

The Quintessential Quetzal



No.4 Arms and the Bird - again

Even more Guatemalan national symbol issues

Part II: Fiscals, Officials and the last airmail

Introduction

Part two and there are still a lot more philatelic issues where the national seal is prominent. Taken from the coat of arms and replete with Resplendent Quetzal and scroll of independence the arms and the bird remains a rich source for thematic collectors. Very rich source.

I did say in the first article that it would not be possible to keep to a strict chronological order in describing the various designs, and indeed there is now some back tracking needed. In fact, it's back to 1919 and the occasion of those Waterlow definitive issues again.

Design 3: 1919 Postal Tax Issues

When describing the Waterlow regulars and the set of four then issued, I mentioned that they were accompanied by a postal tax issue of 12.5c and that as it was of a different design it needed to be saved for later. So, let's look at it now.

Whilst it still has the national symbol prominent, it is indeed a very different stamp. In fact, as you can see from figure 1 below, the seal pretty well dominates the whole stamp.



Fig.1 - 1919 12.5c Postal Tax Issue

It's more like a bank note or bond than a postage stamp with all those swirly lines. And that's because it is no ordinary mail stamp but one that carries a tax. The 12.5c rose red was issued to raise money for reconstruction purposes. An earthquake of 1917/18 destroyed the General Post Office and a tax was imposed on all mail to provide rebuilding funds. Thus, in the bottom tablet below Guatemala we have the words "TIMBRE DE RECONSTRUCCION" - in other words, rebuilding tax.

There is some confusion about its ordering. It was thought that it had been ordered to accompany the other regular Waterlow issues of 1919, but there is evidence to suggest it was ordered later and issued in June instead of May with the other (non-tax) issues.

Philatelically, it is recognised as coming in two types. In Type I the inner frame line below the tip of the lower left scroll is complete. In contrast, with Type II the inner frame line is very faint or even broken below this ornamentation. For clarity, figure 2 below is provided to indicate the differences.

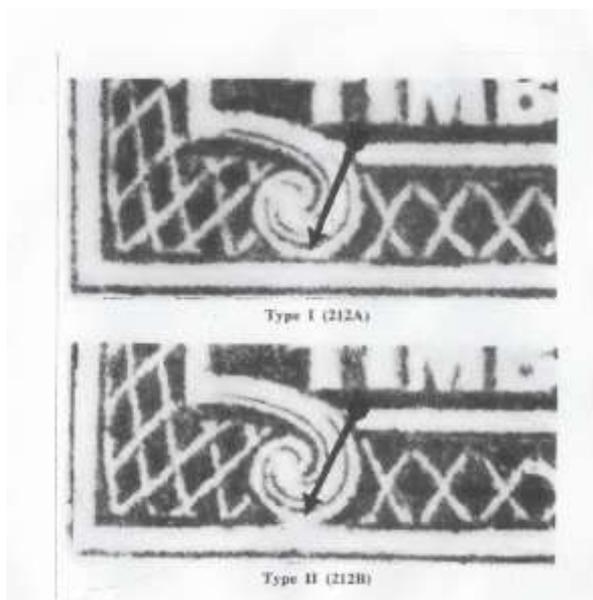


Fig.2 - 12.5c Postal Tax Issues
Types I (above) & II (below)

Whilst not a guide, there are perforation variations as well. Type I is found with perforation types D, E and G (as a reminder, see insert box below and also article 3a), while Type II comes with perforations B, D and G. Both types have been found together se-tenant and a number of perforation flaws have also characterised each type. Given the single colour, there are very few plate varieties.

Did I say single colour? I understand that a version in green and overprinted in red has been reported. But as far as I am aware, there is no record that one exists.

The Perforation Variation Codings:

A	15.6 - 15.8
B	14.9 (but irregular, varying 14.8 - 15.0)
C	14.5 - 15.0 (also irregular, varying between 14.2 and 15.2)
D	14.1 - irregular varying between 14.0 and 14.2
E	13.9
F	13.9 x 12.5 or 11.8
G	13.7 regular
H	13.5 regular

It is believed that the total printing was approximately 6.3 million although no quantity was actually recorded. The stamp was on sale between 1919 and 1927 and it is estimated that 2.8 million were sold/postally used during that period, while a little over 3.5 million were officially destroyed in 1934. In a more recent source, Gruson & Jickling gave 13 million as

the production number, so frankly there remains some uncertainty over the quantity printed.

Design 4a: 1920 Provisional Issues - Telegraph Stamps

We have now already entered a whole new ball game but with the 1920 overprinted issue we see a further design using the national symbol. This is a surcharged telegraph stamp, and it is worth pausing to say something about these generally as they really merit a whole article by themselves.

There is not space here to do them full justice for a huge amount could be said about Guatemalan telegraph stamps, let alone ex-telegraph stamps. They are an entire - and highly complex - collecting area in their own right. Allow me to quote an expert, indeed, probably THE expert on these issues:

“The Guatemala telegraph stamps deserve more attention than they have had in recent years. All except the stamps of the 1930 issue are intertwined with the (standard) postal issues by overprinting. Also, in Guatemala the postal, telegraph and telephone services are all (or at least, were?) operated by the same government department - Direccion General de Correos y Telecomunicaciones.”

*James C. Andrews
Guatemalan Telegraph Stamps & Stationery.
ISGC, Detroit. 1993*

This area includes specialised postal stationery as well as stamps, but even more remarkable, it was only for a relatively short period of time that regulations required a fee for telegrams to be paid using stamps - about thirty years with issues from 1898 to 1930.

But let's focus on our national symbol design. There were three provisional postage issues for 1920 and it's the third one of November of that year that concerns us here. This used the 25c green telegraph tax stamp originally issued in 1919. There is a lot to be said about the original, but the 1920 outing was a surcharge, overprinted "CORREOS" in black ink. Tipografia Nacional were responsible for the surcharge printing, with 2 million being treated for sale. See figure 3 below for image.



Fig.3 - 1920 25c Provisional on telegraph tax issue

The original stamps were recess engraved by Waterlows on white wove paper without a watermark. As such, they display many of the perforation complications identified with that printer. There are at least three perforation variants for this issue - B, D and E - and it can be found with a double overprint and even a double inverted overprint. Fakes are rare, although a handful of these issues have been known with "CORREOS" hand stamped in violet ink and a different typeface.

The interesting aspect for me is in its relationship to the 12.5 cent rose. Yes, it's differently laid out ornamentally and there is a different colour and value, but it still retains all the hallmarks of a fiscal issue with all that elaborate background scroll work as well as the centrally placed national seal. It is a very handsome stamp.

The designs next outing however, was to offer a more complicated set of issues.

Design 4b: 1921 2nd Provisional Issues - Telegraph Stamps

This was yet another temporary set - something which by now you will have realised is a very Guatemalan feature - but this time to meet a need for more 12.5 cent and 25 cent stamps.

Once again the overprinting was undertaken by Tipografia Nacional using either red or black ink and using the 1919 25c green telegraph stamp. The Quetzal is still clearly discernible despite the overprinting. See figures 4 & 5 below for basic examples.



Figs.4 & 5 - 2nd 1921 Provisional issues
With red and black surcharge types
(for more detail see below)

They were issued very late in the year, in either late November or early December 1921. There are just the two values, but it would be a mistake to regard them as straightforward. They most certainly are not.

Firstly, it's usual to break them down into three - not two - separate issues as follows:-

- a) 12.5c on 25c overprinted with surcharge in scarlet and date
- b) 12.5c on 25c overprinted with surcharge in black and date
- c) 25c overprinted "1921 CORREOS" in black

With me so far? Gibbons gives these just two basic numbers (SG172 and 173) but Scott and the ISGC - correctly in my view - give them three separate numbers (ISGC 224-6/Scott 175-7). So, two surcharge values, but with three different inkings. The majority of the 12.5 cent surcharges were printed in scarlet, but the black surcharge is not uncommon. Additionally, the inking of these values irrespective of the colour can vary considerably from quite light to heavy so a good deal of inconsistency in the density of the ink can be realised.

But it now becomes murkier anyway. There are also notable variations in the lettering and positioning of the surcharge. I am uncertain whether it is three or four distinct types. Gruson & Jickling cite four types, but don't describe them, while Goodman gives only three but describes them in some detail, so I'll stick with Goodman.

I have reproduced (courtesy of Goodman) the images of Types I-III in figure 6 below as they are something to seek when collecting. To keep matters relatively straightforward Tables 1 & 2 below attempt to capture the main features of each type:-

Table. 1 - 1921 2nd Provisional Overprinting Types for 12.5 cent issues

Type I	<p>a) First "1" of "1921" is positioned above the right side of the first "R" of "CORREOS."</p> <p>b) The left side of the "D" of "DOCE" is normally to the right side of the first "R" of "CORREOS"</p>
Type II	<p>a) First "1" of "1921" tends to be centred above the first "R" of "CORREOS."</p> <p>b) The "D" of "DOCE" is also normally centred under the same "R."</p>
Type III	<p>a) The first "1" of "1921" is above the left side of the first "R" of "CORREOS."</p> <p>b) The left side of the "D" of "DOCE" is to the left of the left side of the same "R."</p>

Table. 2 - 1921 2nd Provisional Overprinting Types for 25 cent issues

Type I	The first "1" of "1921" is over the left side of the first "R" of "CORREOS."
Type II	The first "1" of "1921" is now positioned centrally over the "R."
Type III	The first "1" of "1921" is positioned over the right side of the "R."

Okay, these type differentiations might seem fairly small, and goodness knows it is more challenging when you have examples gripped in a pair of tweezers in front of you, but they are widely acknowledged and in my view add to the fun of collecting. In terms of frequency and given that both values were printed in sheets of 100, it is known that Type I occurred on 58% of sheets, Type II 25% and Type III at just 16% of the time. Gruson & Jickling refer to a Type IV, but that this only occurred in one position on the sheet, so extremely rare.

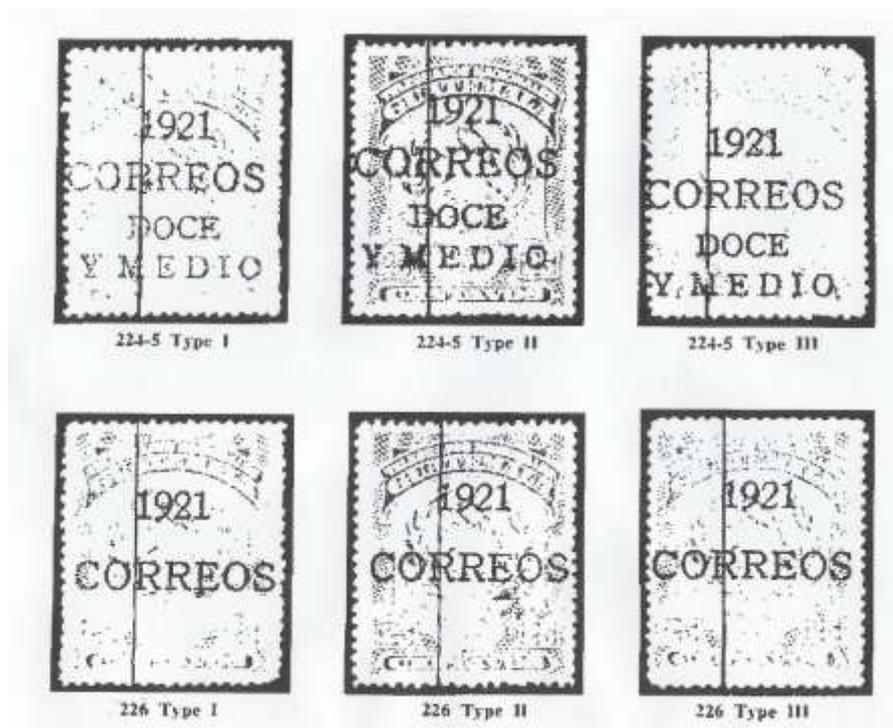


Fig.6 - The three Types across the 12.5c and 25c issues

There are more variations which I won't list here that can also be found across the different values and their different types. On the 12.5c they include a whole range of perforation

variations, some imperforate combinations, vertically and horizontally, and also some double surcharging with one diagonal. The 25c can be found with a number of shifts to the positioning of "1921 CORREOS." Some examples have been found with the "1921" missing or the entire overprint inverted. Partially imperforate examples also exist.

The total quantity printed for the 12.5c whether with red or black surcharge is 500,000, while the 25c had a slightly higher print-run of 600,000.

Design 5: 1929 - The Triangular Official Issues

These are amongst my favourite Guatemalan stamps. Indeed, they sit alongside my most prized issues and, I can assure you, only a handful sit on that line in my stockbooks.

And they are remarkably simple stamps too. As the name implies, they were intended for official use but they were also authorised for ordinary postage. They are supposed to be common as ordinary postage on cover, but I have to say that the examples I have all appear to be official use only. And before you ask, despite, or perhaps because of the shape, my examples are fixed any which way, including sideways and upside down! They clearly challenged users. Mine incidentally, is addressed to a Senorita Elizabeth Taylor.

They are quite small stamps, equilateral triangles with the sides measuring just 25.25mm. Printed in London by Thomas De La Rue on non-watermarked white paper with a quite thick gum, they were issued in seven values from February 1929 at the same time as twelve other non-official values. The latter are sometimes referred to as the "De La Rue Pictorials." All the issues, both official and non-official, have tablets with "UPU" and the date "1926" and additionally the name of the printer is found at the base of the design.

They are of course very distinctive, and indeed unique in appearance. It's impossible to mistake them. As examples, figures 7 and 8 below show the one cent pale greenish blue and the two cent brown.



Fig.7 - 1929 1 cent Official
Pale greenish blue



Fig.8 - 1929 2 cent Official
Brown

The values are given in both figures and words of "CENTAVOS DE QUETZAL," then a relatively new currency and set in separate tablets at the base. Apart from some edging ornamentation, the design is dominated by the national symbol and the words "OFICIAL" are tiny and very discretely positioned. You could easily miss them altogether.

The colours are somewhat hit and miss. The 1c as you can see in figure 1 is rather wishy-washy. The 10c orange brown is nowhere near as pleasant as the 2c brown. Indeed, as well as the 2c, the 5c carmine red and 25c dark blue stand out as the nicest in the set. I said that there were seven values issued and therefore to provide further details I have provided Table 3 below:

Table. 3 - 1929 Triangular Official Issues

Value	Colour	SG No.	ISGC No.
1c	Pale greenish blue	O6	350
2c	Brown	O7	351
3c	Green	O8	352
4c	Dull purple	O9	353
5c	Carmine red	O10	354
10c	Orange brown	O11	355
25c	Dark blue	O12	356

The issues are not uncommon, with a million of each value printed - that's 7 million in total. And notwithstanding the date of issue, examples were still being used postally well into the 1940's

Design 6: Mid-1960's Coat-of-Arms Airmail Issues

This might seem like a tack-on after all those fiscal and official issues as well as the previous national seal designs, but as far as I can discern, this 6th design was the final occasion the national symbol made a philatelic appearance. Yes, just one last series of issues for the Guatemalan coat of arms designs, although we have to shoot forward over 37 years through the 1930's, 40's and 50's before they went on sale.

This coat-of-arms set first issued on 15th December 1966 managed to be both simple and attractive at the same time. These are not particularly complex issues but they are certainly quirky. Despite the absence of the traditional ornamentation I am very fond of them, which perhaps helps to explain why I can rarely resist actually buying them!



Fig.9 - 1966 Coat-of-Arms Issues
5c bright orange & 5c myrtle green

Printed recess engraved in Guatemala by Grabados en Acero (the national Bureau of Engraving), the first issue comprised just two stamps, the 5c bright orange and 5c myrtle green. See figure 9 above. Note the printer's name is printed at the base of each stamp: "T.N. GRABADOS EN ACERO - CHY." The designation "AEREO" is also clearly printed within the design border between the value tablets. These ones are straightforward, printed on a white fluorescent paper and both perforated 13.3, but note the identical values.

Another three followed in April of the following year. The same printer and process was involved. All of them again were issued with the value of 5 cents, but with different colours and on a lower fluorescent stock. Why more of the same values and so soon after the first printing? Good question. See figure 10 below for images.

And this time, just to spice matters up, there were perforation variations. All three can be found with two different perforations. I have not seen any explanation of why these perforation variations occurred. Table 4 below provides the details.

Table. 4 - 1st Re-issue of New Coat-of-Arms (1967)

Value	Colour	Perfs
5c	Deep dull blue	11.4, 12.6
5c	Greenish slate	12.4, 11.4
5c	Deep reddish lilac	12.4, 11.4



Fig.10 - 1967 Coat-of-Arms Issues
(5c deep dull blue, 5c greenish slate, 5c deep reddish lilac)

So, we now have five issues, each a different colour but with the same value of five cents. So, naturally, more were issued. In December 1969 two more 5 cents were added to the set although at slightly separate dates; firstly a deep yellow green perforated 11.5 and then a little later a bluish violet, but this time perforated 12.4. Both were printed on fluorescent or low fluorescent paper. Also see figure 11 below.



Fig.11 - 1969 Coat-of-Arms Issues
(5c deep yellow green, 5c bluish violet)

The 1969 set is sometimes cited as being issued in 1970 and the confusion is understandable because three more followed in that year but not altogether. Firstly there was a 5c deep royal blue in February, a 5c deep magenta in July and then finally in October 1970 a green on pale greenish yellow paper. Needless to add, none of them have identical perforations. The sequence starting with the first issue is 12.4, then 11.4 and lastly 11.3. See figure 12 below for illustrations.



Fig.12 - 1970 Coat-of-Arms Issues
(5c deep royal blue, 5c deep magenta, 5c green on pale greenish yellow)

Now, I will be honest and admit that I find a number of these colours confusing. The last issue with green on pale greenish paper is unmistakable. So is the first one which is quite clearly orange. The greenish slate is effectively “grey” but can be picked out easily. But try the deep dull blue and the deep royal blue. Side by side they are different, but they can easily be mistaken by themselves. Ditto the myrtle green and deep yellow green; and then the two that always confuse me the bluish violet and deep magenta which are really quite different colours. Or, at least they ought to be.

The ISGC use the Stanley Gibbons colour key and these are the descriptions I have stuck to, but as a tool I have often found the swatch not overly helpful. Bluish violet and deep magenta on the swatch are quite distinct, but in reality on these issues I’m less sure. And I couldn’t even find deep royal blue on the key! I have checked, and as far as I can see, even Stampworld and Colnect confuse the colours with these different issues, and some are certainly transposed, so it’s not just me who is confused.

This is a simple design but a curious set. Ten stamps and ten different single colours, but all with the same value and with three re-issues after the original spread over a four year period. Why, I don’t know. And there were a million per stamp printed each time. That’s a total print-run of ten million. No wonder I keep finding - and buying - them.