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Postage Stamps and Postal History of the Canal Zone (Part 2)

(Part 1 in issue No.3)

1906–1909 issues

Postage stamps issued in 1906–1907 were printed by the Hamilton Bank Note Engraving and Printing Co, in New York; Those issued in 1909 were issued by the American Bank Note Company. This series of stamps features portraits of statesmen, educators and other prominent men involved in Panama's early history. There were ten designs in all. Some of the issues were printed with the portrait inverted. The 1909 overprints were printed at the Isthmian Canal Commission's Printing Office in Panama City. The overprinting in the first printing places the word CANAL near the left side of the stamp, reading upward. Successive printings were issued with CANAL at the right, reading downward. Some of the issues have missing or partially missing overprints, doubled overprints and inverted overprinting. A specialised catalogue is needed to determine which values have the various overprinting errors.



Vasco Núñez de Balboa



Fernandez de Cordoba



Arosemena



Jose de Obaldia

A second series of stamps was issued in 1909, honouring the same figures depicted above in the 1906 issues, with same colour themes for a given stamp, but with different border designs



1915 and 1917 pictorial issues

A set of four pictorial stamps were issued by the Canal Zone authorities on March 1, 1915 to commemorate the opening of the Panama Canal. These series of stamps were very different from any of the previous issues in both shape and design. The designs consists of a black picture (a vignette) in the centre framed by a coloured border design.



Map of Panama Canal



Balboa taking possession of the Pacific Ocean



Gatun Locks



Culebra Cut

A second series of three pictorial commemorative stamps were issued in January 1917. On November 27, 1916, Executive Secretary McIlvaine wrote to Panama's Secretary of Foreign Affairs Narciso Garay, informing him that the official name of the cut had been changed from 'Culebra Cut' to 'Gaillard Cut' but by then the 24c stamp commemorating this had already been printed with the former title. Most of the 1917 issues were never sold and were destroyed.



S.S. Panama in Culebra Cut



S.S. Panama in Culebra Cut



S.S. Cristobal in Gatun Locks

The Culebra Cut

The Culebra Cut, formerly called Gaillard Cut, is an artificial valley that cuts through the Continental Divide in Panama. The cut forms part of the Panama Canal, linking Gatun Lake, and thereby the Atlantic Ocean, to the Gulf of Panama and hence the Pacific Ocean. It is 7.8 miles (12.6 km) from the Pedro Miguel lock on the Pacific side to the Chagres River arm of Lake Gatun, with a water level 85 feet (26 m) above sea level.

Construction of the cut was one of the great engineering feats of its time; the immense effort required to complete it was justified by the great significance of the canal to shipping, and in particular the strategic interests of the United States of America.

Culebra is the name for the mountain ridge it cuts through and was also originally applied to the cut itself. From 1915 to 2000 the cut was named Gaillard Cut after US Major David du Bose Gaillard, who had led the excavation. After the canal handover to Panama in 2000, the name was changed back to Culebra. In Spanish the cut is known as the Corte Culebra and is also called the Snake Cut.



Source: Culebra Cut - <https://en.wikipedia.org>

1921 issues

In 1921, the Republic of Panama planned to issue a Centennial commemorative series in honour of the 100th anniversary of Panama's independence from Spain. The Canal Zone was invited to participate in a postal way and the Canal Zone's Executive Secretary was pleased to accept their invitation. By the middle of January 1924, all the stamps of the 1¢ and 2¢ denominations were nearly exhausted which prompted the next production of stamps, issued that year.



Vallarino



Bolivar's Tribute

1924 Coat of Arms issue

Panama had ordered the new permanent coat of arms set both for use in Panama and for the Canal Zone. When stocks of the 1¢ Vallarino stamp were nearly used up it became imperative to have a new supply of 1-cent stamps at once. The Canal Zone Postal Authority requisitioned 50,000 of the 1¢ stamp from Panama for overprinting at Mount Hope and Panama sent over the Vallarino 1¢ stamp. On January 28, 1924, these stamps were overprinted at Mount Hope. Panama was billed for the cost of this overprinting. Before Panama was sent its order for its coat of arms series from the American Bank Note Company, it sent a letter of inquiry to the Canal Zone Administration informing them of their pending order and requested estimates of Canal Zone's stamp requirements for the next year. The Canal Zone overprints were shipped from the United States in January and February 1924 and delivered to the Canal Zone. The Coat of Arms stamps were printed in denominations ranging from 1-cent to 50-cents, however, only the 1-cent and 2-cent issues were ever released for use as postage.



1c and 2c issued



Panama Coat of Arms, overprinted for Canal Zone postage, 1924 Issue printed but never released for postage