable rainy season. In 1888 the railway extended from Kayes as far as Bafoulabé. The line was completed in 1906 extending 553 kilometers from Kayes through Bamako to Koulikoro on the Niger River.

Meanwhile the name of the area served by the railroad became Upper Senegal and Niger from October 18, 1904 to December 4, 1920, when it became part of a newly established French Soudan. Stamps of French West Africa were used from 1943 until independence. The area is now in Mali.

A connection was completed by 1918 with the Senegal line extending eastward from the coast through Kidira on the border between the two colonies. This made a line of 1288 kilometers from Koulikoro to Dakar.

A marking from the early period of the railroad has been discovered:

CHEMIN DE FER/
DU SENÉGAL AU NIGER/ (see Fig. A)
KAYES le 15 SEP, 1901

Convoyeur service apparently started in 1908.

KAYES A KOULIKORO KOULIKORO A KAYES, letters A or B at bottom (Fig. B), 1908- . Used on both Upper Senegal and Niger and French Soudan stamps.

KAYES A KOULIKORO KOULIKORO A KAYES, letters A or B at bottom (Fig. C), 1924- . This marking has slightly larger lettering for the town names than that on Fig. B.

BAMAKO A KAYES KAYES A BAMAKO with star at bottom, 1920's, (Fig. D).

KIDIRA-BAMAKO/SOUDAN-FRANÇAIS, double circle with inner circle of dashes, (Fig. E), 1936-

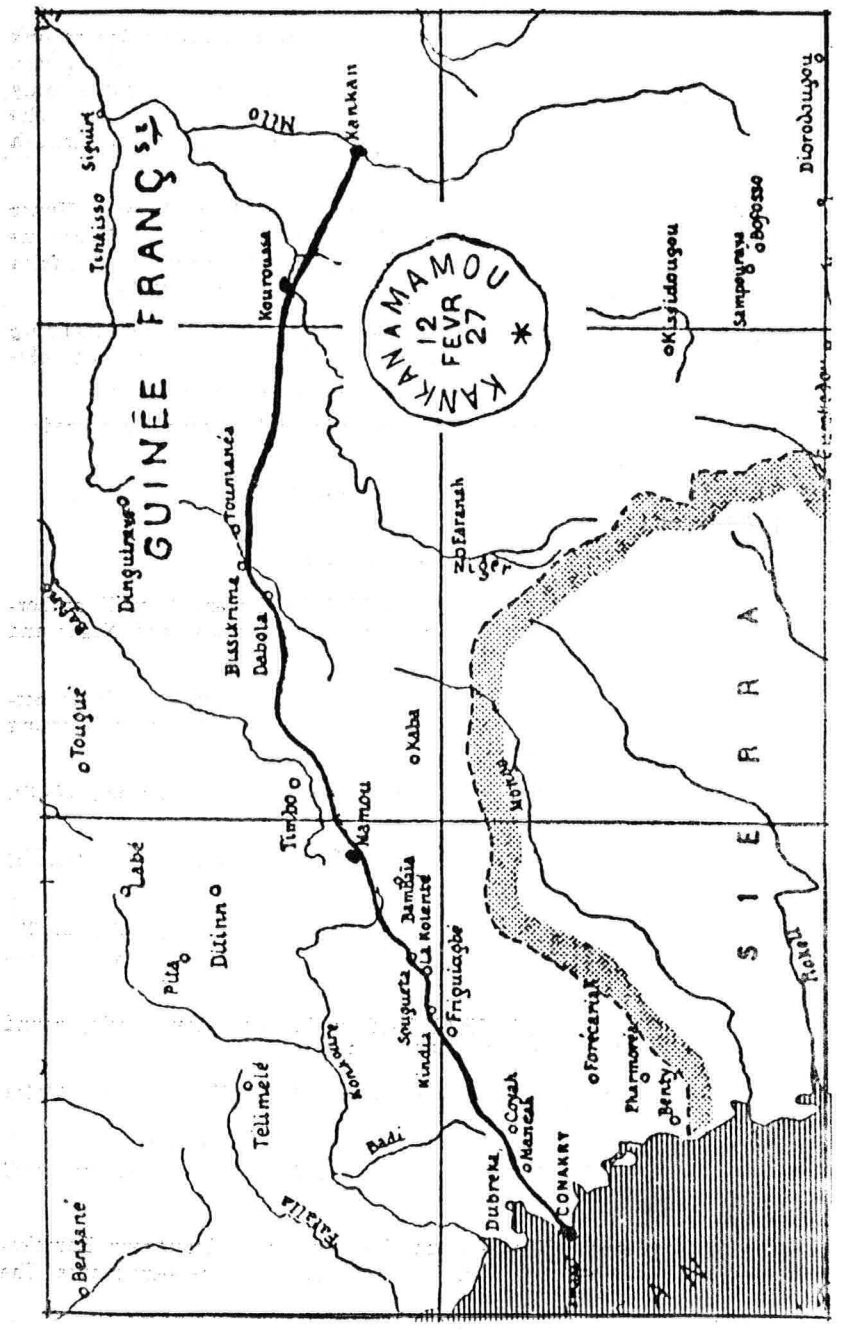
KIDIRA-KOULIKORO/SOUDAN FRANCAIS (similar to Fig. E), 1930's. One source lists this mark in the opposite direction, but a later source does not.

BAMAKO A KAYES/SOUDAN FRANCAIS undulated outer circle, round inner circle of dashes (Fig. F), 1939-

CONVOYEUR/ in oblong box, reported from 1958 on French West Africa
BAMAKO-DAKAR stamps.

Convoyeur markings of Thies to Kayes and Dakar to Kayes are listed under Senegal.

The boxed forerunner (Fig. A) and the late boxed Convoyeur Bamako-Dakar are extreme rarities. Figs. B, C, and D markings are semi-scarce. The other later markings are rare.


GUINÉE FRANÇSE
SIERRA
KANKAN A MAMOU
12
FEVR
27
Siguiri
Tinkisso
Milo
Kankan
Kouroussa
Dinguiraye
Tougué
Bissikrima
Dabola
Kaba
Faranah
Niger
Timbo
Mamou
Labé
Ditinn
Pita
Bambaia
Kolenté
Souguéta
Friguiagbé
Kindia
Konkouré
Télimélé
Badi
Fatalla
Bensané
Dubréka
Manéah
Coyah
CONAKRY
Forécariah
Pharmoréa
Benty
Kissidougou
Sampouyara
Bofosso
Rokell

French Guinea

French Guinea has one long railroad line of 662 kilometers extending from the coast at Conakry inland to Kankan. It was completed to Mamou in 1905, to Kouroussa in 1910 and to Kankan in 1913.

All markings are of the same type.

CONAKRY A MAMOU MAMOU A CONAKRY 1924 into 1950's.

MAMOU A KANKAN KANKAN A MAMOU 1927-38.

MAMOU A KOUROUSSA 1923

Kankan à Mamou markings are frequently seen. Mamou à Kankan markings and those from the Conakry à Mamou line are semi-scarce. Markings Mamou à Kouroussa are rare.

Ivory Coast

One long line stretches inland 807 kilometers from Abidjan to Bobo-Dioulassa in Upper Volta. There was convoyeur service inland only to Bouaké which had been reached by the railroad in 1912.

ABIDJAN A DIMBOKRO DIMBOKRO A ABIDJAN (Fig. A) 1924-
ABIDJAN A BOUAKE BOUAKE A ABIDJAN (Fig. B) 1929-40-

Before the convoyeur markings came into use, railroad station markings were occasionally used to cancel administrative mail. A box marking of Agnéby (Fig. C) and straight-line markings ABIDJAN-VILLE and AZAGUIÉ (Fig. D) have been reported.

The railroad station markings are extremely rare. Abidjan A Dimbokro line markings are very scarce, Abidjan A Bouake line markings semi-scarce. As is usually the case with African convoyeur markings those from inland to the coast are seen more often than those headed inland.

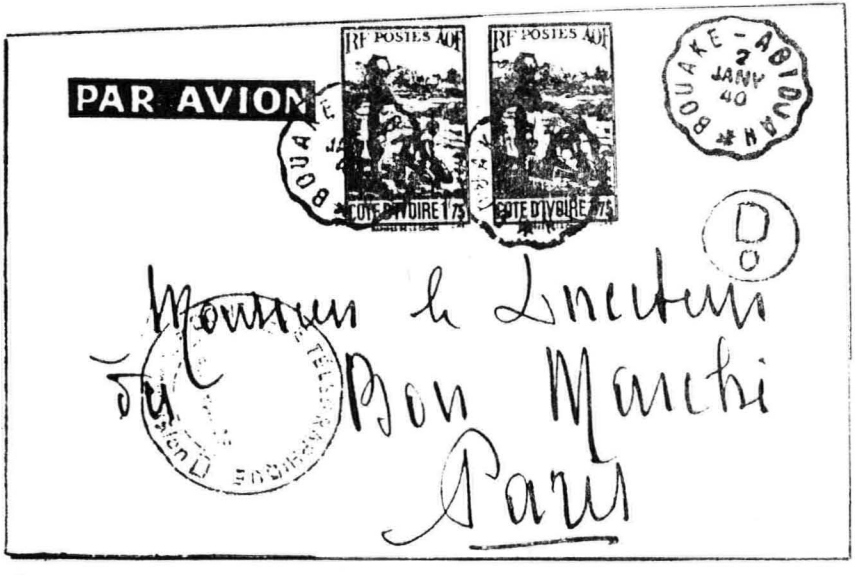
A.

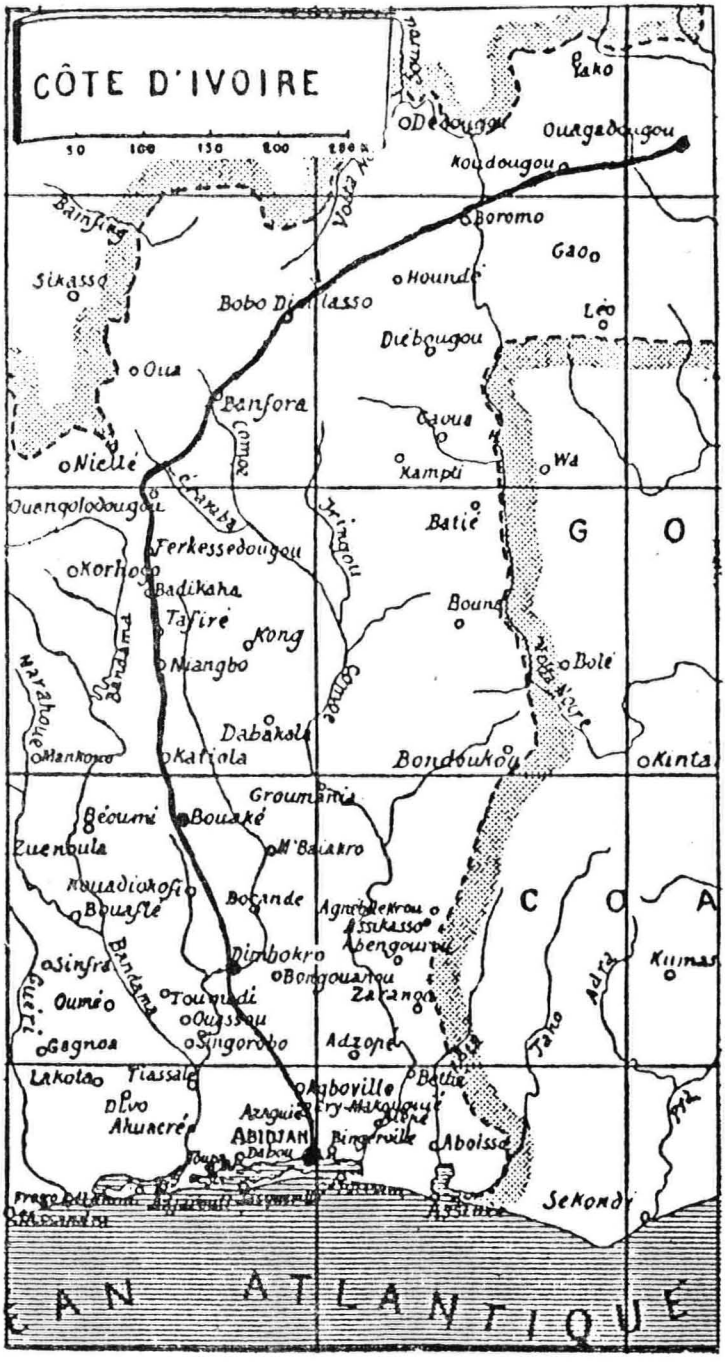
B.

C.

AZAGUIÉ
C.F.C.I

D.




CÔTE D'IVOIRE
50 100 150 200 250
Dédougou
Ouagadougou
Koudougou
Boromo
Gao
Hounde
Sikasso
Bobo Dioulasso
Léo
Diébougou
Oua
Banfora
Gaoua
Niellé
Kampti
Wa
Ouangolodougou
Batié
Ferkessedougou
Korhogo
Badikaha
Bouna
Tafiré
Kong
Niangbo
Bolé
Dabakala
Mankono
Katiola
Bondoukou
Kinta
Groumania
Béoumi
Bouaké
Zuenoula
M'Baikro
Nouadiokofi
Bocande
Bouaflé
Agnibilekrou
Assikasso
Abengourou
Dimbokro
Sinfra
Bongouanou
Kumas
Oumé
Toumodi
Zaranou
Ouassou
Gagnoa
Singrobo
Adzopé
Lakolao
Tiassalé
Bettie
Grand-Lahou
Divo
Akuacré
Azaguié
Agboville
Dry-Makouaye
ABIDJAN
Dabou
Bingerville
Aboisso
Assinie
Sekondi
AN ATLANTIQUE


LOME A PALIME
3
SEPT
1951

A.


LOME A PALIME
19 -1
1956

B.


LOME A ATAKPAME
26 10
23

C.


LOME A BLITTA
26 -1
1951

D.


LOME A ANECHO
29 -9
47

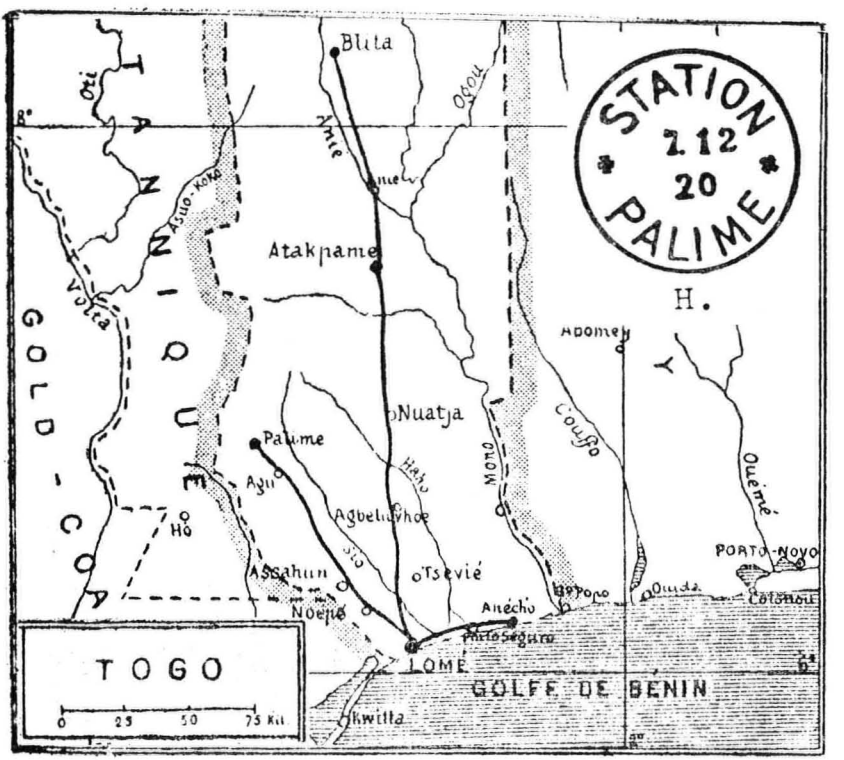
E.


LOME BLITTA
21 -11
1953
TOGO

F.


LOME ANECHO
16 -8
1958
TOGO

G.


STATION
2.12
20
PALIME
Blita
Atakpame
Nuatja
Palime
Agu
Agbelouvhoe
Tsevié
Anécho
Lome
Aného
Porto-Seguro
Kwitta
Ho
Assahun
Noépé
Adomey
Couffo
Mono
Ouémé
PORTO-NOVO
Cotonou
Lagoon
Volta
Oti
Asuo-Koko
Amie
Oroue
Haho
Sio
TANIOUA
GOLD-COAST
TOGO
0 25 50 75 Km
GOLFE DE BENIN
8°
6°

H.

Togo

The German colony of Togo was conquered by the French and English in 1914. A period of joint occupation followed. Then after WW I, Togo became a League of Nations mandate, most of it going to France, part to Great Britain.

The French inherited three railway lines from the Germans, a western line of 119 kilometers from Lomé to Palimé completed in 1905, a coastal line of 43 kilometers from Lomé to Anécho also completed in 1905; and a central line from Lomé completed to Atakpamé in 1913 and extended by the French to Blitta in 1934 for a distance of 280 kilometers. Under the German administration the railways transported mail, but there was no railway mail service.

The French started convoyeur service. Togo convoyeur markings were inscribed in one direction only, with no separate markings for return trips.

LOME A PALIME (Fig. A) 1922-50's

LOME A PALIME (Fig. B) introduced in 1950's, slightly larger circle

LOME A ATAKPAME (Fig. C) 1922-46

LOME A BLITTA (Fig. D) 1946-51

LOME A ANECHO (Fig. E) 1922-48-

LOME BLITTA TOGO (Fig. F) 1952-55-

LOME ANECHO TOGO (Fig. G) 1952-58-

We have not attempted to list all variations within the date blocks of the markings. An example of such a variation occurs in the Lome Blitta marking (Fig. F). It occurs with a deformed slug instead of a blank space over the date.

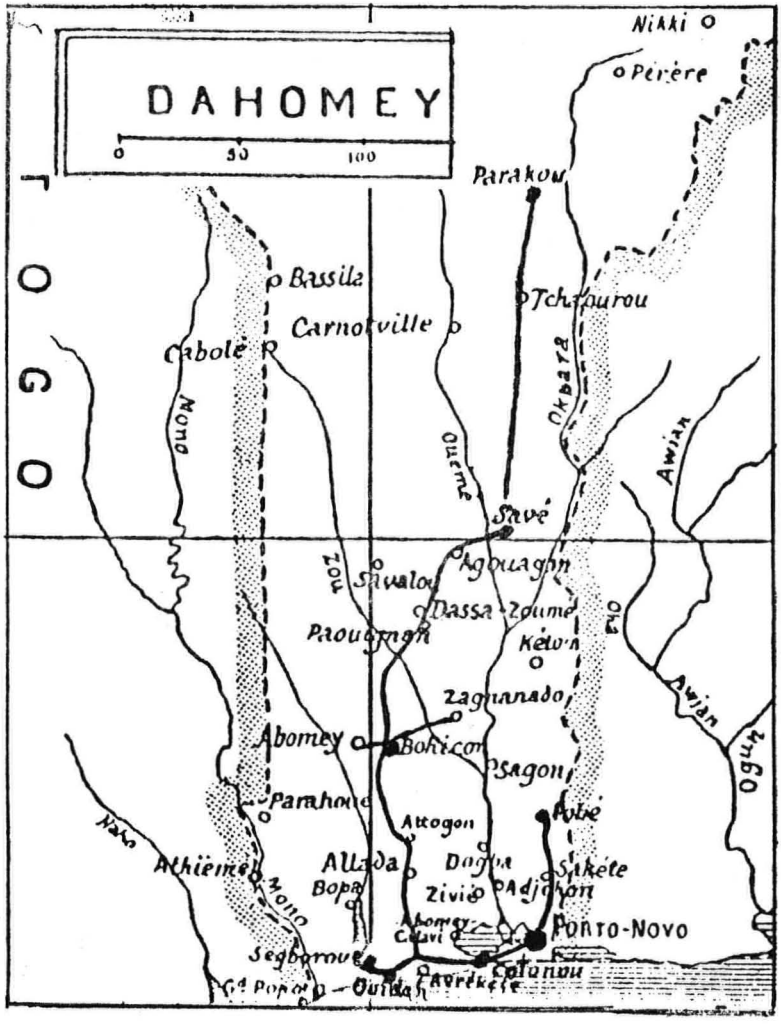
In 1916 under Franco-British occupation and on into 1922, a circular marking, STATION PALIME was used at the railway station there (Fig. H).

In general, Togo convoyeur markings are moderately scarce, the Palime Station marking semi-rare.

The marking, STATION PALIME (Fig. H), may or may not have been a railroad-station marking. Under German rule in Togo there were various station markings, used as administrative cachets (but not to cancel stamps except by favor) at various police and customs stations, etc., but not at railroad stations. No such marking is reported from Palime under German rule.

However, there is a theory that such a marking may have been prepared for Palime but not put into use by the Germans. It may have been found by the British (Palime was in their original occupation zone) and put into postal use by them. Its use has been reported from November 1914 and continned into 1922.

So until the actual locations of the post office is established, whether it was at the railroad station or elsewhere the question will remain unresolved.


DAHOMEY
0
50
100
TOGO
Nikki
Perère
Parakou
Bassila
Carnotville
Tchaourou
Cabolé
Mono
Ouémé
Okbara
Awian
Savé
Agouagon
Zou
Savalou
Dassa-Zoumé
Pouégnon
Kétou
Ouémé
Zagnanado
Abomey
Bohicon
Sagon
Parahoué
Allogon
Aplié
Nako
Athiémé
Allada
Dogba
Sikéte
Mono
Bopa
Zivio
Adjohon
Abomey-Calavi
PORTO-NOVO
Segbanou
Cotonou
Ouidah
Avrékété
Ga Popo
Ogun

Dahomey

The Cotonou-Niger line was opened 153 kilometers to Toffe by the end of 1902, another 143 kilometers to Aan in July 1905, to Paouignan in 1906, Savé in 1912 and Parakou in 1936, for a total length of 417 kilometers.

A branch led westward to Ouidah on the coast, April 1903, and on to Segboroué at the end of 1905, total length from Cotonou 58 kilometers. Convoyeur service started to Ouidah in 1903.

An eastern line of 105 kilometers connected Porto-Novo and Pobé in 1913 and then on to Cotonou. It had no convoyeur service.

Dahomey convoyeur markings are all of the same general type with minor variations, stars or no stars, etc., 26 mm, (Figs. A and B).

COTONOU A OUIDAH OUIDAH A COTONOU 1903-

COTONOU-SEGBOROUE SEGBORONE-COTONOU 1920's-
note misspelling on return trip.

COTONOU A BOHICON BOHICON A COTONOU 1920's-30

COTONOU A PAOUIGNAN PAOUIGNAN A COTONOU 1906-

COTONOU-SAVE (1) 1917-33

COTONOU-SEVE 1916-30's Sevé misspelling for Savé.

Markings of the Cotonou to Bohicon and Paouignan lines are very scarce, the others generally semi-scarce.

A.

B.

A.

B.

C.

D.

E.

F.

G.

H.

I.

J.

K.

L.

Cameroun

The Germans held Cameroun before World War I. The French and British conquered it 1914-16. After World War I most of it became a French League of Nations mandate, a small part of it British.

The French inherited part of a railroad system from the Germans and added to it and extended it. German railroad postal markings exist which are rare forerunners of the French ones.

The Germans built a northern line, Nordbahn or Maneguba-Bahn, in 1906--11, from the coast at Bonaberi inland 160 kilometers to Nkongsamba. It started carrying mail in 1909. In 1912 native postal clerks were installed on its three runs a week in each direction. They sold stamps at its stops and registered mail. War ended its operations September 25, 1914.

DUALA KAMERUN (Fig. A) town mark used as a provisional railroad marking 1912-13 usually struck in violet, with or without year date.

BONABERI-NKONGSAMBA BAHNPOST Z. 1 and Z. 2, May 19, 1913 to Sept. 1914. Zug 1 was from the coast inland, Zug 2 in the opposite direction. Each Zug mark comes in two types, with either one dot or two in the bottom ornamental line. At first there were dots after the Zug marking (Fig. B). Then in late 1913 a solid square slug was substituted for the dots (Fig. C). So there are four subvarieties for each Zug.

B. N./K. B. straightline marking (Bau-Nord/Kamerun-Bahn)

BONABERI straightline marking.

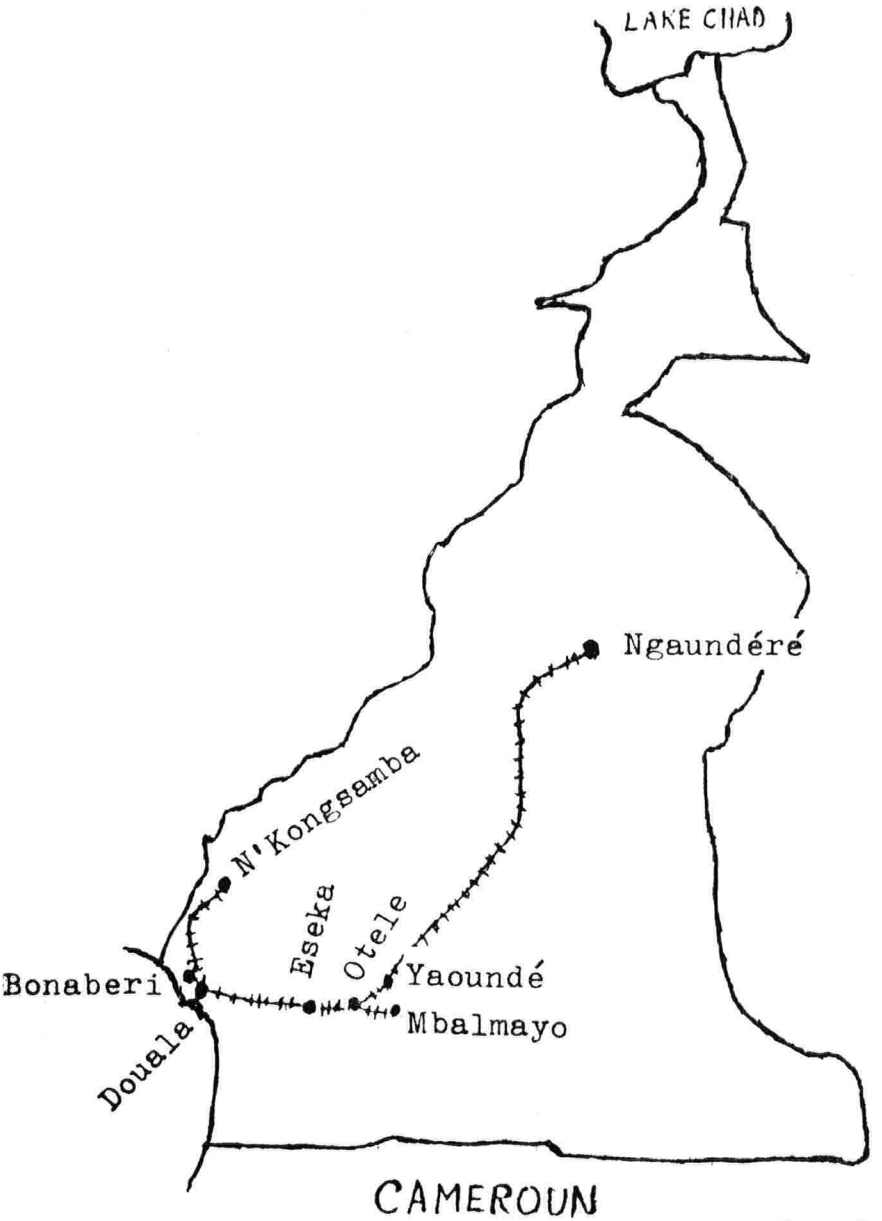
The Germans also started a central railroad, Mittelland Bahn, projected to run inland from Douala. At the start of World War I, its first 198 kilometers were fully operational. It was used to carry mail, starting in 1913, but had no railroad post office in German days.

During World War I retreating Germans badly damaged the northern line. The French first temporarily repaired it and then rebuilt it. The Germans also damaged rolling stock, signal equipment, etc., on the central line and the French did not get it back ito operation until 1919.

Work began in 1922 to extend the central line to Yaoundé, involving constructing many large bridges and three long tunnels in mountainous country. This work was completed in 1927. Total length of the line was 308 kilometers. Its first convoyeur markings read Duala a Eseka. Later markings Douala a Yaoundé reflected its extension.

Construction began in 1958 on a further extension of the central line. In 1969 it had reached Belabo and further construction brought it to Ngaundéré.

Cameroun lines are meter gauge except for a narrow gauge branch off the central line extending 38 kilometers from Otele to Mbalmayo.


LAKE CHAD
Ngaundéré
N'Kongsamba
Eseka
Otele
Yaoundé
Bonaberi
Douala
Mbalmayo
CAMEROUN

In 1955 the two main lines were linked by a bridge over the Wouri estuary between Douala and Bonaberi. Northern line markings initially read Bonaberi-Nkongsamba. When Bonaberi and Douala were linked by the new bridge, new markings, Douala A Nkongsama were prepared.

As the illustrations show, some of the Cameroun convoyeur markings are in distinctive types not seen in other colonies. They read in one direction only. There are no separate markings for the return trips.

Northern Line:—

BONABERI A N'KONG-SAMBA (Fig. D) 1921-36

BONABERI-NKONGSAMBA CAMEROUN (Figs. E and F) 1932-65
Two separate markings were used concurrently with minor variations in regard to the position of the B in Bonaberi and the spacing and position of the C in Cameroun.

DOUALA A NKONGSAMBA (Fig. G) 1957-59-

Central Line:—

DUALA A ESEKA (same type as Fig. D) 1920-30

DOUALA-YAOUNDÉ CAMEROUN (Fig. H) ca. 1930-53

DOUALA À YAOUNDÉ I CAMEROUN (Fig. I) 1940-55

DOUALA À YAOUNDÉ CAMEROUN, large circle (Fig. J) 1948-61

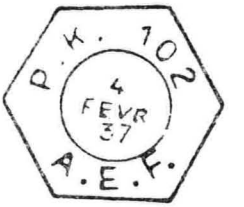
DOUALA À YAOUNDÉ CAMEROUN, small circle (Fig. K) 1955-61

Otele-M'balmayo Line:—

OTELE A M'BALMAYO CAMEROUN (Fig. L) 1933-51

A.

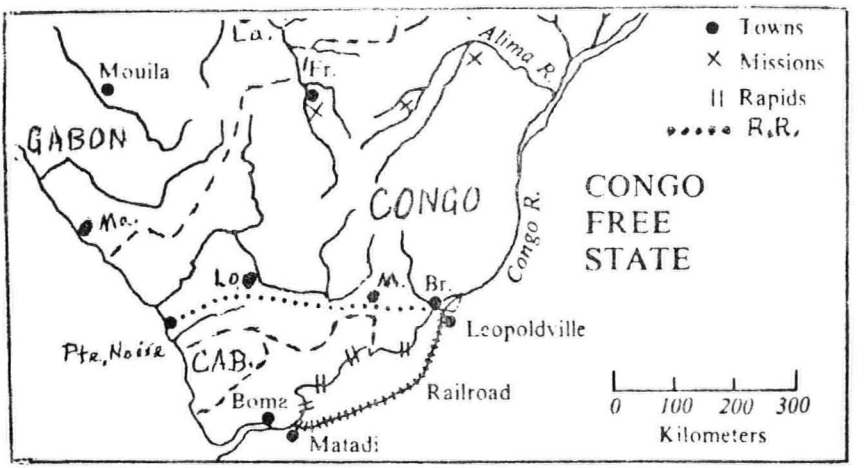
B.



E.

C.

D.



Br= Brazzaville
M= Mindouli
Lo = Loudima

French Equatorial Africa

Construction of the Congo-Ocean Line of 511 kilometers from Pointe-Noire on the Gabon coast to Brazzaville in Middle Congo commenced in 1921 and continued with heavy expenditure of lives of workmen (imported Indo-chinese) until its completion in July 1934. By 1930 the line was open for its first 90 km inland from the coast and at the other end had been put through 190 km westward from Brazzaville. The 2,000 ft. Mayumbe mountains, posing severe construction problems (17 tunnels), had separated the two sections, which were connected by a highway in the meantime.

The line was built on the British Colonial gauge of 3 feet 6 inches, to match the Belgian Congo rail line. There is a junction at Monte Bele (near Loudima) with the 180-mile Comilog Line which was opened in 1964 to carry manganese ore from the Moanda mines in Gabon.

As of about 1969 (after independence of the colonies from France) there were two railcar expresses each way daily on the line, each carrying a first-class car with a bar. It was a 11½ hour trip from Pointe-Noire to Brazzaville with 39 stops. In addition there were slow mixed trains which the natives used to peddle produce, chickens, and goats from village to village.

There have been two sets of convoyeur marks:—

*LIGNE BRAZZAVILLE A POINTE-NOIRE*A.E.F., 1938-51 (Fig. A)

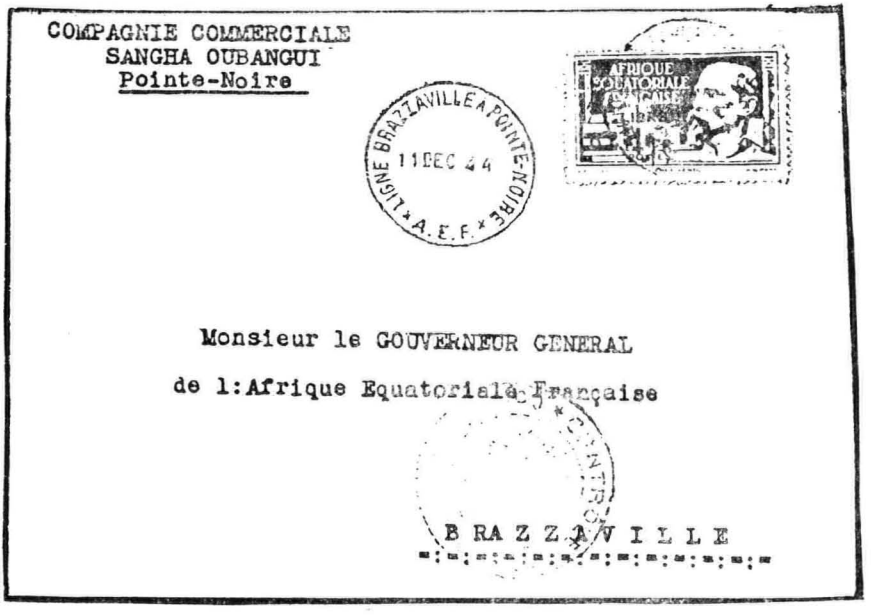
*LIGNE POINTE-NOIRE A BRAZZAVILLE*A.E.F., 1938-51 (Fig. B)

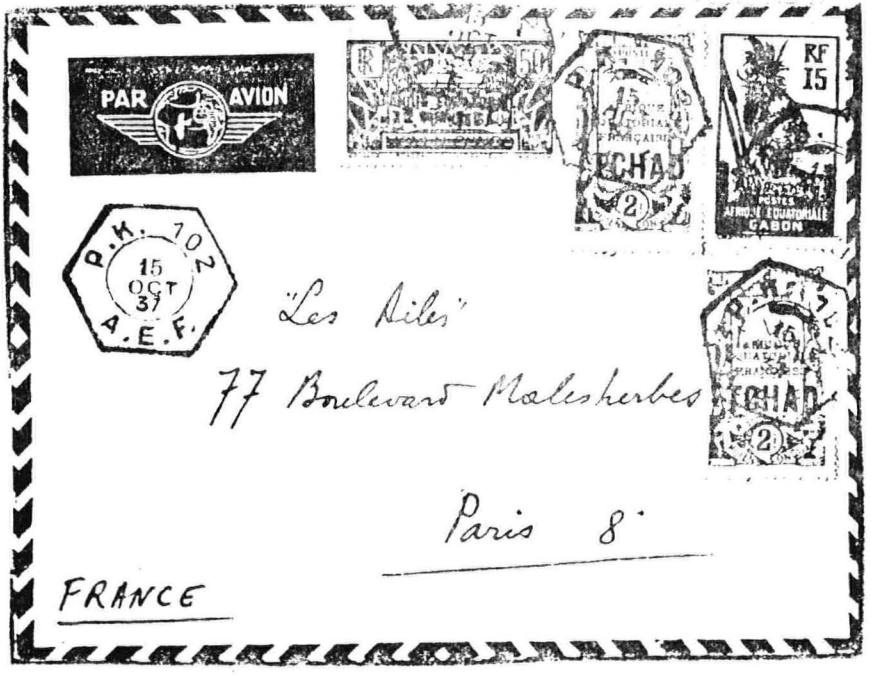
*BRAZZAVILLE A */POINTE-NOIRE, 1952- (Fig. C)

*POINTE-NOIRE A */BRAZZAVILLE, 1952 (Fig. D)

These marks are scarce.

A postal agency was opened at Kilomètre 102 (from Pte. Noire) on the line about 1937. It was probably at the site of a former construction camp for a difficult part of the line where many tunnels and viaducts were being built. (The Mindouli viaduct is illustrated on the Middle Congo stamp Sc. Type A4 and another viaduct on the French Equatorial Africa stamp Sc. Type A1.) This agency used a hexagonal marking (Fig. E) reading "P.K. 102/A.E.F." until 1948, then a circular one. They are regarded as station markings and are very rare.


COMPAGNIE COMMERCIALE
SANGHA OUBANGUI
Pointe-Noire
LIGNE BRAZZAVILLE A POINTE-NOIRE
11 DEC 44
A.E.F.
AFRIQUE ÉQUATORIALE FRANÇAISE
Monsieur le GOUVERNEUR GENERAL
de l'Afrique Equatoriale Française
BRAZZAVILLE


PAR AVION
TCHAD
RF 15
GABON
P.K. 70
15 OCT 37
A.E.F.
"Les Ailes"
77 Boulevard Malesherbes
Paris 8e
FRANCE


PAR AVION
BRAZZAVILLE A POINTE-NOIRE
18 MAR 1957
POINTE-NOIRE
Par Avion
BRAZZAVILLE
POINTE-NOIRE A BRAZZAVILLE


B.
GUERRE
A.
50
ETHIOPIE
C.
DES SOMALIS
POSTES
DJIBOUTI


COMPAGNIE IMPERIALE DES CHEMINS DE FER ETHIOPIENS

(Fig. D)

Somali Coast

Work commenced at Djibouti in 1897 on the line of the Compagnie Imperiale de Chemins de Fer Ethiopiens designed to link Addis Abeba in Ethiopia with the coast. The company, floated with French capital, built the line 192 miles to Dire Dawa in Ethiopia. It ran into financial difficulties in 1902 and was liquidated. After refinancing with French government aid work started again in 1908. It was interrupted by the start of WW I, but the line was completed to Addis Abeba in 1917. Only 88-90 kilometers of this line were in Somali Coast.

Very rare railway-related markings exist both on Somali Coast and Ethiopian stamps.

ADDIS ABEBA À DAODANLÉ (Fig. A) undulated circle with Amharic inscription at bottom. An Ethiopian convoyeur marking known both on Somali Coast and Ethiopian stamps. Reported from 1927. Daodanlé is a short ways south of the Somali Coast-Ethiopian border, in Ethiopia.

DJIBOUTI À ADDIS ABEBA, a similar bilingual marking.

COMPAGNIE DU CHEMIN DE FER/
FRANCO-ETHIOPIEN DE DJIBOUTI/
à ADDIS ABEBA/
GARE DE DJIBOUTI

(Fig. B) 4-line inscription in a rectangular box. Apparently dates from 1917-19 era

•COTE DES SOMALIS•/DJIBOUTI, with POSTES Kil, 90 in ms in the center (Fig. C), evidently a marking of a station on or near the border. The basic mark was used at Djibouti 1894-1901 and this station mark is a provisional adaptation of it, possibly during the construction period (illustrated by Langlois and Bourselet but not by Tristant).

The cachet Fig. D with illustration of locomotive on the Djibouti-Ethiopia RR was seen on back of commercial cover of the RR company to France, 1904, was administrative but apparently rarely used.

A.

B.

C.

D.

E.

F.

G.

H.

I.

J.

K.

L.

Madagascar

Madagascar, a huge island off the east coast of Africa, became a French colony in 1896. A French expedition in 1895-96 had driven the native queen off her throne. Pacification continued until about 1905.

Construction started in 1901 on a main railway line to connect the capital city, Tananarive with the coast. It was started from a point inland, Anivorano, with rails and equipment being barged up the Mohitra river. It was a major project with about 19,000 construction workers on the job at a single time.

Its first 102 kilometers to Fanovana was opened November 1, 1904. Tananarive was reached in 1909. The line was extended to Brickaville on the east coast inland waterway, the Canal des Pangalanes. It was known as the Ligne Tananarive à l Côte Est. It was extended along a long sandy key 97 kilometers to the port of Tamatave in 1912. Its total length was 367 kilometers.

A branch of 167 kilometers was built north from Moramanga to the Lac Aloatra area in 1914-23, and another branch from Tananarive to Antirabe, started in 1912, was interrupted by WW I, and was completed in 1923, 158 kilometers. A fourth and unconnected line was built 1926-36 connecting Fianarantsoa with Manakara on the coast, 163 kilometers.

The travelling post offices working from reserved compartments on the passenger trains in French Colonial days sold stamps and registered letters as well as dropping off and collecting mail at stations en route. In addition on mixed trains, the "chef de train" had a postal box on his car into which he put letters given to him at the stations, possibly applying markings to them.

Railway mail convoyeur service on all four lines has continued after the Madagascar Republic was established in 1958. There is a continuity in the convoyeur markings.

Dates given are the years of earliest and latest reported uses of the markings.

TANANARIVE A LA COTE EST MADAGASCAR, with letters A, B, and possibly C, (Fig. A) A 1909-16, B 1915

A new style of marking was introduced in 1917 (Fig. B). Its key feature was the letter at the bottom of the marking.

TAMATAVE A TANANARIVE A 1924-31, B 1917-31, C 1917-31

TANANARIVE A TAMATAVE A 1921-28, B 1917-31, C 1917-28
Existence of marks with letter D is doubtful.

A new type of marking was first introduced in 1931, characterized by the use of numbers instead of letters at the bottom of the marking (Fig. C). Its use was eventually extended to all four lines.

TAMATAVE-TANANARIVE No. 1 1932-45, 2 1933-53, 3 1933-49, 4 1932-57

M.

N.

O.

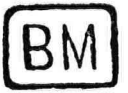
P.

Q.

R.

S.

1



2

5

4

3

T.

TANANARIVE-TAMATAVE No. 1 1931-38, 2 1932-45, 3 1934-43, 4 1932-38 Number 5 was reported, but its existence has not been recently confirmed.

TANANARIVE-ANTSIRABE No. 1 1933-48, No. 2 probable.

ANTSIRABE-TANANARIVE No. 1 1933-48, No. 2 1947.

MANAKARA-FIANARANTSOA No. 1 1933-55

FIANARANTSOA-MANAKARA No. 1 1938-40

MORAMANGA LAC ALAOTRA No. 1 1939-71, 2 1934-52

LAC ALAOTRA MORAMANGA No. 1 1934-71, 2 1933-49 (see Fig. S)

MORIMANGA-ALAOTRA straightline marking 1938, reported by Tristant, (see Fig. S, cover).

Introduction of a new group of markings took place (not all at once) in the mid and late 1950's. Their general characteristics are larger undulated circles than the previous markings. In their date blocks month and day are both expressed in numbers and the year dates in four digits instead of two.

There are subvarieties of the stars in the date blocks, an ordinary star (Fig. D), a star in a circle (Fig. E) and a fancy decorative star ornament (not always well struck) (Fig. F). Available data information on these is a bit fragmentary, and not broken down by varieties of the star.

TAMATAVE A TANANARIVE No. 1 probably exists, 2 1957-71 3 1957-60, 4 1964-66

TANANARIVE A TAMATAVE No. 1 probably exists, 2 1971, 3 probably exists, 4 probably exists

FIANARANTSOA A MANAKARA with star at bottom 1961-71

MANAKARA A FIANARANTSOA with star at bottom (Fig. G) 1958-

FIANARANTSOA A MANAKARA No. 1 1957 (like Fig. D)

MANAKARA A FIANARANTSOA No. 2 1956 (like Fig. D)

ANTSIRABE A TANANARIVE No. 2 1958-71 (Figs. H and I)

TANANARIVE A ANTSIRABE No. 1 1971

LAC ALAOTRA-MORAMANGA 2 MADAGASCAR (Fig. J) 1960

LAC ALAOTRA-MORAMANGA star at bottom (Fig. K) 1960-67

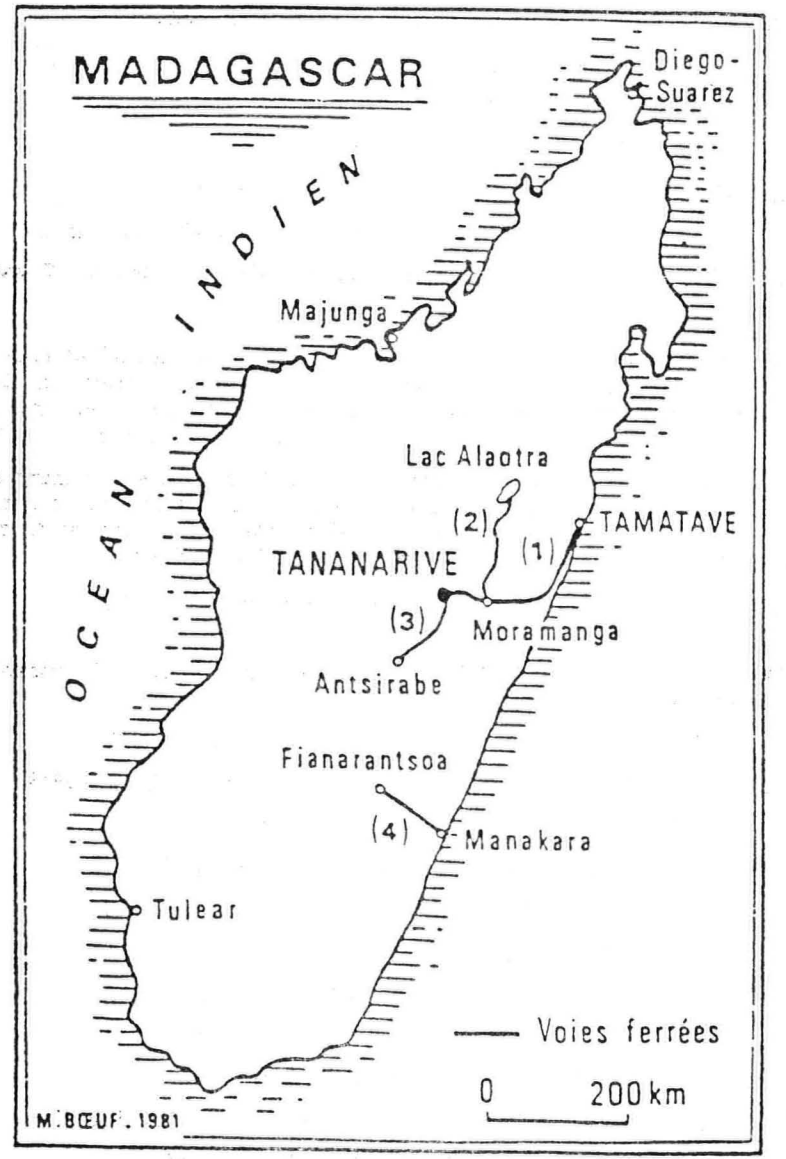
MORAMANGA-LAC ALAOTRA str at bottom, possible

LAC ALAOTRA-MORAMANGA MADAGASCAR 1971 (like Fig. L)

MORAMANGA-LAC ALAOTRA MADAGASCAR 1971 (Fig. L)

MORAMANGA-LAC ALAOTRA MADAGASCAR 1981 (Fig. M) note specing differences between Figs. L and M.

LAC ALAOTRA-MORAMANGA MADAGASCAR 1981 (similar to Fig. M)


MADAGASCAR
OCEAN INDIEN
Diego-Suarez
Majunga
Lac Alaotra
(2)
(1)
TAMATAVE
TANANARIVE
(3)
Moramanga
Antsirabe
Fianarantsoa
(4)
Manakara
Tulear
Voies ferrées
0 200 km
M. BŒUF. 1981

A new type of circular marking was in use in 1981 (Fig. N):

Antananarivo A Tamatave Convoyeur—1 through 4

Tamatave A Antananarive Convoyeur—1 through 4

Antananarive A Antsirabe Convoyeur—1 and 2

Antsirabe A Antananarive Convoyeur—1 and 2

Different circular markings also in use in 1981:

Fianarantsoa Manakara Convoyeur 1 (Fig. O) and Convoyeur 2

Manakara Fianarantso Convoyeur 1 (Fig. O) and Convoyeur 2 (Fig. P)

Railway station markings: The first to be discovered was Chemin de Fer Le Mangoro (Fig. Q) 1919. There is a second type (Fig. R) which has been reported from Ambodinifodi, Maratsara, Mangoro, Le Mangore (the same place), Andaingo, Marovoay and Behenjy.

A linear railroad-station marking CARION, 4 x 22 mm, struck in violet in 1937 has been reported by C. W. E. Coles. Gavin Fryer reports partial unidentifiable strikes of other linear markings. All railroad-station markings are extremely rare.

B M markings from Madagascar occur in a wide variety of styles.

Many buses had postal boxes on them, and mail from them often received B M markings as well as a town cancellation when the mail was handed in at a post office. Usually the town cancel cancels the stamp, but sometimes the BM marking also hit the stamp, and once in a while you see a stamp with a BM marking only. (Fig. T).

The same system was almost certainly used in regard to some mail put into postal boxes on trains—perhaps from the boxes on the mixed trains. And there are periods when trains were running but where there was no apparent convoyeur service.

Scarcity of Madagascar Markings. Post World War II markings are very scarce to rare, Fig. J, very rare. Of the earlier markings, many of those of the Tamatave-Tananarive line are fairly common off cover. Those of Lac Alaotra-Moramanga line are generally quite scarce, Tamatave-Ansirabe line very scarce, and of the Fianarantsoa-Manakara line very, very scarce. Tamatave A la Côte Est A is very scarce, with letter B very rare. There are other scarcity notes in the text.

Convoyeur Type K with number 1.

Reunion

Reunion is a French island in the Indian Ocean ,since 1947 a Department of France. Two railway lines were opened in 1882, the 85 kilometer "Ligne sous le Vent" (leeward line) from St-Dénis to St-Pierre and the 41 kilometer "Ligne du Vent" (windward line) from St-Dénis to St-Benoit.

An arrèté of the administration of 2 Aug. 1882 authorized the date stamps for use by the mailmen on the lines; each mailman was to have a date stamp, and there was one mailman per line. The letters in the later marks are supposed to identify the mailman or the line he served (6 lines by 1893). The letters G and I are alleged to exist. Mail boxes were placed on each mailvan and on each station. The numbers in the Convoyeur marks of 1929-56 were according to a stationmaster, to identify the mail handed in at St. Denis (#1), St. Pierre (#2), and St. Benoit (#3); it is not reported what #4 was for, perhaps for the St. Denis to Pointe de Galets line. Ligne du Vent was closed on Nov. 30, 1952 and line Sous le Vent on March 15 1956,, except for the section St. Denis to Pointe de Galets.

The first group of railway markings carry the inscription "Réunion Ligne V" or "Ligne S V." They are double-circle markings.

RÉUNION/LIGNE V (Fig. A) inner circle of dots, 1882-97.
RÉUNION/LIGNE S V (Fig. B) inner circle of dots, 1882-00.

Both of these markings exist in blue, as well as the more common black.

RÉUNION/LIGNE V (Fig. C) solid inner circle, 1888-1902.
RÉUNION/LIGNE S V (similar to Fig. C) solid inner circle, 1888-97.

There followed various other markings with less-abbreviated inscriptions

•RÉUNION•/LIGNE DU VENT (Fig. E), 1893-1902.
•RÉUNION•/LIGNE SOUS-le-VENT (Fig. D), 1893-1902.
•RÉUNION•/LIGNE SOUS-le-V (Fig. F), 1898-1902.
LIGNE DU VENT/REUNION line designation at top, (Fig. G), 1898-1902.
LIGNE•S•LE VENT/REUNION line designation at top (Fig. H), 1900-02.
•REUNION•/LIGNE/S-LE VENT (Fig. I), 1901.

The two railway lines were combined in 1902 into one line with three sections: St-Benoit to St-Denis, St-Denis to St-Paul, and St-Paul to St-Pierre. New double-circle Convoyeur markings were introduced Feb. 1, 1902:

CONVOYEUR/REUNION with letters A through F and blank 1902-28 (Fig. J), E, F, and blank (no letter) are the rare ones. They had a shorter span of use than the others.

In 1929 new type markings with a single undulated circle were introduced with numbers instead of letters:

REUNION/CONVOYEUR with numbers 1 through 4 (similar to Fig. J but with Convoyeur at bottom), 1929-52 (not all numbers in use until 1952).

CONVOYEUR/REUNION (Fig. K), introduced in 1935, number 1 in use until 1956.

Both these types exist starting in 1949 with four-digit year dates instead of two digits.

A.

B.

C.

D.

E.

F.

G.

H.

I.

J.

K.

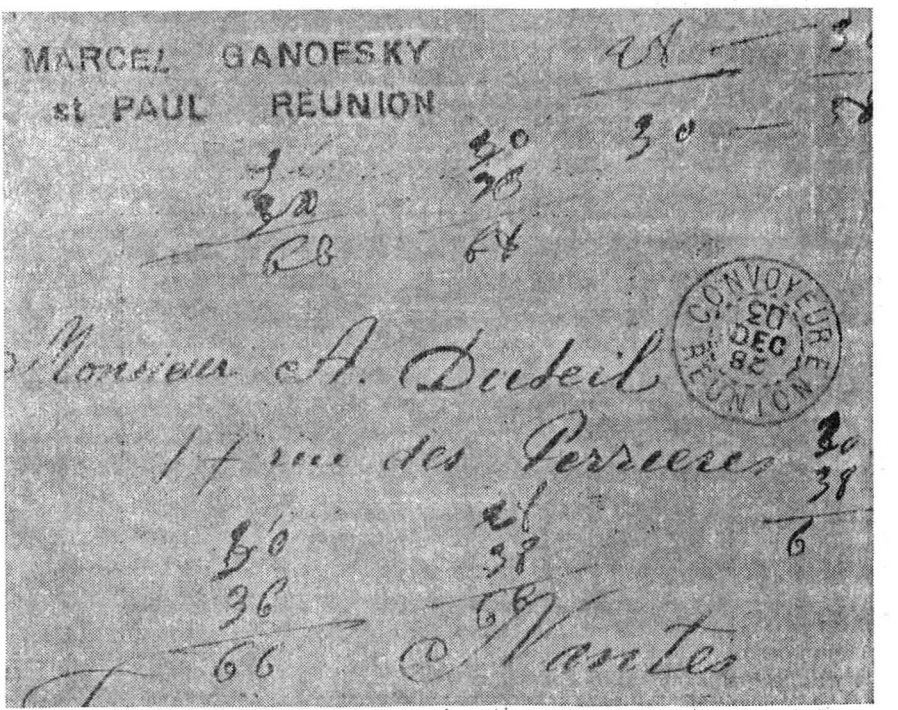
The "B M" Marks:

Two or three slightly different "BM" marks are known on Reunion stamps and covers of the 1880s-90s. They are in large serifed letters about 8 mm high and the "BM' ca. 15 mm wide. At the right a vertical line appears which is from the edge of the type holder. One type has the strokes of "M" vertical and another diverging downward. Seen in black and blue. The only cover we have seen (Fig.) is of 1891 to Paris, with a 15c Dubois stamp postmarked at Ste. Rose, a St-Denis Corr. D'Armées postmark—a military-rate cover. Ibbotson attributes the BM marks to postings in a mail box on the wagons which were used before the railroad. Although the cover shown here is from 1891 long after the railroad opened, Ste. Rose is not on the railroad but on the highway south of St. Benoit, and we assume the BM mark is from the mail wagon that ran on the highway along the south coast where the railway never reached. Probably none of the BM marks were used on the railroad but we have no documentation.

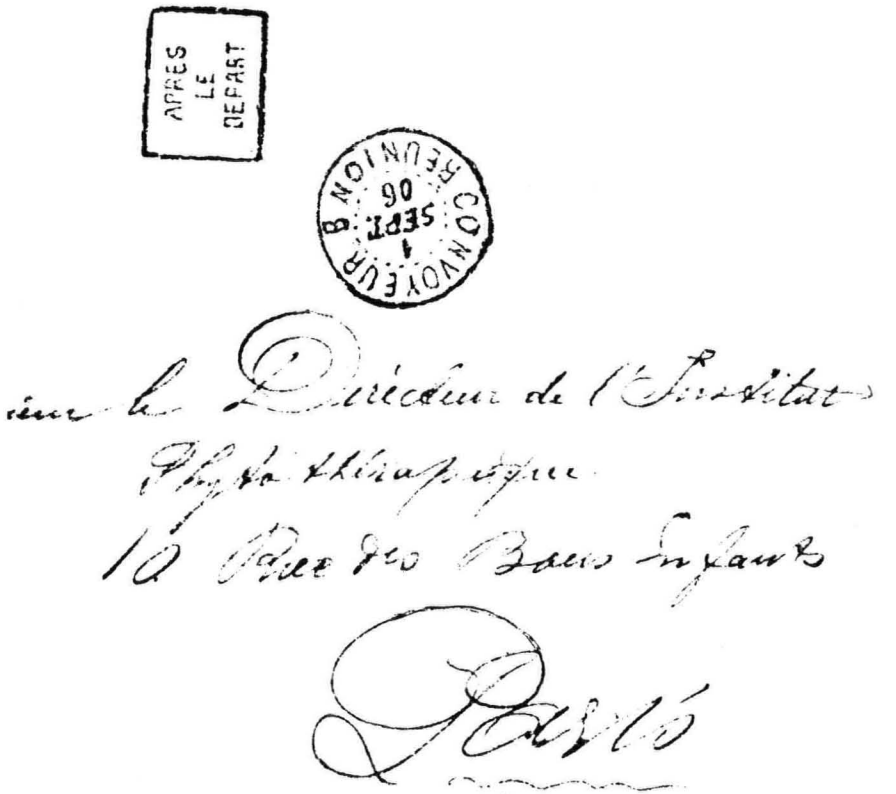
Scarcity of Reunion markings:

BM markings are very rare. Most of the early circular Ligne markings are very rare, except
Fig. B which is semi-rare, "Ligne SV" (similar to Fig. C) which is semi-rare
Fig. C "Ligne V" which is scarce, and Fig. G is semi-rare.

The circular convoyeur markings, Fig. I, are not scarce except for the ones with letters E or F, or with no letter, which are rare.
The wavy outer circle Convoyeur markings tend to be scarce, with "Convoyeur 4" rare.



Convoyeur Type J with rare E letter.



Convoyeur Type J with letter B.

"BM" on 1891 cover from Ste. Rose posted on highway mail wagon.

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The late Dr. Charles J. Vaurie was a charter member of the Society and first editor of its Philatelist, 1941-44. He was donor of philatelic literature to the Society while he was living. Upon receipt of a further donation of material by his widow, Patricia Vaurie, the Board of FCPS thought it appropriate that his appreciation of the usefulness of philatelic literature be memorialized by creating a fund in his name.

This Fund, established in 1976, is to subsidize the publication of original studies or catalogs on the philately and postal history of France and Colonies. The Fund will be a revolving one, the proceeds from sale of the subsidized publications being used to subsidize future works. Contributions to the Fund are welcomed, including gifts of material that can be sold to the benefit of the Fund (not tax exempt, however).