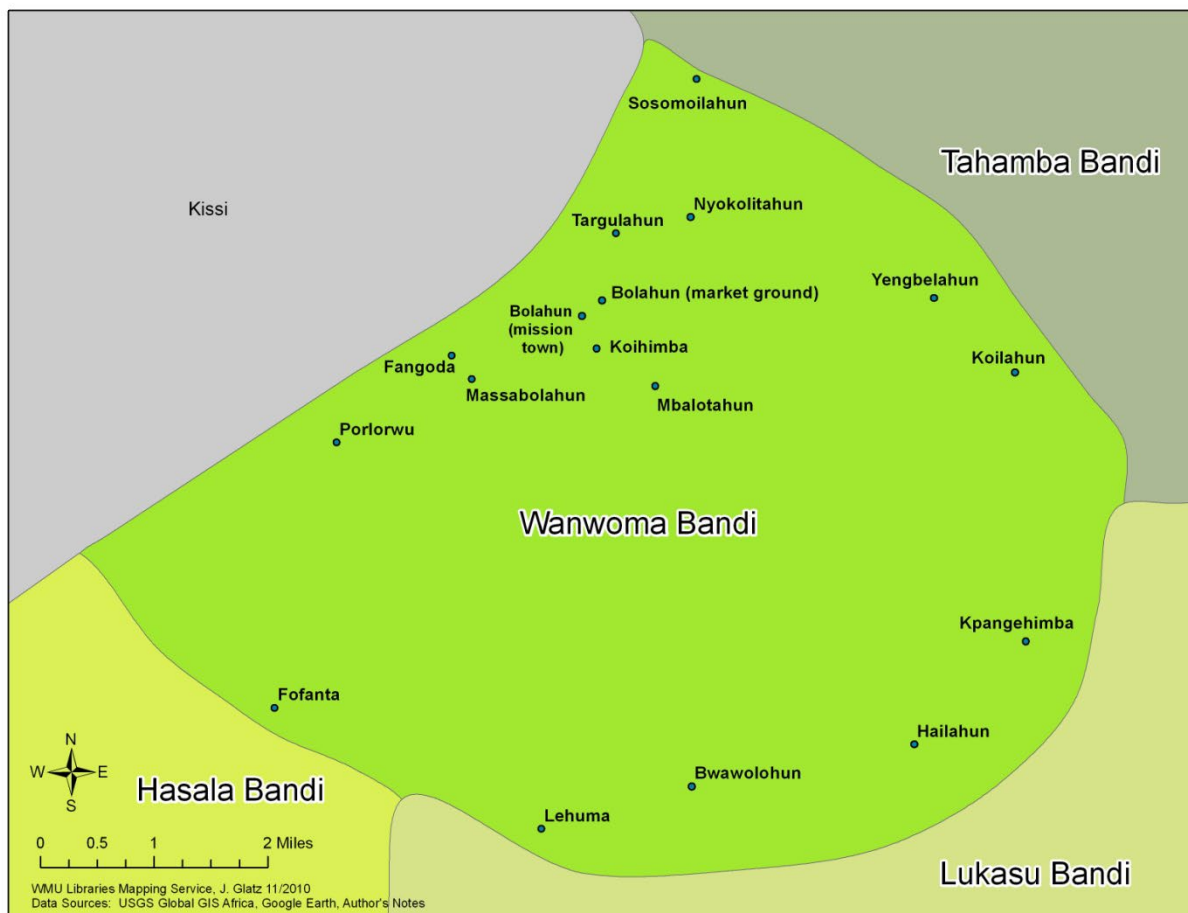


A Peep into the History of Bolahun and Work of the Order of the Holy Cross (OHC) Missionaries, 1921 – 1960



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THE LOCATION OF BOLAHUN

Bolahun is located in Wanwoma Clan, Kolahun District, Lofa County in northwestern Liberia. The town is approximately 250 miles from the coastal area of Liberia. The establishment of the OHC mission in once obscured village in 1922 transformed Bolahun into an academic center of learning in northwestern Liberia. The establishment of school, church, and hospital by the missionaries led to Bolahun becoming a center of learning as well as spiritual and physical healing. The **School** educated students who became prominent leaders, educators, scientists, medical doctors, nurses, engineers, lawyers, social workers, and architects. The **Church** planted the seed of the Christian Faith that positively shaped the minds and characters of generations of Liberians and non-Liberians who have contributed immensely to the betterment of humanity. The **St. Joseph Hospital**, under the care of European and American medical doctors, provided treatments for tropical and other diseases for patients from Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. The school, church and hospital catered to the needs of the various ethnic groups and nationalities that came in numbers and settled in Bolahun. For nearly half a century (1922 – 1980s), these ethnic groups and nationalities transformed Bolahun into a metropolitan center in northwestern Liberian hinterland.

THE ORIGIN OF THE NAME “BOLAHUN”

Father Campbell: The name has origin in the female named Mbolo who built her fishing house and garden near the river, but the village was destroyed many years ago before the arrival of the missionaries.

Brother Edward: The mission town Bolahun was suggested by Chief Fofi Konneh of Massambolahun in remembrance of his grandfather’s wife named Jasambulu. His grandfather and Jasambulu lived in the one-house village until they died, after which people began to refer to the place as “mbulu lahun.”

Father Milligan: The site of the mission had an old town before the arrival of the OHC Fathers. The head of the town was called m'bolo, and the town became known as m'bolo lahun, meaning the home of m'bolo.

Before the Arrival of the OHC Missionaries in Bolahun

April 1921

Order of the HOLY Cross (OHC) in West Park, New York, announced it has decided "to enter the foreign mission field."

Missionary work was to start in Liberia with permission of the Episcopal Church of Liberia under the leadership of Bishop Walter Henry Overs.

Reasons:

Liberia was created in 1822, but its hinterland was inhabited by indigenous people who were either Muslims or believers in African Traditional Religion (ATR).

Bishop Overs to OHC Chapters in New York:

"Children in the [Liberian] hinterland were growing up in vice and ignorance."

THE SEARCH FOR THE SITE OF THE OHC MISSION

February 22, 1922 - Arrival of the first OHC group in Massambolahun

Members of the Group Included:

Father Herbert Hawkins – Head

Rev. Father Barnette

Rev. Father Hazzard – Official photographer

Rev. James Dwalu – a Liberian Priest (Vai)

Rev. Elwood Haines - Head of Episcopal Mission in Cape Mount

Sierra Leonean Porters

October 5, 1922 - Arrival of the second OHC group in Massambolahun

Father Robert E. Campbell

Father Harold Manley – Mission Architect

Alan Sori

Mr. (James) Salifu – Chief Chef

Six Sierra Leonean Porters

THE CHOICE OF PLACE FOR CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY WORK

Bandiland

It is centrally located in relation to the Kissi, Loma, Mende, Belle, and Gola. It was possible from this central point to exert Christian influence to the adjoining ethnic groups.

Massambolahun

The Chief (Fofi Konneh) was MOST RECEPTIVE to the idea of the mission. The town also represented the center of large population and therefore a town of considerable importance.

Bolahun

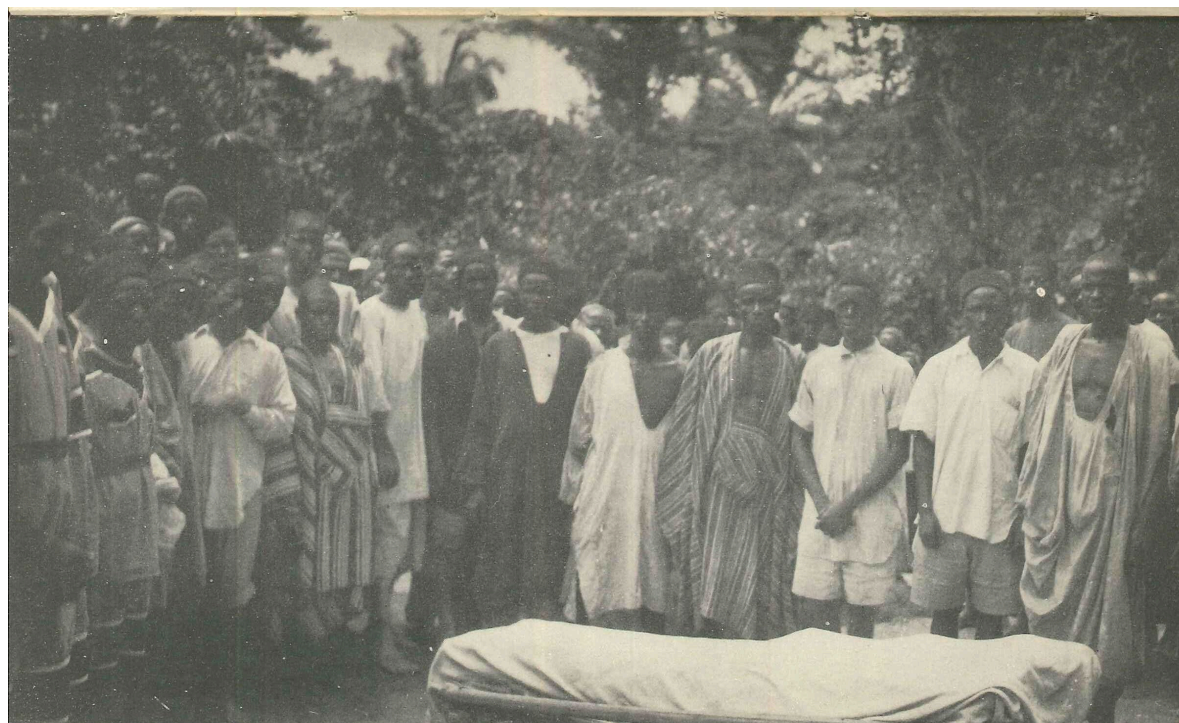
The area was suitable because of the presence of natural features such as fertile land (farming and gardening), a hill to build a Monastery, and a river to support the mission station. The area was also centrally located between two big Muslim towns and “a Christian colony” there would radiate [Christianity] to counter the spread of Islam.

February 1922 - The first OHC “Prayer House” established on the outskirts of Massambolahun.

Chief Fofi Konneh allowed OHC Missionaries temporary permission to settle near Massambolahun.



THE PARAMOUNT CHIEF FOFI



The Burial of Paramount Chief Fofi

May 2, 1922 – Prominent Bandi Chiefs, including Fofi Konneh and Njave Manjo met in Kolahun and approved the OHC request to establish in Bolahun in the presence of Commissioner James Ledlum.



THE DATE OF OHC OFFICIAL ACQUISITION OF LAND FOR THE CHRISTIAN MISSION

August 14, 1922 – President Charles D. B. King issued official permit to the OHC to occupy a piece of land to “establish Church and School buildings.”

Those who signed the document of permission included:

1. Father Herbert Hawkins for OHC
2. Western Province Commissioner James Ledlum for the Liberian Government
3. Chief Fofi Jorkor Konneh for the people of Wanwoma Clan.

NOTE: The land was not own by the OHC, but it was to be used for Christian work and should be turned over to the local people at the end of their work.

THREE PILLARS OF MISSIONARY WORK IN AND OUTSIDE BOLAHUN:

1. **Church:**
2. **School:**
3. **Hospital:**

THE CHURCH AS INSTRUMENT OF CHRISTIAN EVANGELISM

Father Hawkins to OHC, West Park, New York:

“We need a Christian Colony in Bolahun and establish outside stations to prevent the Islamization of the whole of northwestern Liberia.”



BISHOP CAMPBELL (CENTER) AND SOME OF HIS FLOCK

“Priests who serve [the mission] should be lovers of the people, have the ability and capability to connect with them, be willing to reach out to them in their villages with the Gospel. Teach the local people to become evangelists who would teach their people in their own languages.” – OHC NEW YORK

March 27, 1923 – The Mission station moved from temporary location in Massambolahun to Bolahun.

October 11, 1923 – Father Campbell laid the cornerstone of the St. Mary Church in Bolahun.



THE FIRST ST. MARY'S CHURCH

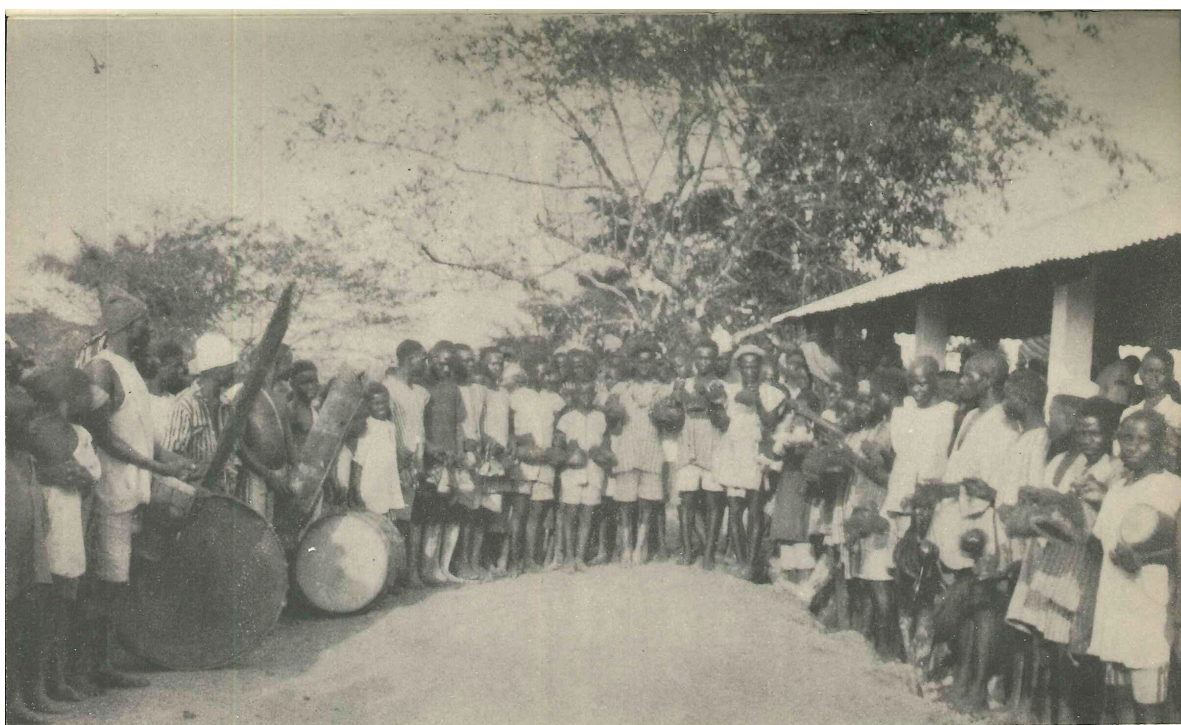
1924 – First St. Athanasius Monastery established in Bolahun.



BUSH SOCIETY DANCERS IN FRONT OF OLD MONASTERY



THE "DEVIL" COMES TO TOWN



The Town Band on a State Occasion



A Bandi Up-Devil

1929 – New St. Athanasius Monastery built up the hill.

Some outside Church Stations

1927– St. Martin in Foya Dundu

1927 – St. Lawrence in Boawohun

1935 –First Prayer visit to Tagulanhun at the request of Old Chief Gbaiya

1938 – St. Thomas in Ndambu

1948 - St. Peter in Gondolahun

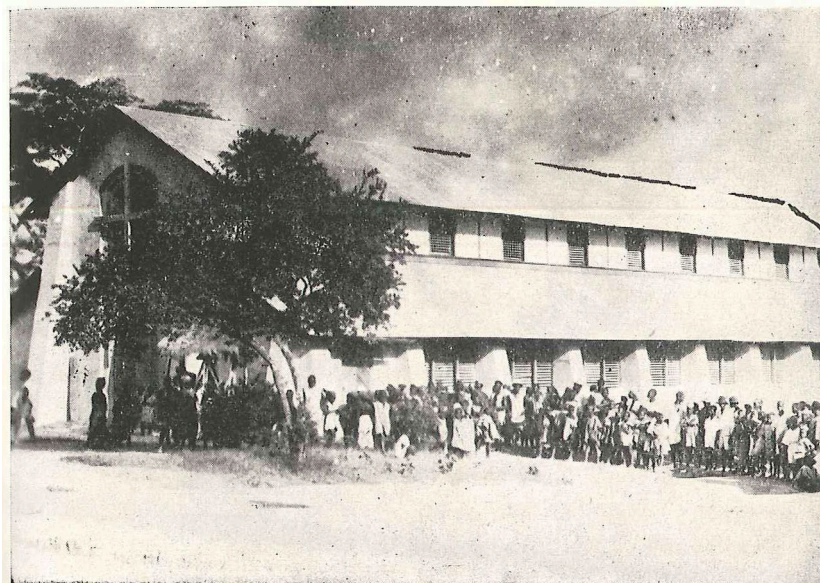
1948- St. George in Vahun

Holy Cross Chapel in Kolahun

St. Andrew in Mbaloma

1927 - Porluma Station

1943 – New St. Mary Church Opened in Bolahun



NEW ST. MARY'S CHURCH

OHC Guide to Christian Evangelism among the People:

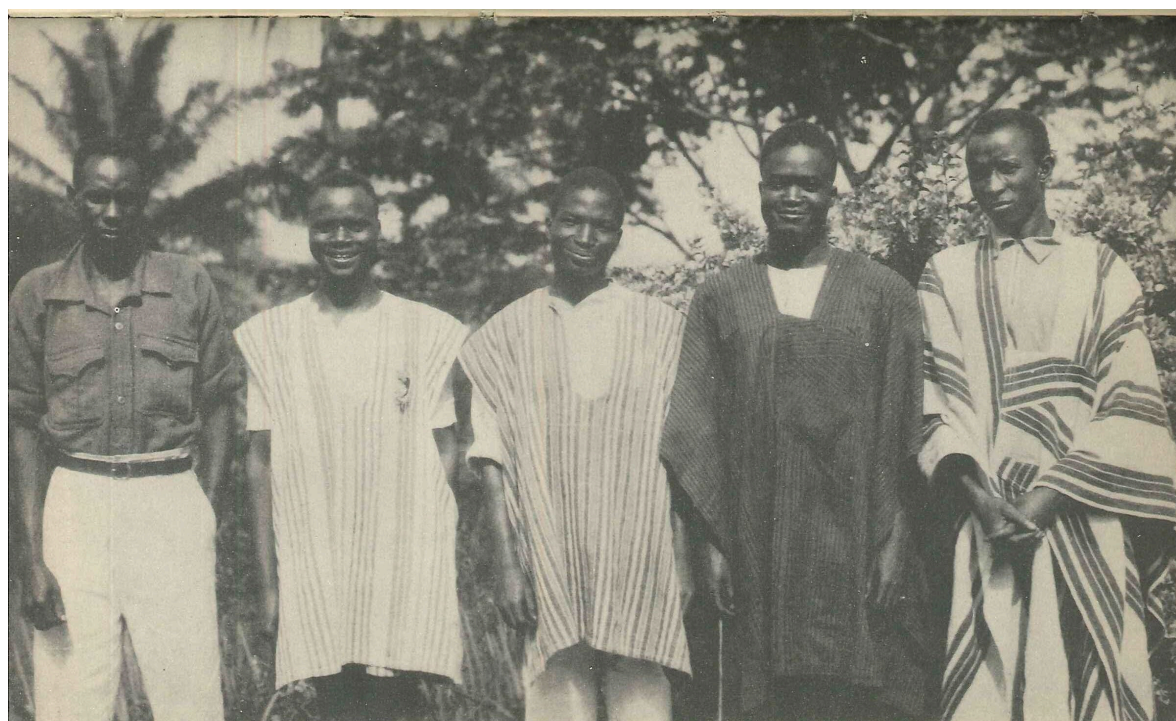
1. Learn to speak the languages of the local people.
2. Appreciate their cultural values as long as they do not violate the Christian Faith
3. Translate the Gospel into local languages.
4. Train young men to become agents of the Christian Faith among their people.
5. Train local people in medical knowledge and let them use their skills for physical and spiritual healing of the sick.



GROUP OF EVANGELISTS
(left to right, Moses Janga, Philip Bala, George Lahai,
Zacharias Kpoto and Tamba Songo)



AFTER MASS ON LIBERIAN THANKSGIVING DAY



Native Evangelists

The MISSION SCHOOL AS INSTRUMENT OF CHRISTIAN EVANGELISM:

May 1925 – Message of OHC Bolahun to OHC New York

“A school in Bolahun will be the principal evangelical agent. It will mold the minds and characters of future leaders who would build a new society based on Christian Civilization that they have learned in the Mission School.”

Teachers of the school will use their knowledge of the Bible to teach the students about the Gospel of Christ and Christian way of life. Every member of the mission school staff has to be a practice missionary.

September 1, 1923 – First school St. Philip Elementary opened in Bolahun.
7 Students.



COMPOUND OF ST. PHILIP'S SCHOOL

First students enrolled: Fodi Konneh and Langama.

Uniform: Country clothes.

Tuition: Rice, Palm Oil, Dried Meat.

The first teacher: Thomas Hunter, a Sierra Leonean from Sherbro.

January 1924 - Father Harry J. Stretch first Headmaster of Bolahun School.

1927 – Mr. Steven E. Manley became the second Headmaster of Bolahun School.
He was previously a resident of Sherbro Island and teacher at the United Brethren in Christ School.

June 1928 – Chief Mollie Farvander (Muslim) of Sosomolahun gave his son Munyah to OHC for school. He was given the name Herbert Munyah.

July 1932 – St. Agnes School opened for only girls directed by Sis. Clare.



1935 – Girls and boys allowed in St. Agnes. Discontinued in 1941 and reinstated in 1946 to 4th grade.

1933 – Rt. Rev. Leopold Kroll: "When we opened the school in 1923, the government told the chiefs they must send boys to school. The people of each village got together and decided who to send, not the parents of the students."

Some OHC Schools outside Bolahun:

1. 1940 –Vazela School opened
2. 1945 – Foya Dundu School opened
3. 1947 – Pandemai School opened
4. 1948 – Vahun and Gondolahun Schools opened.

1946 – Rev. Father Raymond A. Gill organized the High School in Bolahun for boys only.

1947 – St. Augustine High School opened with 5 boys.

1948 – Girls allowed in the High School. 48 students enrolled:

46 boys and 2 girls - 19 Bandi, 14 Loma, 5 Kissi, 3 Mandingo, and 1 Mende

Father Bessom became the first principal.



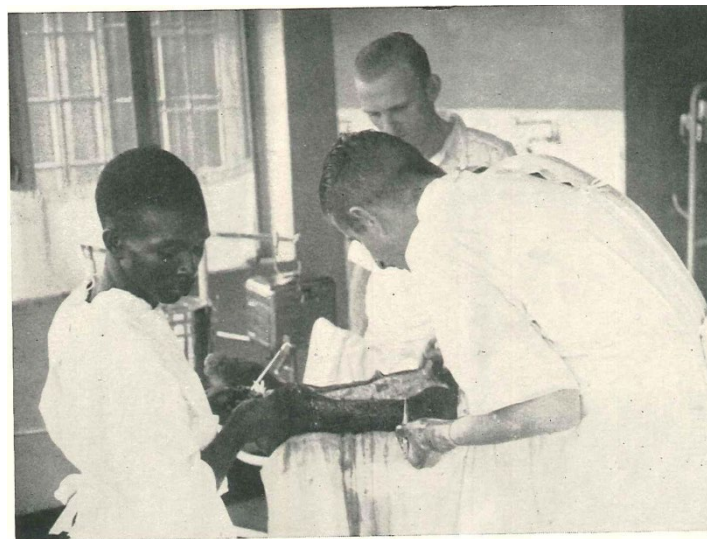
THE HOSPITAL AS AN INSTRUMENT OF CHRISTIAN EVANGELISM

Doctors should use their medical skills and knowledge as means to an end. The end will be to draw the souls of men and women to Him who alone can recover them from the mortal sickness of their souls. Doctors should use their healing art to point their patients to the Great Physician, Jesus Christ.



THE HOSPITAL STAFF AT BOLAHUN
First on the left is James Njuma, the 'house-surgeon,' and first on the right is Joseph Ngombu, the "Empty Matchbox."

Dr. Werner Junge at Work at St. Joseph Hospital



THE AUTHOR OPERATING ON A PATIENT SUFFERING FROM ELEPHANTIASIS

1923 – Arrival of Father Allen.

He was not a professional physician but had basic training and knowledge in tropical first aid from Livingstone College in London. He first started providing treatment for some tropical diseases.

One of the first patient: “White-man medicine strong too much.”

OHC Fathers to OHC in New York - Medical services helped to break last vestiges of hostility or opposition to planting Christianity in Bolahun.

February 2nd, 1926 – Dr. Edgar Maas arrived in Bolahun.

He was the first medical doctor in Bolahun.

July 1927 - St. Joseph Hospital in Bolahun opened to patients.

1928 - Rev. Father James H. Gorham to OHC New York:

“We felt please to have him (a Muslim Chief Mollie) get treatment at the hospital, and were particularly gratified and at the same time a little surprise, to see him attend Mass on Sunday.”

1928-1929 – Dr. Germann did research work in Bolahun while helping Dr. Maas at the hospital.

1931- 1933 – Dr. Werner Junge replaced Dr. Maas.

1933– 1936 - Dr. Joachim Kruger provided medical services.

1936– 1937 – Sister Dr. Joan Clatworthy provided medical services.

1938– 1939 – Dr. Roger Fowler served as the first American medical doctor.

1939– 1941 – Dr. Joseph L. Selden provided medical services.

1941- 1944 – Dr. E. P. Veatch provided medical services.

1944– 1951 – No resident medical doctor at St. Joseph Hospital.

Sister and trained nurse, Hilary Link, worked with Father Kroll and Brother Sydney as well as Patrick Siafa to provide medical services at the hospital.

Patrick Siafa operated hernias and hydroceles after he had worked with various doctors for many years.

1951 – 1954 – Dr. and Mrs. William Rogers Beasley provided medical services.

He was trained in tropical medicine and treatment of sleeping sickness and leprosy.

He established Mbalotahun for people with lepers.

He also established a town called Hilarylahun (name after Sister Hilary) for people recovering gradually from illness.

1954 – Rev. Dr. Joseph H. Smyth provided medical services.

1956 – Sister Una arrived and assisted with women medical cases.

1952 – Dr. Beasley introduced the first Landover motor car in Bolahun by way of Guinea.

Some of the Early Christian families in Bolahun

Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Momoh

Children: James Karmo and Anna Sao Momoh

Mr. and Mrs. William Morlu

Children: Gabriel and Sembe Morlu

Zachariah Kpoto

Cyprian Ambulay and son Michael Karmo



Christian Chief James Tamba and Wife

The OHC Priors of Bolahun, 1922 – 1947

The Rev. Robert E. Campbell, 1922 – 1925

The Rev. McVeigh Harrison, 1925 – 1926

The Rev. James H. Gorham, 1926 – 1932

The Rev. John S. Baldwin, 1932 – 1937

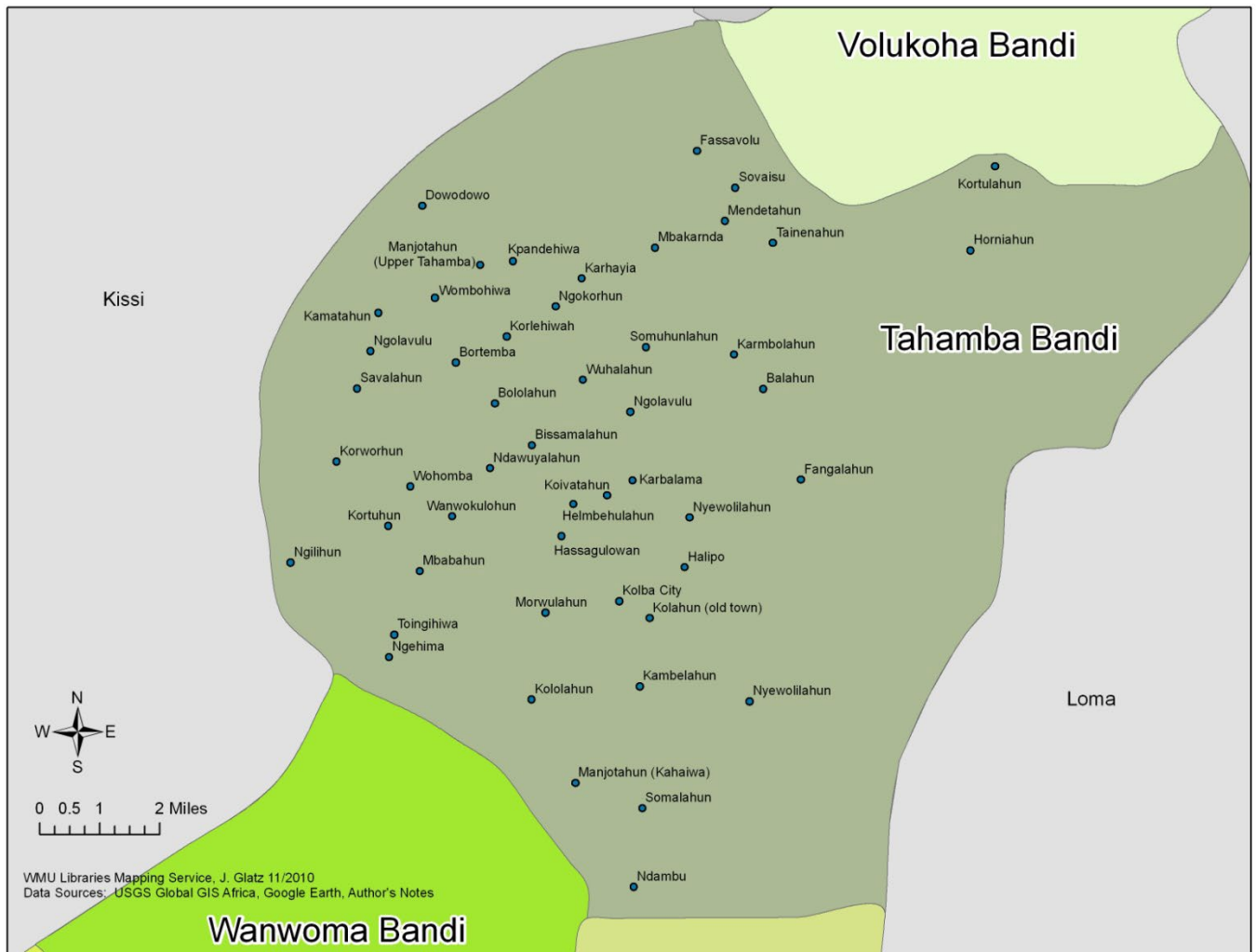
The Rev. Leopold Kroll, Jr., 1937 – 1946

The Rev. Joseph G. Parsell, 1947 -

1932 – Bolahun Market



The Market at Bolahun



April 8, 1960 – President WVS Tubman officially opened the motor road to Bolahun.

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