



Panama Canal Zone Map 1911

Source: File:Panama Canal relief and cross section map.jpg - <https://en.wikipedia.org>

First issues

The Republic of Panama was formally part of Colombia, and after it broke away from Colombia, with assistance from the United States, it established itself as a separate nation where it immediately became necessary to establish its own post offices and issue its own postage stamps. The Canal Zone Post Office was inaugurated on June 25, 1904. Beforehand the domestic rates of postage in the United States were made applicable to all possessions of the United States on June 20, 1904, which henceforth included the Canal Zone.

The first Panama stamps consisted of existing Colombian stamps, which were overprinted with Panama. These in turn were used for Canal Zone postage and were again, overprinted with CANAL ZONE with a red bar at top blocking out the name Colombia. Many varieties of the overprinting of PANAMA and CANAL ZONE exist, including doubled overprinting, complete inverts and stamps with the letter A inverted or completely missing. The coloring of the overprinting varies from violet to bluish-violet, with the overprinting measuring 18 mm. The first comprehensive study of these issues was conducted by George L. Toppan, and his classification of the various varieties that occur in these issues is the most feasible one yet presented.



Source: Postage stamps and postal history of the Canal Zone - <https://en.wikipedia.org>

The first stamps issued for Canal Zone postage consisted of three values, 2c, 5c and 10c, which were first issued on June 24, 1904, but were only used for twenty-four days, until July 17, 1904, and were removed from sale after that date. They were overprinted with a rubber handstamp. Dr. J. C. Perry, a surgeon in the U. S. Marine Hospital, and a philatelic student was stationed at Ancon at this time, whose investigations provided much information concerning this and some of the later series. In regard to the first stamp issues he said:

The first issue of stamps was authorized by executive order of the Governor of the Canal Zone, which provided that a limited number of stamps of the Panama Republic should be secured and surcharged "Canal Zone" in order to meet the demands of the postal service until the United States stamps properly surcharged could be obtained from Washington.

These first issues were carefully guarded and purchases were limited to the amount of one dollar in silver or fifty cents in U.S. currency. The executive order also cautioned anyone about buying or keeping large quantities of these stamps, as they would not be available for postage after the above date. However, this cautionary measure was unnecessary. This first series of Canal Zone overprint issues is the one with the most plentiful fakes.

1904 issues, second series

These stamps consisted of existing U.S. regular issues of 1902–1903 and were overprinted in 1904 with CANAL ZONE and PANAMA in vertical fashion, for use as Canal Zone postage: Issued in denominations of 1c, 2c, 5c 8c and 10c. Benjamin Franklin became the first historical figure to appear on Canal Zone Postage. The overprinting was conducted in Washington D.C. These were the first U.S. stamps overprinted for use in the Canal Zone, and consisted of a huge quantity on 10-million stamps. As the stamps featured American historical figures, such as Benjamin Franklin, George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, they were generally not well received by the largely Panamanian population in and around the Canal Zone. These issues were briefly used for less than five months and were taken off sale as a result of the "Taft Agreement". This agreement was brought about as a result of an investigation into the protests made by Panama officials and business. These issues were in use from July 18 to December 11, 1904. Only a small percentage were actually sold, with the greater bulk of them destroyed on January 2–3, 1906, supervised by the Director of Posts, Tom M. Cooke



Two years after they were issued they were withdrawn from sale with the remainders of all values destroyed on January 2 and 3, 1906. Their withdrawal was arranged through an agreement between the Secretary of War, William Taft, and the Government of the Republic of Panama. The arrangement between the two governments resulted in many varieties for two reasons: One was due to the fact that the Canal Zone surcharge was printed on small quantities of stamps, with copper faced type which was

reset at least five times for some of the values. The other was because many of the stamps used were those which had already been surcharged by the Panama authorities, and which were again surcharged with the Canal Zone overprinting. The last of these overprints were issued in 1939.

1904 issues, third series

In 1904, the Taft agreement required that Canal Zone stamps be produced by overprinting Panama stamps, and that 40% of their face value was to be paid to Panama. Somewhat similar to the map design of the first issues of 1904, the Third Series of Canal Zone stamps went on sale December 12, 1904. This issue was first overprinted by Mr. C. Bertoncini who was the Chief of the Canal Zone Division of Map Making, and then transferred to the Printing Bureau of the Engineering Department, also known as the 'Commission Printing Office', in August 1905. The Third Series is very interesting because of the myriad combinations in the overprints. The Canal Zone Director of Posts, sent a memorandum to all postmasters instructing them to sell these stamps for their face value in gold, or in Colombian silver at the rate of two for one. All the stamps in this series were overprinted in black from the same style of Canal Zone plates, in several different stages, with slight changes in the lettering for each stage. The overprinting plate was set up to overprint a full sheet of 100 stamps in one pass. new plates were brought in after several printings as needed, with each plate resulting in variations or errors in the overprinting.



In December 1904 the Canal Zone postal authorities requested from Panama a supply of 8¢ stamps for to be employed as registration fee stamps. Panama at the time did not have an 8¢ denomination in its current series of postage, making it necessary to prepare an 8¢ surcharge stamp to existing stocks of postage stamps. To this end Panama used their regular 50¢ stamp from their current series of issues. The 8¢ surcharge was made in Panama on Colombian stamps already overprinted with a red colored bar and the word PANAMA and occurs in varying thickness and forms. There are three varieties of the '8' in the surcharge.



Source: *Postage stamps and postal history of the Canal Zone* - <https://en.wikipedia.org>

(Canal Zone Postage Stamps and Postal History to be continued in next issue).