

France & Colonies Philatelist



Published bi-monthly by the France and Colonies Group

Secretary: Mrs. Helen A. Stringham, 34 Minerva Ave., Manasquan, N.J.

Editor: Stephen G. Rich, P. O. Box B, Verona, N.J.

Key Characteristics of the Type L.O. Merson Stamps
of France and Offices Abroad

See Dr. Wood's article on page 14, within.



How to Recognize the Real

Type L.O. Merson Stamps, of French Levant

By Robert L. Wood, M. D.

(See front page of this number. Top picture is the "Real McCoy" and lower picture is what is passed off on us for this).

Max Ohlman, after study of our "Philatelist" remarked, "With so many forgeries, I don't see why anyone collects French Colonies!"

They are plentiful, but probably any specialized study group could produce an equal number in their field. This note deals with French Offices in the Levant; numbers 29, 32, and 33 used in French Post Offices in Abyssinia from 1906-08, together with stamps of Djibouti and Port Said. These three stamps, especially numbers 32 and 33, are extensively counterfeited, like all the high value Merson type-A 18, and before purchasing it is well to have an enlarged photograph to bring out details, as I have done. Number 33 illustrates the 5 franc Port Said, and is a manifest forgery compared with the genuine 5 franc French issue.

In the original, the space above the label bearing the word "Postes", at the left hand end by the spray of leaves, and above the shield bearing the numeral of value, is almost solid. The upper left hand corner of the inner frame line has but two broken lines, not continuous.

In the forgery, the space above the label bearing the word "Postes" or office name, at the left hand end by the spray of leaves, above the shield bearing the numeral of value, consists of four lines plainly drawn. The upper left hand corner of the inner frame line consists of four well defined lines, three of which are continuous with the vertical frame line. In addition, the whole stamp has been too meticulously drawn. All the lines are finer than in the genuine, the forger being too anxious to produce a fine stamp.

No credit accrues to me. This information came to me from Mr. Ervant Kirk of the New York Stamp Co. who brought it to my attention. Mr. Kirk states that they have seen only used forgeries, but members of our group have submitted mint stamps which have been pronounced bogus by experts.

Kohl Handbook Translation

In 1928 the first section of France in the Kohl Handbook appeared in the Collectors Club Philatelist, translated from the German. This covered only 1849-1875. Since then the later portions have been accessible only to those who can read German.

The Group has accepted the responsibility of doing the translation of Part 2, 1876-1920, for publication in that magazine some time in 1950. A committee has been appointed; and as this is written in July 1949, about a quarter of Part 2 is already in first draft manuscript.

Much work remains to be done, as the Handbook translation is to be brought up to our present information on the stamps of this period. We are not pressed for time, as very likely July 1950 will be the earliest that any part can appear in print. Furthermore, Part 2 of Kohl will surely have to be divided into at least two or perhaps three instalments. Part 1 was published as one large unit only by virtue of a contribution of money to pay for the oversize number of the C.G.P., made by one of the grand older men of stamps now deceased.

DAHOMEY Post Office List, 1948

By Edmond Queyroy.

As for Ivory Coast in No. 44 and as for Upper Volta (corrections and additions only) in No. 43, I again cite from Public Notice No. 3273 of the P.T.T., dated July 17, 1948, and give the present roster of post offices for another colony.

These lists are useful in preventing us from acquiring stamps illegitimately cancelled. Also, they give us the indications of changes of the boundaries of colonial units of government.

These lists will be continued until the whole area included (all divisions of French West Africa) have been listed.

Dahomey:

A. Independent or "full" offices:

Porto-Novo (Head Office)

Abomey	Kandi
Abomey-Calavi	Natitingou
Adjohou	Nikki
Allada	Ouidah
Athiémé	Parahoué
Attogon	Parakou
Bassila	Pobé
Bimberéké	Sakété
Bolicon	Savalou
Cotonou	Savé
Cové	Tchaourou
Dassa-Zoumé	Zagnanado
Djougou	
Grand-Popo	

B. Subordinate Offices or Postal Agencies:

Agoue	subordinate to	Grand-Popo
Bante	"	Savalou
Bopa	"	Athiémé
Ketou	"	Zagnanado
Kouande	"	Natitingou
Malanville	"	Kandi
Ouagbo	"	Attogon
Tangueta	"	Natitingou
Tori-Bossito	"	Allada
Zinvie	"	Calavi

Our Policy

The members of the Group are entitled to know exactly what their Editor aims to do in their journal. Only by such a statement can he find out whether the members want something different in any respect.

This journal aims, but does not always succeed, therein, to make every number as nearly a balanced number as possible-- with something of France, something of Colonies, something of the 19th Century, something of the 20th Century, something for the novice and something for the advanced collector, in each number. The plan is to have a goodly amount of copy dealing with cancellations, because many of us are very much interested in them; air mail, semi-postal, postage due and other special stamps discussed fairly often.

This journal takes as one prime purpose, the informing of its readers against forgeries and against material illegitimately issued, marketed through monopolies to the disadvantage of the collector, or never actually put into use in the land of supposed origin.

This journal is not considered a place for publishing of mere lists of quantities issued of any stamps. Your editor does not know that any great number of readers care for statistics of that sort. He believes that they usually are misleading. Except where they help with definite information, the actual texts of the government orders, (so-miscalled "decrees") are likewise considered outside our field.

Gleanings
Among the Postmarks of Martinique

By Robert G. Stone and Ralph Holtsizer.
(Continuation)

V. Miscellaneous: Commemorative, Army,
Maritime, and Auxiliary Markings.

(Continued from No. 45)

C. Maritime Postal Markings.
(Continuation of instalment)

The intermediate ports of call of the lines varied from time to time. It is not known what the status of them has been since 1940, due to the War. All these lines used the same type of postmark, in general. From 1865 to about 1881-82, they were of the small double-circle and the octagonal styles, inscribed:

LIGNE A (B, etc) PAQ.FR. N° 1 (2, 3, 4, 5, 6),
with or without fleurons (stars).

COL.FR. LIG.A. (B, etc) N° 1 (2, etc.)

COL.FR. PAQ.FR. A (B, etc) N° 1 (etc).

After June 1876, these various Ligne postmarks obliterate the stamps (French or French colonial) on mailed-on-board letters. Later, in the 1870's and '80's they are often struck in blue or red, as well as in black.

In the late 1880's the octagonal and circular types show up in larger size, and with the inscriptions in gothic instead of roman capitals. The smaller-sized postmarks begin to disappear from use in the 1890's.

About 1896-97 the octagonal type began to appear with a new system of inscriptions which contained the terminal ports of the route, with the Ligne letter and the device or "die" number (one for each clerk or ship?) following it, in abbreviated form. Martinique was served by:

COLON A BORDEAUX L.D. No.1 (2, 3)

BORDEAUX A COLON L.D. No.1 (2, 3)

St NAZAIRE A COLON L.A. No.1 (2, 3)

COLON A St NAZAIRE L.A. No.1 (2, 3)

FORT DE FRANCE A CAYENNE L.C. No.1

FORT DE FRANCE A HAITI L.E. No.1

(Note that the same line now has a different postmark in each direction, after the manner of French R.P.O.'s.--Editor, F. & C. Phil.)

Over the period 1914-25 a new style postmark was gradually introduced. In this, the inner circle was dropped, the date reduced to two lines, and a star added above the date.

By 1930 or somewhat earlier, two new routes were calling:

LE HAVRE A COLON L.No.1 (2, 3)

COLON AU HAVRE L.No.1 (2, 3)

(These seem to be opposite directions of the same service--Editor, F. & C. Phil.)

In general, these line cancellations are not plentiful but rather scarce on Martinique stamps before 1900, but are more common in recent years. Since about 1905, they are always in black.

Army Correspondence maritime postmarks were also introduced in 1865. They are the same in styles as the "Ligne" marks, but worded thus:

COR. D. ARM. / LIG. (or LIGNE) A. PAQ. N° 1

CORR. D'ARMÉES / LIG.A PAQ. N° 3

Or PAQ.FR. F. N° 2

or CORRESPONDANCES D'ARMÉES L.D. N° 3 --etc.

These are known for Lignes A, B, C and D, down to about 1900 or 1910.

(b). French Naval Postmarks are of two styles: one contains the type and name of the vessel, e. g., CROISSIERE-RICHELIEU; the other is inscribed POSTES NAVALES. They first appeared in 1923 and all have been in hexagonal broken-lined frames with a star and two-lined date in the center and a small anchor at the bottom. Various French naval vessels have called at Martinique on cruises, or have been stationed there, for longer or shorter periods. The aircraft carrier Bearn achieved fame while blockaded there during the late war. During 1940-43, when the colony was under the Naval Administration (Adm. Robert) of Vichy, the POSTE NAVALE cancellation was frequently used at Fort de France, specially on high-denomination stamps.

(c). Unofficial Merchant Marine Postal Markings are customarily used for endorsing the mail, by pursers on most steamships. As a result of the many steamship lines calling at Martinique in recent years, a large variety of these marks can be found on Martinique stamps -- which were used on letters mailed on board the ships by seamen, by tourists, or by residents of the colony posting letters at the dock after closing of the foreign mails at the post office.

Before 1920 such markings are quite rare, but during the 1930's they became common. The best-known pursers' marks are from the ships of several Canadian lines: the Furness-Withy S.S.Co., the Canadian National S.S.Co., and the Bermuda & West Indies S.S.Co. These lines' pursers marks usually consisted of or included such words as:

MAILED ON THE HIGH SEAS

POSTED ON HIGH SEAS

POSTED AT SEA

MAILED AT SEA --- etc.

Normally these markings are struck on the face of the letter, in accordance with U. P. U. regulations. But occasionally they cancel the stamps -- though the stamps should be cancelled ("obliterated") only by the "paquebot" mark of the port of arrival (See division (e), below). Marks of the American Caribbean Line are also common on Martinique ship letters. The French Line (C.G.T.) boats which carry the closed-pouch French mails under contract and sometimes provide official French seaspost service on board (using the "Ligne" type postmarks described in division (a), above), also have pursers' straight line handstamps for loose ship letters. But they are not common on Martinique stamps.

We have seen:

PAQUEBOT-POSTE / "COLOMBIE"

SAINT. DOMINGUE

GUADELOUPE (with date struck separately)

COLON A / AT NAZAIRE (rare)

Marks for the ships Cuba, Flandre, Fort Royal, Dora, Fort de France, Fort Richepaise, and Allier, should also exist.

This instalment will be continued in the next number of this journal.



The beautiful 1948 sesquicentennial of Chateaubriand stamp which worthily does honor to this great poet.

Billig's Philatelic Handbook. Fritz Billig, Jamaica, N.Y. Vol. IX, 1948, 208 pp; Vol. XI, 1949, 208 pp.

Our member Fritz Billig continues to bring out volume after volume of this series, continuing the plan of bringing into our language material that has hitherto been accessible only to those who can read other idoms. However, to these are now added entirely new articles in the volumes at hand.

In particular, we who collect French countries will be glad to have certain items --- such as the identification of genuine and forgery of French Morocco airmail in Vol. IX and the continuation of listings of early France from Vol. VII, through the Empire, in Vol. XI. An Airmail listing of French Sudan is also found in Vol. XI --- also those for Reunion and Senegal.

Vol. IX is of special interest to cancellation collectors, because it has the first list of Italian numeral cancellations in our language, the article on Japanese cancellations, and the first list of Russian numeral cancellations in our language. This latter suffers from one real hindrance -- the transliteration of the Russian office names is according to the German sounds of the letters. It might well have been wholly redone into less confusing form. We also think it might have been well to translate names of cities which have been changed, into their present equivalents-- such as St. Petersburg into Leningrad.

Vol. XI centers around a large original work, by Spink and Truman, on the identification of the Hermes Heads of Greece.

Keep up the good work, Fritz; but please aid us by getting rid of those language confusions.

---S.G.R.

1949 Concurrent Usage in Guadeloupe and Martinique

Thanks to Mr. R.G. Stone, we report that since Jan. 1, 1949, both France and the old Colonial issue are valid in these two former colonies now Departments of metropolitan France. French stamps are being used, and concurrently the colonial stamps on hand are being used up. Many interesting covers, showing both kinds of stamps at same offices and dates, and "mixed franking", have been seen.



Picture of a proof of the 1947 500f green, for use as album illustration by those members who care to clip it.



FRENCH MOROCCO

Colors of the "Solidarite 1948" set chronicled a while back are 5f. green, 6f. red orange, 9f. deep brown, and 15f. deep blue. There is also a miniature sheet featuring the entire series.

THE AIRPOST JOURNAL

JUNE, 1949

"Crowfeesh"

This is a sort of password or slogan among a number of our members in the Parent Chapter. It is a French pronunciation of the word "crawfish" and originated at the time of the attempted special shows in the Museum of Science and Industry in New York, early in 1947. The Group had been scheduled to hold the second of such shows -- and when Dr. Dye, the Director, died, we had to back out quickly. Former President Raoul Lesgor, who was the man in charge for us, rang several of us who would be showing, and urged us to "Crowfeesh" out of the obligation. The term took, since the event, so we keep using it.

"No Secretary's Report"

Your editor is hastening this number to the printer at the same time as No. 45, and did not ask Secretary Stringham for a report to go into it, since it is published during July and the last report goes to June 15.

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: French or French Colonies covers with clear impression of the double circle postmark or backstamp inscribed "Poste aux Armees." Prefer those of the World War II period. Please describe & price each one separately. Everel E. Keys, 14742 Center Av., Harvey, Illinois (Member 246).

Trade: Complete 30-volume set Encyclopedia Americana, 1949 edition in original packing case, cost \$249.50, for equal catalog value in mint 20th Century France. List of items needed, on request. Charles H. Obert, 201 Alsace St., Bridgeport 3, Conn. (Member 346)

Exchange wanted: will give fine stamps of British Colonies and Western Europe for France 19th Century Ceres and Napoleon types, and for French Colonies from 5c Scott catalog up. Arnold Kirchover, 316 Hamilton St., Albany 1, N.Y. (Member 43)

Wanted to buy or exchange: postal stationery of the Pneumatic Tubesystem of Paris. Correspondence with collectors of this material also invited. Dan J. Lapinski, 1906 Lake St., Melrose Park, Illinois (Member 388)

With postmark showing date in July 1876 or earlier, I will buy copies of the ultramarine 25c France 1875, either type. Price each item separately, please. S.G. Rich, Verona, N.J. (Member 2).