

1924 Panama Arms Issue for the Isthmus of Panama

Purpose and Scope:

This single frame exhibit explores the development and use of the 1924 Panama Arms issue within the Isthmus of Panama. Material includes the 1924 Panama Arms issue utilized by Panama and overprinted for use in the Canal Zone. Their use on mail originating or arriving in the Canal Zone is considered within the scope of the exhibit.

Treatment:

The traditional format is used. The exhibit opens with the development of the base set of stamps for use in Panama beginning with a study of the sunken die proofs, proofs, specimens, and issued stamps produced by the American Bank Note Company (ABNCo). There were thirty-seven print orders placed over a 21-year period for various denominations of this definitive set. There are no known errors. The frame includes postal history relating to usage of these stamps arriving or originating within the United States Administered Canal Zone. The two major metropolitan areas of Panama (Panama City and Colon) bordered the Canal Zone, with Panama City adjacent to Ancon and Colon adjacent to Cristobal, and ninety percent of Panama's populace lived within these metropolitan areas in the 1920s. Panamanians and residents of the Canal Zone had access to post offices in both Panama and the Canal Zone.

To satisfy the Taft Agreement of December 3, 1904, the Canal Zone Postal Service was required to purchase stamps from Panama at 40% of face for use in the Canal Zone. This was a compromised negotiated by William H. Taft as Secretary of War and approved by President Theodore Roosevelt to compensate Panama for lost postal revenue. The stamps of Panama were overprinted with "Canal Zone" for use within the Canal Zone. The Canal Zone placed an order in November 1923 for the Panama Arms stamps from the ABNCo utilizing 9 of the 10 denominations. The 1/2 cent yellow was not ordered. This segment of the exhibit reviews overprinting of Panama Arms stamps through specimens from the ABNCo archives. One plate was used for the printing sheet stamps and one for booklet panes which will be demonstrated with specimen and issued plate blocks.

The 1 cent dark green and 2 cent carmine were available from February 13, 1924 until the abrogation of the Taft Agreement on June 30, 1924. Covers within this section represent the limited use of the stamps prior to the abrogation.

Due to the short window of time from receiving the stamps in February 1924 to the abrogation of the Taft Agreement, stock of the 7 higher values and booklets of the 2 lower values were not issued. Panama requested 600 copies of each value for submission to the Universal Postal Union. At that time the UPU only required 480 copies of each issue. Shortly after this submission to Panama, full sets of the nine overprinted values appeared in the philatelic market in Panama, England and France. The exhibit will conclude with a look at the full unissued set and specimens of the booklets. All copies of the booklets were destroyed with the unused stock. The specimen archive included 1c dark green (69 panes) and 2c carmine (71 panes).

Importance:

The abrogation of the Taft Agreement led to a shift in the Canal Zone Postal service from overprints on Panama stamps to overprints on United States stamps. This rapid change in policy led to a short usage window of the 1924 Panama Arms overprint issue within the Canal Zone. Panama continued to use the issue as the primary postal issue for over two decades as seen in mail passing through or terminating in the zone.

Research:

This exhibit displays knowledge gleaned from written references, viewing collections, and correspondence with the major collectors of the Panama Arms issue. Through personal research, including the review of the ABNCo master inventory record, I determined there were 37 orders placed by Panama to the ABNCo for the Arms issue from 1924 – 1945. This had previously been reported as 35. This will be published in the future following my further review of the ABNCo archive documents.

Rarity & Condition:

Issued over 95 years ago in a tropical environment, most covers show signs of wear, included stains, tears and toning. The exhibit contains the only covers available to the exhibitor in many years of searching. This search has demonstrated the rarity of these covers in the marketplace, while the catalog values them as common. A limited number of proofs and specimens were sold at the ABNCo archive auction. The group of specimen stamps represents the complete run of the Canal Zone issue. The 10-cent purple block of 12 with specimen room handstamps and the 1 cent dark green and 2 cent carmine uncut booklet panes are rare presentations of the available specimens. The 1c and 2c sunken die proofs represent the complete 10 piece set in the authors collection. This is one of only two complete sets known sunken die proof sets with die number known to the author.

References:

Canal Zone Stamps: Updated and Supplemented 4th Edition by Gilbert Plass, Geoffrey Brewster, and Richard Salz. Published by The Canal Zone Study Group 2016. Pages 118 – 125.

"ABNCo Specimens of the 1924 Canal Zone Coat of Arms Series" by James Crumpacker, Gary Weiss, and David Leeds. *The Canal Zone Philatelist*. 1998(34)1. Pages 5 – 8.

Canal Zone Booklets by James DeVoss. Published by The Canal Zone Study Group 1953. Page 16.

"The Panama Coat of Arms Issue, A Progress Report" by Jim Cross. *COPACARTA* March 2000. Pages 48-51.

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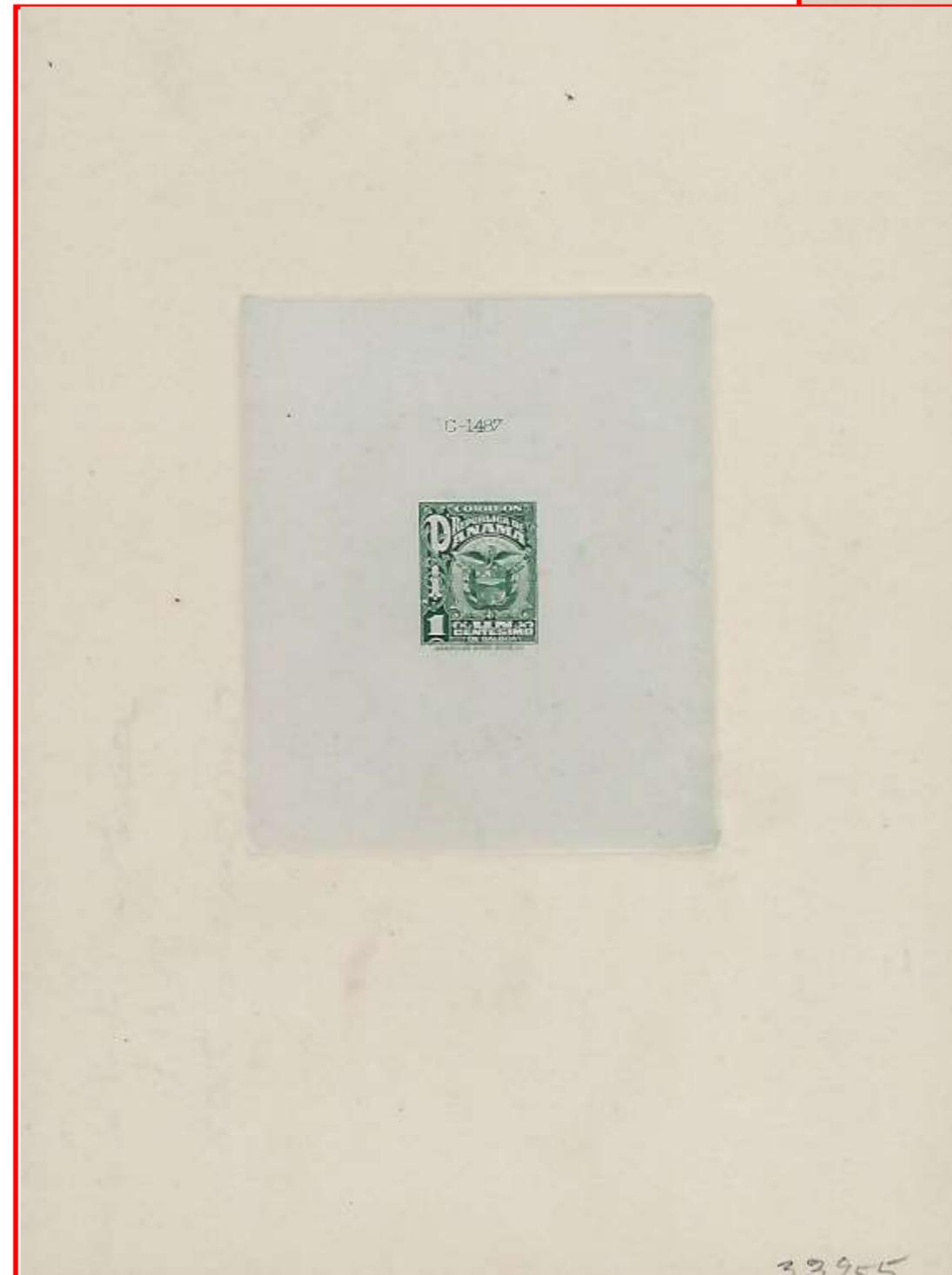
Plan:

- Pages 1-4 American Bank Note Company Proofs
- Page 5 Panama Specimens
- Page 6 Panama Issue
- Page 7-10 Panama Issue Use
- Page 11-12 Canal Zone Overprint Specimens
- Page 13-14 Canal Zone Overprint Issue
- Page 15 Canal Zone Unissued Values
- Page 16 Canal Zone Overprint Booklet Specimens

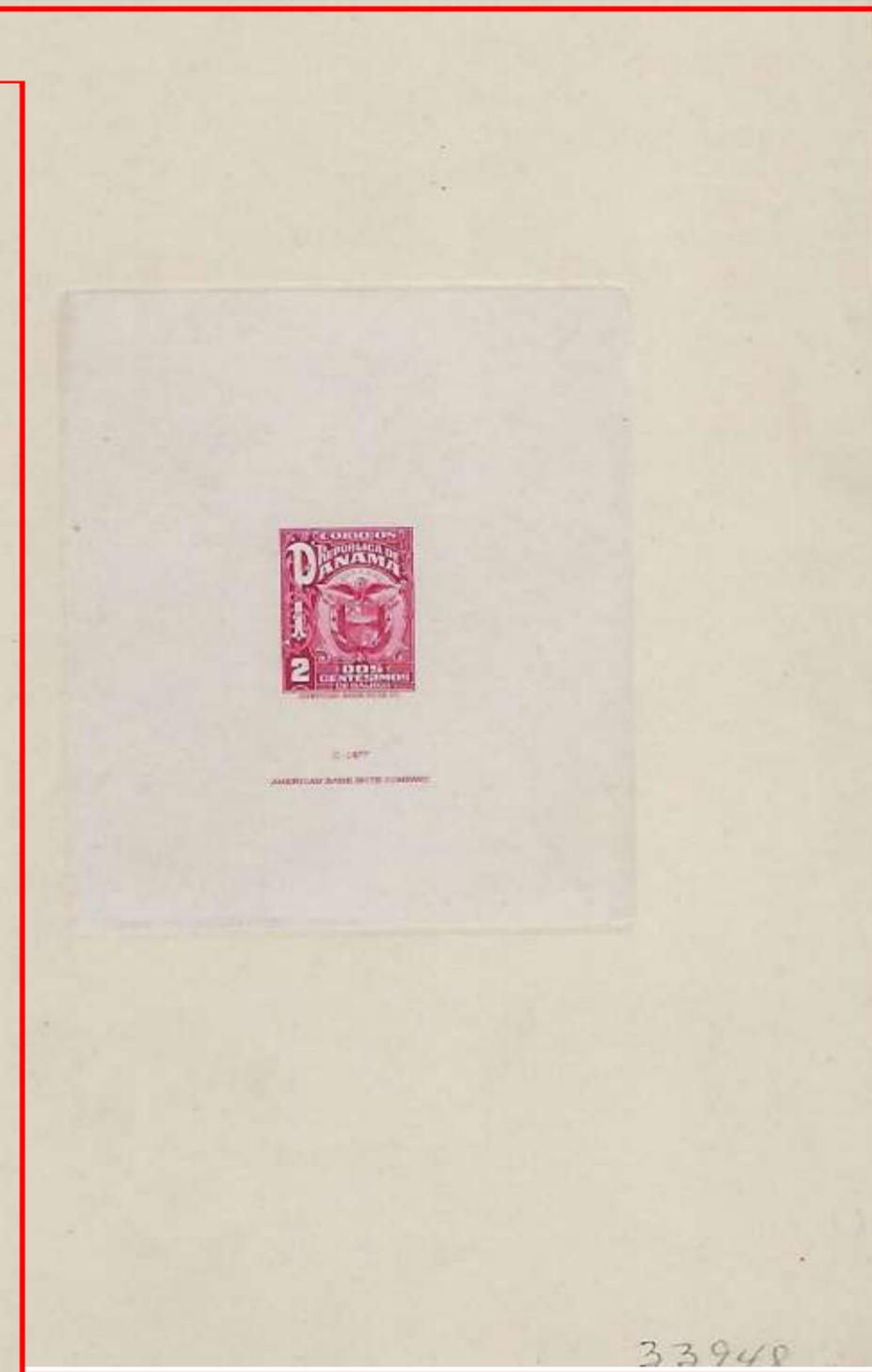
Items considered significant are noted in red text and outline.

Existing stock of Panamanian stamps in 1923 was insufficient to meet the anticipated needs of Panama and the Canal Zone for 1924.

Panama placed an order with the American Bank Note Company May 28, 1923 requesting an artist design a single color stamp with a vignette depicting the arms of Panama and a frame with the words "República de Panamá".



The 1c green (Die C-1487) American Bank Note Company Sunken Die Proof with die number above and penciled file number at lower right corner.



The 2c carmine (Die C-1477) American Bank Note Company Sunken Die Proof with die number and penciled file number in lower right corner. The C-1477 was the master die used for the remaining issues.

Panama Arms Proofs



The stamps were prepared as two panes of 100 (10x10) arranged horizontally with a gutter between panes.



1c dark green and 2c carmine gutter strips of 6 on card.

Each is 1 of 20 possible examples that could exist.



Panama 1924 Arm proofs in issued colors on card from American Bank Note Company archives. Archive included 1/2c (200 stamps), 1c (400 stamps), 2c (400 stamps), 5c-1b (200 stamps)

The American Bank Note Company archive included one sheet (2 panes x 100 stamps) of 10c dark violet on gummed stamp paper with security punctures.

No other proofs on paper are known.

Panama Arms Specimens



Panama placed the first order for the Panama Arms issue of ten values in October 1923 from the American Bank Note Company. The American Bank Note Company order number was 7427.



Panama placed thirty-seven orders with the American Bank Note Company for various denominations from the set. The final order was September 1945 for 7 values as order American Bank Note Company order 12129.

Panama Arms Issue



Generally believed to be issued in May 1924, but earliest known use April 21, 1924

Special Event Specimens



Specimen from the souvenir booklet produce for the October 1931 Panamerican Postal Congress of Madrid.



"MUESTRA" overprint prepared for the 1956 Philatelic Exhibition New York. Only 20 copies were overprinted.



Panama Arms Issue Use

Letters to Postal Union of the Americas and Spain (PUAS) member nations, including the Canal Zone and United States, were charged the local Panama rate of 1 cent for postcards and 2 cents for letters.



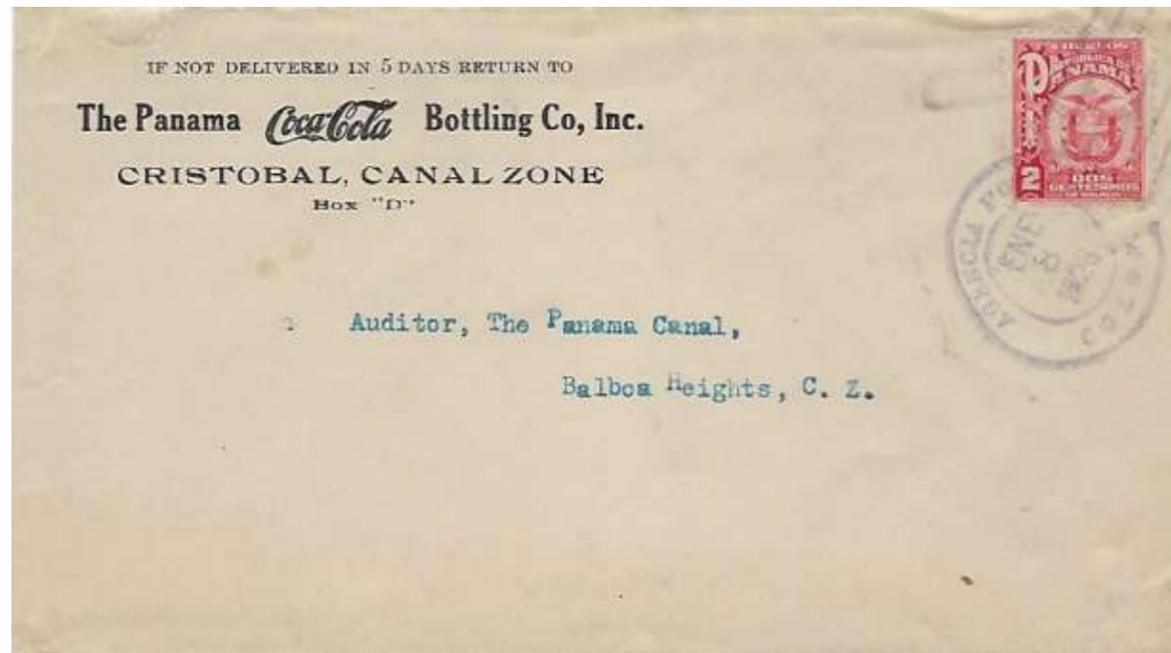
Panama 1 cent dark green on Paquebot mail cancelled in the Canal Zone 1933.



Due to proximity of Cristobal, Canal Zone and Colon, Panama was mistakenly posted at the wrong office.

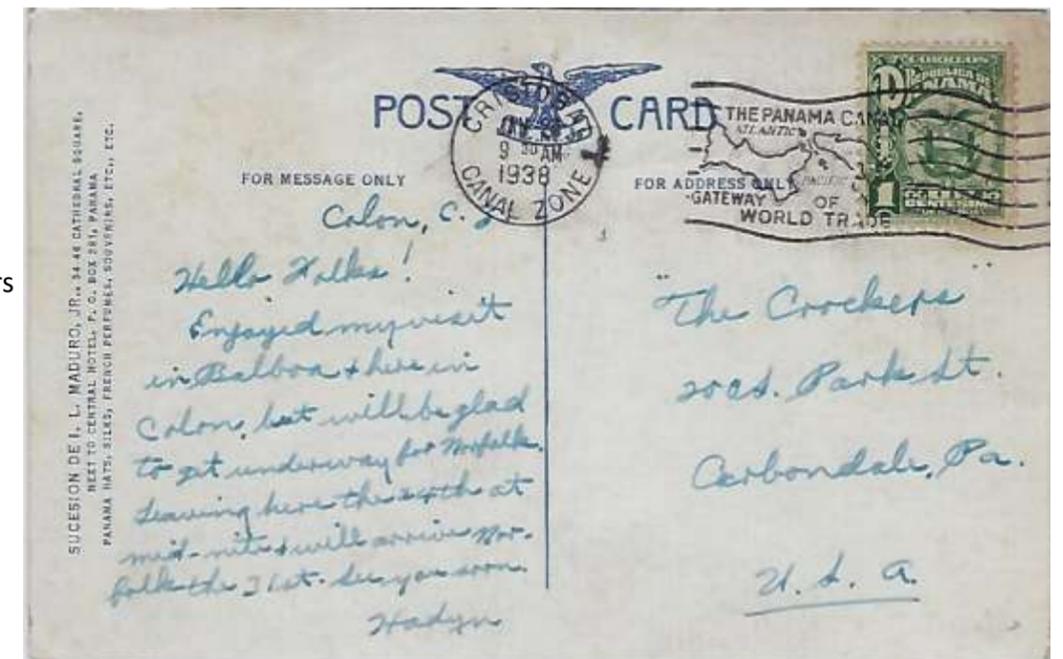


Top of message states Cristobal/Colon May 28, 1938. Card is cancelled with a May 28, 1938 postmark in Cristobal, follow by a Colon cancel on May 31, 1938. The card was run upside down at Cristobal so as not to cancel the stamp. The 2 cent carmine pays the UPU postcard rate to Europe.



Commercial use Colon, Panama to Balboa Heights, Canal Zone 1928

Postcard postmarked in Cristobal, Canal Zone with 1c green Panama stamp attached for postage. No Panama markings applied. Appears postcard was accepted by Canal Zone post office.



Panama Arms Issue Use

The 5 cent blue was commonly used to pay the registration rate once the supply of the 1917 registration stamps was exhausted. Panama no longer issued specific registration stamps after the 1917 issue.



July 6, 1925 cover from Panama City to Balboa, Canal Zone. Registration paid by 5c blue and UPAE member letter rate 60-75g rate paid by 10 cent purple.



Image of reverse of cover at 75% with transit markings through Ancon to Balboa on July 7, 1925.



February 16, 1932 cover from Panama City to Cristobal. Registration fee of 10 cents after 1931 paid by 5 cent blue pair, double rate letter rate of 4 cents paid by 1 cent dark green block of four.



Image of reverse of cover at 75% with receiving mark for Cristobal February 16, 1924 along with Panama registration seal.

Canal Zone Specimens

The Taft Agreement of December 3, 1904 required the Canal Zone to purchase stamps of Panama at 40% of face for use within the zone. This compensated Panama for lost revenue for mail posted at Canal Zone post offices. The stamps were overprinted "Canal Zone".

As part of Panama's initial order in October 1923, the Canal Zone Postal Service of the United States placed an order for the Panama Arms issue overprinted "Canal Zone" as part of order #7427. The Canal Zone ordered the 1 cent - 1 balboa values of the set. The 1/2 cent was not ordered.

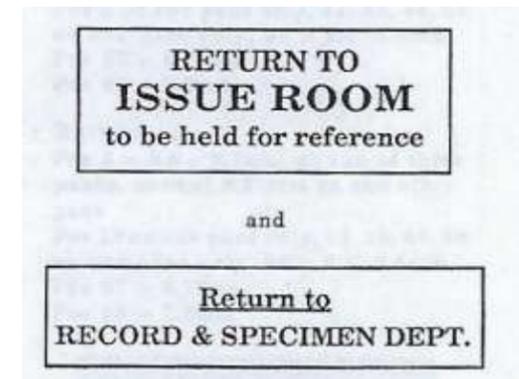
The flat top "A" overprint used in the 1920 and 1921 overprints was used for the 1924 issue.



CANAL ZONE
overprint type V

SPECIMEN

SPECIMEN
overprint
type B



Ten of the twenty-six panes were hand stamped at the top with one of the above return handstamps.



American Bank Note Company archive included 3 panes of 100 copies each of all values except the 2 cent red. Only 194 copies of the 2 cent red remained.



Specimen 10 cent dark violet top block of 12. One of 3 examples from the ABNCo archives. The October 17, 1923 date is the date the order was entered into the ABNCo Foreign department's order book.

Author unaware of any additional specimen 10 cent top sheet block with return to specimen dept handstamp.

Canal Zone Overprint Issue

By the time the print order arrived in the Canal Zone in January and February 1924, the prior stock of 1 cent and 2 cents sheet stamps were nearly exhausted. The 1 cent dark green and 2 cent carmine were immediately used to fill orders on February 2nd and 5th 1924. This was before the basic Panama version of the stamp was issued in April by the Republic.



1 cent dark green and 2 cent carmine block of 6. Note order number F-7427 in top right of block. The same order number as Panama's original order.

Dropped "E" Variety

Note top of "E" in top row of stamps is slightly below the top of the other letters. Referred to as the dropped E variety.



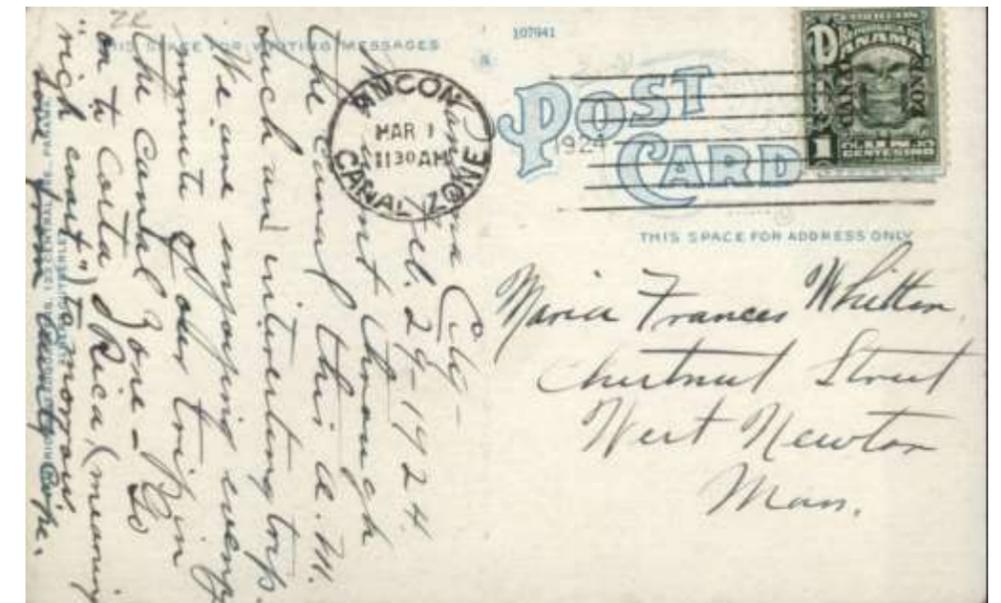
Enlarged to 200%

The dropped E is the only overprint variety list for the Canal Zone overprints of the Panama Arms issue. It is found in approximately 10% of issues. Broken letter varieties exist, but do not appear to be consistent.

There are no known perforation errors (imperfs) or overprint errors (inverted, double, missing, etc.)



Postmarked June 27, 1924 in Balboa, Canal Zone. The 2 cent carmine rose covers the 2 cent local letter rate. Printed in the same order, the 2 cent can be found in carmine and carmine rose.



Postmarked March 1, 1924 in Ancon, Canal Zone. The 1 cent dark green pays the 1 cent post card rate to the United States.

Canal Zone Overprint Unissued Values

The Taft Agreement was dissolved effective July 1, 1924. Panama stamps overprinted "Canal Zone" were replaced by stamps of the United States overprinted "Canal Zone". This led to a short window of use of overprinted Panama Arms stamp in the Canal Zone. Only the 1c dark green and 2c carmine were issued by the Canal Zone Post Office prior to the withdrawal. A grace period from July 1, 1924—August 31, 1924 allowed the use of Panama overprint stamps already in consumer hands.



Panama requested 600 sets of the 1c-1b on February 27, 1924 for submission to the United Postal Union. At that time the United Postal Union required 480 copies.

Shortly after the deliver of stamps to Panama, the unissued stamps appeared in dealer stocks in Panama, England and France.

This led to a small quantity of unissued stamps available of the philatelic market.

Booklet panes were printed and shipped to the Canal Zone in February 1924.

American Bank Note Company order F7428.

4 pane booklet of 6 stamps of 1 cent dark green	5,000
2 pane booklet of 6 stamps of 2 cent carmine	30,000
4 pane booklet of 6 stamps of 2 cent carmine	5,000

Adequate supply of earlier booklets remained available, so the booklets were not immediately made available for purchase. The booklets were not issued prior to the abrogation of the Taft Agreement. The entire stock of 40,000 booklets was destroyed August 14, 1937. There are no known covers of booklet with booklet stamps or panes other than specimen.



Two specimen uncut booklet panes of 1 cent dark green and 2 cent carmine.

American Bank Note archive included 69 and 71 booklet panes respectively.