

The Quintessential Quetzal



No.3 Arms and the Bird

More Guatemalan national symbol issues

Part I: Waterlows and Perkins Bacon

Introduction

In the second part of “A Quandary of Quetzals,” I stressed that as well as there being an awful lot of Quetzals on Guatemalan stamps, there was specifically a large series of designs based on the national coat of arms. As a reminder, I have reproduced the arms in figure 1 below. The Quetzal makes it special.



Fig.1 - The Guatemalan Coat of Arms

Guatemalan stamps using the arms are sometimes referred to as the “National Emblem” or “National symbol” or sometimes “National seal” issues. Strictly speaking, Part Two just touched the surface and primarily focused on the distinctive and highly collectable series issued between 1886 and 1903. They are stamps that look straightforward but in reality are very complex with a number of overprints and surcharges. As they are relatively cheap I have hundreds of them. And still collecting. But I also said that there were other, later and equally complex designs that used the national coat of arms, and it is some of these I want to talk about now.

There are lots of examples, indeed far too many for just one article. There are a number of basic designs or types that emerged and as some are immensely complex, it would be very difficult to cram any review and discussion into just one piece. So, I have split the subject into two primary groups and two articles - broadly, the early Waterlow and Perkins Bacon issues and then secondly, the ex-fiscals, officials and then the most recent issues. But, I would stress that neither are intended to be a fully comprehensive listing. In Guatemalan stamps, the national symbol is important and pops up on all sorts of issues and in all sorts of guises. Too many for even two articles.

Here, I want to look specifically at the next few decades, from 1902 to 1926. This period contains another significant and important series of issues that use the national coat of arms, or rather the key part of it, the Quetzal and scrolled independence parchment. It is a period that is another rich source of complexities.

Whilst chronology is important, as they intermingle at times, for the sake of clarity I think it best to go through them as design types rather than in strict sequential order. The numbering is purely my own. So, here goes.

Design 1 - a) The early Waterlows - 1902 and all that

Waterlow & Sons were to become responsible for the printing of the vast majority of issues between 1902 and 1926, so in many respects the different designs could be dubbed Waterlow Quetzals.

A set of ten predominately pictorial stamps ranging from 1 cent to 2 pesos were issued by Guatemala in September 1902. They were printed recess engraved in sheets of 100 (10x10) and all in two colours. Indeed, the series is sometimes referred to as, “the bicoloured Waterlows.”

It is fair to say that for some collectors of Guatemalan philately, this set has been a sole area of study. The Waterlows have been described as, “A vast field of research.” This is because following on from the printing process they are a rich source of plate and die faults, shade and perforation variations and what have you. Indeed, I know one collector who has amassed thousands of the early Waterlows and written a whole series of wonderfully detailed articles on the plate varieties and flaws that can be found. They are a rich area for obsessives. They are beautiful stamps, but fear not, the focus here is solely on Quetzals.

The 1c green and purple (see figure 2) is the only Quetzal issue in this particular series, and as the first and lowest value, offers a sort of official seal of approval with its coat of arms ahead of all the others that follow that include engravings of buildings and statues and landscapes within ornate and individualised frames.



Fig. 2 - 1902 1c Waterlow issue (SG116)

Just the one stamp? Well, nor quite. Like the rest of the early Waterlows it comes with its fair share of varieties. And challenges.

For a start, there were twelve printings of this value right up to 1916 when the fall in the currency removed the need for a 1c value, and whilst the outer area remained relatively constant from green to blue-green, the centrepiece with the national symbol gradually changed over time from purple to claret. Altogether, there are four recognised colours through the lifetime of the issue. These are detailed below in Table 2.

Secondly, due to all kinds of issues with Waterlows perforating machines (a subject that merits an article in its own right!) there are a plethora of different perforations that are acknowledged for all the issues within this series. I have detailed them in Table 1 below, but in summary it means that there are a range of perforations between 13.5 and 15.8. You'll be busy with the “Instanta” gauge for these ones.

Table. 1 - Perforation Variations & Codings for Early Waterlows

ISGC Coding*	Perforations	Explanatory Comments
A	15.6 to 15.8	
B	14.9	An average - Irregular and possibly varying between 14.8 and 15.0
C	14.5 to 15.0	Again, irregular
D	14.1	Varying occasionally between 14.0 and 14.2
E	13.9	Key variant
F	13.9x12.5 or 11.8	A variant of E with sides showing different perforations
G	13.7	Regular
H	13.5	Regular, but small holes and irregular teeth

*These are standardised for the Waterlows by the ISGC because of the wide variations found

In descending order, the commonest perforations that can be found are E, D and B. Because of the historical evolvement of the colours, they can also be tied with the perforation variations. This is shown in Table 2 below.

Table. 2 - 1c Early Waterlow Colour Variations & Perforations

Colours	ISGC No.	SG No.	Scott No.	Perforations
Green & purple	129A	116	-	A,E,F,G
Green & reddish purple	129B	-	-	C,D,E,F,G,H
Green & deep reddish purple	129C	-	-	E,G
Green & claret	129D	-	114	B,D,E,G,H

It is not possible to put dates against the colour changes other than the last one, however, the deep reddish purple is the least common variety. The later green and claret variety can also be found imperforate on the vertical sides.

There were at least two plates used for the frame and another for the centre. A whole series of flaws have been identified, indeed, the early Waterlows are a flaw hunters paradise, but I will not digress and detail them here. Do I hear a sigh of relief?

Design 1 - b) 1916 Provisionals

This design as a definitive or “regular” as the Americans refer to it, was, as we have already mentioned still being produced right up to 1916. For a series with so many faults and quirks, it is remarkable it was extant as long as it was. Altogether, eight million of the 1c were printed, but only just over 6.5 million were for general use. Or philatelic dealers. The remaining issues - all of the Green and claret variety - were overprinted and surcharged with higher values in May 1916.

Overprinted in Guatemala by the Tipografia Nacional, there are two surcharges, both printed in black and carrying their own degrees of complexity. First is the 6c on 1c. This is overprinted in lettering “SEIS CENTAVOS” and positioned centrally. A further surcharge accompanied this issue, this is the twelve and half cent on 1 cent with the surcharge in figures and “CENTAVOS” below, again positioned centrally. See figures 3 and 4 below.



Fig.3 - 1916 6c/1c Surchage (SG152)



Fig.4 - 1916 12.5c/1c Surchage (SG153)

They look straightforward, but this is misleading. Why? Well, lots of reasons. For a start they inherited the perforation variations of the standard definitives with at least four different ones to be found. I shan't list them. The 6c/1c can even be found with the imperforate sides example. This issue also has instances of an inverted "S" in "SEIS" and both values can be found with the same problem for "CENTAVOS." There are examples of double or inverted surcharges for both stamps and a variety of other faults.

It is quite a list of issues but, there is one biggie. The majority of stamps to be found are fake. The overprints were extensively forged and there is a high chance that if, like me, you have any of these they will not be genuine. How come? For a start the basic stamps were cheap. A full sheet of 100 came to only a few cents in US money and so large quantities could be bought up for very little outlay and then "improved" for the collectors market with false overprints. The twelve and a half surcharge was especially targeted. Many of them have now been identified but this is not the place to list them. It would form an entire article in itself, but I can supply a list for anyone who is interested. There are though a few tips that can normally identify a surcharge as fake:-

- The surcharge is all red or red & black;
- The centre with national symbol is violet in colour;
- Genuine inverted surcharges are known, but they were a favourite for forgery so these should always be treated with caution;
- If the measurement of "SEIS" does not match the genuine 8.25x3.5mm or,
- The measurement of "CENTAVOS" does not match 20.25x2.5mm.

I have a joined pair of the 6c/1c and whilst they look good, I think it is only 50/50 that they are genuine.

Design 1 - c) 1917 Provisional

This is the last outing for this design. Again overprinted by Tipografia Nacional in black, but this time there was just one issue with a surcharge of 2 cents. An estimated 475,000 stamps were treated and then issued in August 1917. See figure 5 below.



Fig. 5 - 1917 2c/1c Surcharge (SG156)

And I can repeat much of what has been said about the other overprints and surcharge issues. The perforation variations are there as well as imperforate examples; there are surcharge inversions. There is even a Perfin, punctured "OFICIAL." And of course, there are fakes.

The forgeries of this surcharge have been the subject of some pretty extensive research, but as a guide for the general collector a quick check should be for the following:-

- "DOS" should measure 7.25x2.5mm;
- "CENTAVOS" should measure between 20.25 and 20.5x2.5mm; and,
- The space between the lines should be 2.5mm.

And who would have thought a Quetzal could create such mayhem?

Design 2 - a) 1919 Regular and Postal Tax Issues

This is by far the most extensive and complex of the four national symbol designs under review.

We are still with Waterlows for the moment, but we move to a new design and a considerably higher value. Again printed recess engraved in London and produced on sheets of 100 (10x10) the three pesos was a new arrangement of the national symbol and formed part of a set of four with three new and attractive pictorial issues. In addition, they were accompanied by a postal tax issue of 12.5c, but I'll say more about that one later as it is a different design arrangement.

The three pesos was again printed in two colours, but this time a deep green with two forms of black. The first printing is normally described as "oily black;" the second printing as grey-black. I think the deep green is more of a greyish green, but I will let you be the judge as the design is reproduced in figure 6 below.



Fig. 6 - 1919 3 pesos Regular Issue (SG162)

This is the basic design that pops up in a number of guises with minor changes. Note that despite not being issued until 3rd May 1919, the tablet beneath the national symbol bears the date "1918." Overall, I think it is a rather elegant design and that this explains why it endured with adjustments at later dates.

The two printings were spaced apart in unequal quantities, with the first issued on 3rd May 1919 with one million, and the second of half that quantity and issued on 3rd February 1921. As well as the difference in the colouring of the national coat of arms the centres also look very slightly different. Those of the second printing seem clearer, crisper. In addition, there are four perforation varieties for the 1st issue, but only two for the second.

There are only a handful of plate varieties this time around and no doubt be pleased to hear that it is also relatively fake free. There is an "OFICIAL" issue for this value and design but this time hand stamped, not punctured, but I have never seen a copy on the market.

Design 2 - b) 2nd Provisional Issue 1922

Things become a wee bit complicated here as there are three surcharging series on various issues of 1902 through to 1921 throughout this year. It is the second and third ones that should concern us with regard to the national symbol designs as the 1st series doesn't include a Quetzal design. All the series have a degree of complexity, but I would argue that both the 2nd and 3rd are inherently more complicated.

Fig. 8 - 25c Overprinting Plate Arrangement
1922 2nd Provisional Issues

You can see from this that Types B and C are the least common with only ten per sheet each. In fact of the total quantity produced, they breakdown as follows:-

Type "A"	250,000	50%
Type "B"	50,000	10%
Type "C"	50,000	10%
Type "D"	150,000	30%
Total:	500,000	100%

To add more fun to this already heady mixture a number of sheets were printed with the surcharge inverted. In addition, there are instances of vertical pairs of Type "A" being imperforate between each as well as examples of all four types being found horizontally imperforate between each other.



Fig. 9 - 12.5c Surcharge
1922 2nd Provisional Issue



Fig.10 - 25c Surcharge (Type A)
1922 2nd Provisional Issue

Design 2 - c) 3rd Provisional Issue 1922

It is a little like buses, they always seem to arrive in clusters. Two months later in August 1922 a further set of ten surcharged stamps were issued using selected issues from 1902, 1919 and 1921. Again the overprinting was undertaken by Amos y Anderson, so once more we find a mixture of numeral styles. But different ones this time.

The 3 pesos was again surcharged (in red) with 25 cents, but on this occasion the remaining range of overprint types (E to J) were used. Using the same 100 stamp format, the distribution of types is now completely different and certainly far more irregular as you will see from figure 11 below.

E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	F
F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	H
G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	J	J
E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	F
F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	H
E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	F
F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	H

Fig. 11 - 25c Overprinting Plate Arrangement
1922 3rd Provisional Issues

Indeed, different. You can see from this that over half are Type E and that Types H and J are the least common - and most sought after. In total, they breakdown as follows:-

Type "E"	171,000	57%
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Type "F"	90,000	30%
Type "G"	24,000	8%
Type "H"	9,000	3%
Type "J"	6,000	2%
Total:	300,000	100%

Whilst there are three variations of perforation, the only other variety to be aware of is an inverted surcharge. However, there are a cornucopia of flaws with the 25c overprints plates - at least nineteen and a paradise for specialists - but I will not list them here. Oh, and as with many earlier Guatemalan there are several fakes to be aware of, particularly with the rare Type J overprint, although this rarely applies to the 25c/3 pesos issue. See figure 12 below for images of Types "E" to "J."



Fig.12 - Surcharge Types "E" to "J"
 (Note "J" is on 90c non-Quetzal value in this example)
 1922 2nd Provisional Issues

Design 2 - d) 2nd Regular Issue 1924

And we are still not finished with this version of the national symbol just yet for it had two further incarnations. Oh, and we move away from Waterlows.

In February 1924 a new series of lithograph definitives printed in Guatemala were issued. There were just three values. It did not include this national symbol design, but did have the 1 pesos blue-green Quetzal atop a column. The classic Quetzal was riding again. However, at the beginning of August 1924 a second series with a further nine definitives was issued, but now recess engraved by Perkins, Bacon & Co in London. This time the Design 2 3 pesos formed part of the set.

It is easily distinguishable from its predecessors. The tablet beneath the national seal still says "1918" - no one seems to know why it wasn't changed - but the stamp is single colour, just dark green. The grey black for the national symbol is no more. There is just a single perforation of 14 comb. No variations. This issue is also slightly differently proportioned - 26.75x20.75mm, compared to 26.5x21.0mm for the original issue. And lastly, the printer places their name on the base of the stamp: "PERKINS BACON & CO, LONDRES." Waterlow always placed their name in the margins in the middle of each sheet. If you look at figure 13 below you can see most of the differences immediately.



Fig.13 - 1924 3 pesos regular (SG209)

The quantity produced was just 150,000. Printed on white, and normally unwatermarked paper, there are examples of it on paper watermarked "LINEN C A BOND." Overall, it is quite a clean looking stamp. It is also a very straightforward issue - just the one perforation, no major faults and no surcharges. On official use, it can be found either punctured or hand stamped "OFICIAL."

Design 2 - e) Regular Issue 1926

I fear that we still have a little further to go with this particular design. This Quetzal is tenacious, it does not disappear quickly.

And it's back with Waterlow & Sons as printers. In July 1926 a set of eleven definitives were issued. Many from the 1924 regulars were repeated and the 3 pesos was included, again with a single colour, but now in deep green. This time the tablet under the seal shows the correct date "1926." Once more it is on white unwatermarked paper, giving it a clean appearance. There is the same erratic centring as the 1924 version but the stamp is a little larger at 27.25x22mm. And now Waterlow's have copied Perkins, Bacon & Co and placed their name on the base of the stamp instead of the margins. Copy cats!

It is perforated at 12.5 and this seems to be consistent this time. However, there are a couple of imperforate versions to be found - a lower border stamp imperforated at the bottom and an upper border stamp imperforated at the top. An image of the perforated stamp is provided as figure 14 below.



Fig.14 - 1926 3 pesos Regular (SG220)

The intriguing aspect of this issue concerns the quantities printed - 9 million. I'll repeat that slowly, nine million. To be honest, the whole set of eleven gives a mad figure for printing - 42 million - and the \$1.50 issue alone had 15 million produced.

And it is mad because in the previous year Guatemala had revalued its currency, removed the pesos and introduced the Quetzal, pegging it to the US Dollar. The pesos always used the dollar sign to denote it, but after 1925 it was "Q" for Quetzal. At an agreed rate of 60 old pesos = 1 new Quetzal, 3 pesos would be equivalent to 5 new cents. So why continue with stamps a year later that used the old currency and have them produced in such large quantities? Dunno.

What is clear is that an awful lot of the 1926 regulars were eventually destroyed. It is estimated that only 5 million of the 3 pesos were “available” for use and then those not used destroyed, although how many it is impossible to say. It is known that about 3 million copies of the 1926 \$3 regular were used fiscally in 1929. The remaining 1 million were either used for later surcharging (for more see below) or also destroyed.

It is possible that from the total figure - postally available or otherwise - that over one million were just pulped or burnt. It’s unclear. There was not another set of definitives that carried the new currency for three years, so this issue one year after the changeover seems frankly eccentric.

Design 2 - f) The later surcharges (1929-32)

As indicated above, the 1926 regulars were also used later for a number of overprinted and surcharged issues. The \$3 deep green in particular received new currency surcharges for a hastily issued commemorative and a series of airmail issues. Oh, and you will be pleased to hear that, in keeping with Guatemalan philatelic tradition, they are not straightforward. But then, Quetzal stamps rarely are.

Let’s break them down into the three separate issues.

i) 1929 - Ferrocarril Oriental Commemorative Overprint

The issue was to commemorate the opening of the Eastern Railway which provided a connection with neighbouring El Salvador. It was all a little odd. The railway benefited El Salvador more than Guatemala as the former now gained access to the Caribbean coast, while Guatemala already had that advantage. Guatemala had the lion’s share of construction work including difficult terrain to traverse. And then, instead of issuing a special set to mark the inauguration of the new rail link they chose a cheap option of overprinting an old issue that didn’t even reflect the new currency. This was doubly illogical as a new set of definitives that did have the new currency (including three and five cents values) had already been issued at the beginning of the year. Bonkers perhaps, but then as we have seen, they had produced too many of these stamps in the first place!

There are two stamps, a 3 cents with a black surcharge and a 5 cents with red surcharge. The overprinting was undertaken by Tipografia Nacional and both were available by the end of December 1929. Altogether, a quantity of 20,000 of the 3c and 30,000 of the 5c were produced. For their appearance, see figures 15 and 16 below.



Fig. 15
3c/3p Ferrocarril Oriental
(SG244)



Fig. 16
5c/3p Ferrocarril Oriental
(SG245)

The overprint design is unusual in that, perhaps to suggest a rail route, it is produced in either colour as a wavy line of type with the two surcharged values below this on the left. Beneath the values is a stylised two way arrow device with shading, and then the date,

“1929,” placed towards the right and the bottom of the stamp. The entire overprint measures 27.5x19.5mm. I always think that the higher value 5c/3p red version is more difficult to read. Either way, the Quetzal is not flattered by the arrangement.

ii) 1930 - 2nd Airmail Issues

Issued on the 9th December 1930 after overprinting again by Tipografia Nacional, the values were produced to cope with an expanding internal airmail service. There were five values in the set, four of which were surcharges on the 3 pesos. The 1 and 2 cent were over printed in black, the 3 and 4 cent in red. An example of the 2 cent is reproduced as figure 17 below.



Fig.17 - 2c/3p 1930 2nd Airmail Issue (SG256)

The overprint and surcharge of this example reads: “SERVICIO AEREO INTERIOR 2 Centavos DE QUETZAL 1930.” It measures 27x18.25mm. Altogether, 200,000 were overprinted broken down as follows:-

1c/3p - 100,000	Optd black
2c/3p - 25,000	Optd black
3c/3p - 25,000	Optd red
4c/3p - 50,000	Optd red

iii) 1932 - Surcharged Airmail Issues

And then the final outing of this seemingly inexhaustible design. But now overshadowed by another cock-up.

The 1926 3 pesos was yet again dragged out to fulfil a pressing need for domestic airmail stamps. It was overprinted with a value of 3 cents in not only dark violet but also carmine. The dark violet version was issued in early February 1932, the carmine later, in mid-October. See figure 18 for an example of the carmine issue.



Fig.18 - 1932 Surcharged Airmail (SG268B)

However, there was a bad over estimation of the numbers required and this resulted in a large number being unused and eventually destroyed. A total of 200,000 of the dark violet and 500,000 of the carmine were produced. It has been calculated that at least 33% of the former and close to 80% were burnt or pulped. What a sad ending after such a long run.

Pause Point

Yes, a pause, a catching of breathe and not a conclusion. So far we have looked at just two design types, covered thirty years with eleven distinct issues and, just for the record, seen 24,575,000 stamps printed that used a form of the national symbol. And we have not finished yet. Not by a long margin. There is more to come in part two.