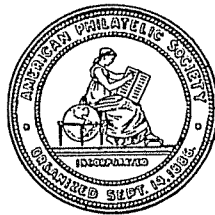


THE POSTAL HISTORY OF PUERTO RICO

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able in the hair and in the features of the face. The general effect was the production of a much more detailed, though somewhat coarser impression than even from new clichés. (Note righthand stamps in Fig. 18 and 22).

To clearly illustrate the different points of variation in cliché appearance of this stamp under varying conditions as just outlined, we are so fortunate as to be able to show the "life history" of one of the $\frac{1}{2}$ real stamps bearing a plate variety (plate position 12 i) in all three issues; as shown in Fig. 35-a.

We may add that the question as to whether one of the $\frac{1}{2}$ real stamps is a counterfeit or a genuine stamp, is much aggravated by the weird appearance of heavily inked impressions from generally dirty plates. Excess inking was sometimes carried out to such an extent that the outer side of marginal stamps frequently shows a complete loss of detail in ornamental designs or lettering, as may be seen from the stamps shown in Fig. 35-b, which are genuine.

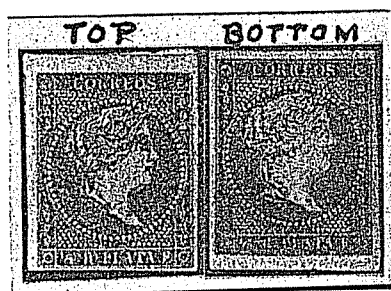


Fig. 35-b.

We have never seen a counterfeit on cover, or with a town handstamp, from Puerto Rico. An interesting possibility that counterfeits were used in Puerto Rico, or perhaps one of the unusual prints of the genuine stamps may have been taken for bogus, is to be found in an advertised item in MANN'S STAMP MAGAZINE for March 1917⁽⁴⁾ which we quote:

" $\frac{1}{2}$ rp dull blue-green forgery used to defraud the post, Nov. 29, 1860, on entire original letter sheet. Although designated as a forgery, this stamp is used on a Commercial Review Circular and may have been issued by the Puerto Rican post office, and may be a rare provisional local printing, and is probably unique in this condition."

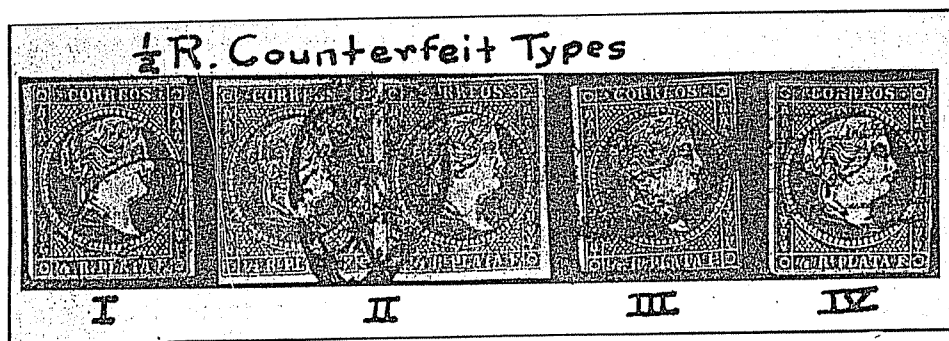


Fig. 35-c.

We illustrate and describe below in Fig. 35-c, four of the five types of counterfeits of the $\frac{1}{2}$ real value, with which we are familiar. The fifth, and most important as well as the most puzzling type, will be shown and discussed last.

COUNTERFEITS OF THE $\frac{1}{2}$ REAL VALUE

TYPE 1. In the genuine stamp, the circle enclosing the bust contains 73 pearls, uniform in size and spacing. In the "type 1" counterfeit, the number of pearls is correct, but the spacing is irregular, and the two pearls opposite the eye are joined.

(4) Courtesy of Frank Pollard Brown, of Plymouth, Mich.

In the genuine stamp, the "C" of "CORREOS" is the same height as the adjoining "O"; in the counterfeit the "C" is slightly higher.

In the genuine stamp, the "E" of "CORREOS" is slightly higher than the preceding "R"; in the counterfeit the "E" is slightly lower than the "R" or "O" of "CORREOS".

In the genuine stamp the laurel leaf wreath has three well defined and sharply pointed leaves, slightly separated from the pearls in front. In the counterfeit, the wreath terminates in two leaves with ill defined rounded points; one of the points touches the pearl in front, (stamp number 9A, 1856-II, 3rd setting, has a plate flaw similar, with leaf touching pearl).

The end of the ribbon on the neck has four thin lines of shading projecting from it in the genuine stamp; in the counterfeit the end of the ribbon has two thick prongs projecting from it.

In the counterfeit, the fourth bell ornament from the bottom, in the lower left hand panel, is broken by a line of color; in the upper right hand panel, the left leg of the first bell ornament from the top is joined to the white dot underneath it.

In the counterfeit, the space between the white circle enclosing the bust, and the outer frame line on the right hand side, is only half of that on the genuine stamp.

In the counterfeit, the fraction bar in " $\frac{1}{2}$ " has its lower end nearly cut off by a colored marking.

The counterfeit is typographed; size of design, same as the genuine stamp; date of use, one copy with dated handstamp, of an unknown Cuban town, July 19th, 1862; colors, light blue, dull blue, dark blue; papers, commonly seen on very thin white, rare on very thick white paper.

TYPE 2. In the counterfeit, the lettering in the upper label is slightly taller than in the genuine, and the second "O" of "CORREOS" leans to the right.

In the counterfeit, the numeral "1" and "2" of " $\frac{1}{2}$ " are larger than in the genuine stamp; the lettering in "RI. PLATA F" is unevenly formed; the left leg of the second "A" in "PLATA" is curved.

In the genuine stamp, the eyebrow is made of one continuous line of color; in the counterfeit, the eyebrow is made up of two dashes and one dot.

In the genuine stamp, the pupil of the eye is so placed that the Queen seems to be looking calmly straight ahead; in the counterfeit the eye pupil is placed in the corner of the eye, giving one the impression that the Queen is cross eyed, and looking upwards.

In the original, the end of the ribbon on the center of the neck is followed by four lines of shading; in the counterfeit, the ribbons end is followed by one solid shaped point.

Counterfeit is typographed; size of design, width same as genuine stamp, height slightly less than that of genuine stamp; date of use unknown; colors, bright blue, deep blue; paper, medium white.

TYPE 3. In the genuine, the top bell shaped ornament in the lower left hand panel is cut off nearly in half; in this counterfeit the same ornament forms a nearly complete "bell".

In the genuine stamp the ribbon on the center of the neck is followed by four lines of shading; in this counterfeit, by a single thick pointed colored line.

In the genuine stamp, the eye appears to be looking straight ahead; in the counterfeit, apparently peeping downwards over the nose.

In the genuine stamp, the lower right hand quadrant has the pearls neatly placed in vertical rows; in this counterfeit the pearls occupying this position are mostly arranged on a curve whose radius roughly follows that of the circle enclosing the bust.

This counterfeit is lithographed; size of design, same as the genuine stamp; date of use unknown; colors, deep blue, light blue; paper, heavy white.

TYPE 4. A normal clear print of the genuine stamp shows the eye, the eyebrow, and the shading at the side of the nose, all to be carefully drawn and detailed. However, a common and very characteristic print of the genuine stamp, from a dirty and overinked plate, gives an impression showing a perfect pugilistic black eye.

The "black eyed" type of impression was used as a model for our fourth type of counterfeit, as shown in Fig. 35-d.

In the genuine stamp, the points of the three laurel leaves are well defined, and nearly touch the pearls; in the counterfeit only one laurel leaf is well defined, and is too far from the pearls.

In the counterfeit the lower frame line is too thin, and shows an upward bend under the "P" of "PLATA".

Something about the facial expression of this counterfeit gives one the impression that a negress is portrayed.

Lettering in both labels, though slightly irregular in form, is dangerously like that of the genuine stamp.

This counterfeit is lithographed; size of design, width same as the genuine stamp, height slightly less than that of the genuine stamp; dates of use, seen on two covers (1) Pinar de Rio, CUBA, September 8th, 1862 and (2) Habana, CUBA, 186?, July 18th. Colors, milky blue, bright blue, deep blue, dull blue. Papers, medium white.

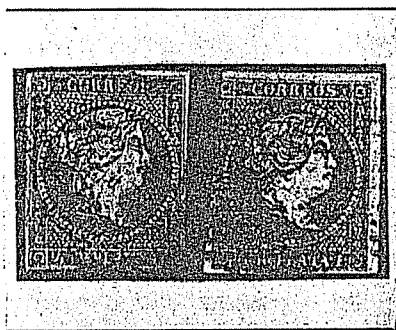


Fig. 35-d. An over inked print of the genuine stamp compared to Type 4 counterfeit.

The four types of counterfeits that we have described so far, have all been seen with postal cancellations. Each of the types bears a dangerous likeness to the genuine stamp in some of its many varying aspects, and we can well conceive how any or all of these counterfeits were excellent enough to have fooled postal authorities in the past just as they today fool the average dealer or collector. We note from the case of lightly cancelled copies, these stamps would be more easy of detection in unused condition (in which condition we have never seen any of types 1 to 4). In the case of heavily cancelled copies, detection becomes difficult, and probably often impossible. Neither the color of the ink used, nor the papers, are of any value to us in distinguishing counterfeits from legitimate stamps, as both materials present the same variations in both types of stamps.

TYPE 5. We now come to our fifth type of counterfeit of the $\frac{1}{2}$ real stamp of the second issue of 1856. This is a stamp so radically different from the genuine stamp in its design (but not in ink or paper used) as to make it very difficult for us to understand how the most myopic of postal clerks, in the most humble of rural post offices, could ever have been fooled as to its being the legitimate government product. In an attempt to find some plausible reasons as to how such a stamp comes to be found postally used (though it is the rarest of the counterfeits in used condition, it is also the only one we have seen in unused condition), certain of the "old Spanish customs" in effect in the West Indian postal service, in Puerto Rico and in Cuba, in the period under consideration, are we hope, of interest and value.

The system of stamp distribution employed by the Spanish postal service was both a great inconvenience to the public, and a great inducement to the counterfeiter. It will be recalled that the Royal Decree of February 15, 1856 provided that:

"the sale of stamps will be extended * * * to all places where tobacco and salt are sold (offices of government monopolies)".

As a matter of fact, stamps were not on sale at post offices in Puerto Rico, but had to be obtained from various authorized vendors, who held stocks of stamps on consignment from the Spanish Custom Houses, and who received a small commission from their sale to the public. This system offered great possibilities for the disposal of counterfeit stamps to an unsuspecting public; and would thus allow a dishonest stamp vender to make a far larger profit, than would have been the case had he confined his sales to genuine stamps procured from the government. The governments only check on stamp so sold, would be the examination and weighing of the letter to see if the proper postage had been affixed, upon receipt of the letter in the post office. Any counterfeit differing flagrantly from the genuine stamp, should have been detected at this point.

Another peculiarity of the Spanish postal service, which we believe to be unique among the postal administrations of the world, offered a great inducement to counterfeiters. Spain put on sale, for many successive years, a new issue of stamps on a given date. Subsequent to the first day of sale, the public was given the privilege for a short time of exchanging the old issue of stamps for an equal face value of the new stamps. After this period of grace was up, the old issue was neither valid for postage, nor was it received in exchange. Of course, the thought behind this system was an attempt to make counterfeiting difficult, by the frequent changes of design. Actually it does not appear to have deterred counterfeiters, but on the contrary afforded an added means of defrauding the government.

While there appear to have been wholesale quantities of counterfeits used on mail in Spain to defraud the post office, the number seems to have been much smaller in Cuba. Perhaps the richest harvest of the forger came with the expiration of an issue, when counterfeits were turned in at some government office, and perfectly genuine stamps of the new issue were received in exchange. When stamps of the expiring issue were turned in at the post office, the stamps were pasted onto pieces of paper forming sheets of 100 stamps. When the government disposed of these remainders in Spain, (of Spanish stamps) many large blocks of counterfeits were found pasted on the sheets along with the genuine stamps. There is no doubt but that such large scale operations could not have been carried on without the collusion, in many cases, of the clerk receiving the stamps.

We were recently fortunate enough to obtain, from one of the well known North American dealers, (Marks Stamp Company of Toronto) an approval selection of some 4,000 copies of the $\frac{1}{2}$ real stamp of the 1856-II (unwatermarked) issue. All of these stamps were in large blocks, quarter sheets or half sheets. All had on the top sheet margin, the customary *paraphs* (an addition to a signature made by a flourish of the pen) with which Spanish treasury or post office officials were in the habit of indicating that they had given their approval or acceptance. Most of the sheets contained three or four different *paraphs*. The marked difference in color in this stock indicated that it comprised numerous printings.

Although this large consignment had all of the external appearances of similar lots of post office remainders that we have seen, an inspection of the design indicated that they were of a type not corresponding with the genuine stamp, nor with any of the well known counterfeits. We illustrate (Fig. 36) this type, together with a one real stamp, of the same type, classing them provisionally as forgeries.

This stamp was printed in sheets of the same size as the genuine stamp; ten horizontal rows of seventeen stamps, making the correct total of 170 stamps. But even at the first glance at the sheet (disregarding any difference in stamp design) a radical difference in sheet layout is to be noted. While the alignment of the genuine stamp is irregular, the sheet is not divided into panes. In the case of this counterfeit, the alignment is much better than in the case of the genuine, but the great difference lies in the fact that the sheet is divided by lines nearly twice the width of the ordinary stamp-to-stamp spacing, into six panes (2 of 36, 1 of 30, 2 of 24, and 1 of 20 stamps).

This counterfeit is lithographed; the original lay out consisted of three rows of six, each stamp with its own individual plate variety, giving us 18 minor varieties. The entire plate lay-out is made up of reproductions in whole, or in part, of these three rows of six.

The design of the stamp is radically different from the genuine. Instead of the bell shaped ornaments being formed by thin white lines, we find these same ornaments in the counterfeits to be heavy white masses. The lettering in the counterfeit is much heavier; there are 79 pearls in the circle as against 73 in the genuine, and in all other counterfeits seen. The size of the pearls varies greatly, instead of being uniform as in the circle on the genuine. The pearls in the upper and lower right hand quadrants, in the counterfeit touch the inner vertical frame line; in the genuine and in all other counterfeits seen, the pearls on the right side stop short of the frame line by nearly half a millimeter. In the counterfeit, the points of the laurel leaves, are half a millimeter from the nearest pearl, while the circle containing the bust is placed in the center of the stamp (and not off center to the right) while the white line of the circle is not uniform in thickness, and shows several die defects in its thinnest part.

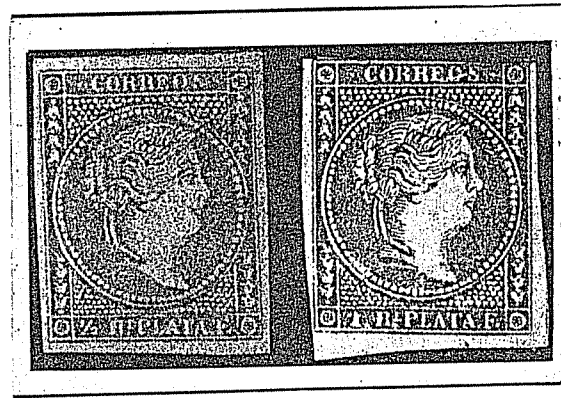


Fig. 36. Type 5 counterfeits of the $\frac{1}{2}$ and 1 real design, made to defraud the Spanish Government.

The size of this counterfeit is the same as the genuine. One of the astonishing things about it is that it comes in a number of widely differing colors, corresponding with colors in which the original stamp is also met with, namely: deep blue, dull blue, pale blue, and of all things, the rare gray color.

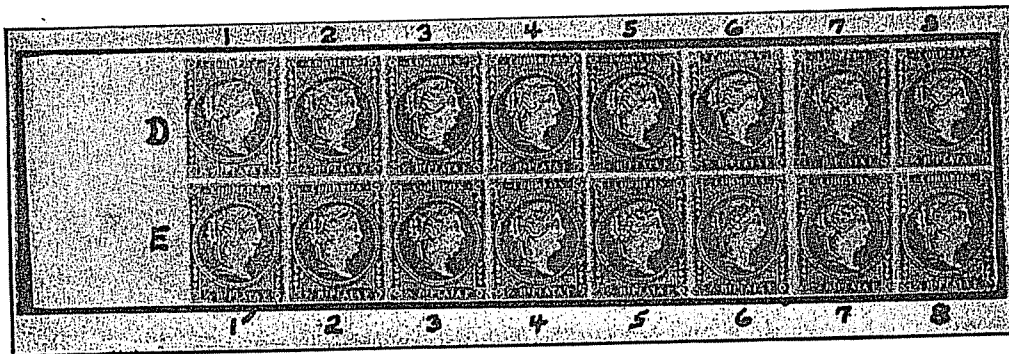


Fig. 37. A block showing widely varying facial expressions. Note chins or mouths on stamps number 4D, 6D, 1E, and 6E.

A still more striking difference between genuine and counterfeit than any we have so far considered is to be found in a number of stamps in the sheet that really constitute major varieties. We believe that the curious aspects of these stamps in question may have been considered as different types of counterfeits rather than variations of the same type, and may account in part for the large number of forgeries of this stamp

supposed to exist. Four of these stamps, with facial contours widely different from either the genuine stamp or this particular counterfeit, are shown in the block pictured in Fig. 37. Compare the mouths or chins on stamps numbered 4D, 6D, 1E, and 6E with the surrounding stamps. These freaks are constant varieties in various printings. How could any postal official be fooled by such atrocities? There must be some joker about this stamp, and Queen Isabella on stamp 1E is laughing at it.

The questions aroused by the points so far considered in connection with this stamp, are further complicated by the fact that while this stamp bears but slight resemblance to the genuine, it does have a number of points in common with an essay of an unissued design for the stamp. Points in common between this counterfeit, and the essay in question, are resemblances in the lettering, in the shortness of the laurel deaves, and in the inclusion of both large and small pearls in the circle enclosing the bust. This essay is shown in Fig. 38.



Fig. 38. The essays, from which the local prints, or counterfeits may have been copied. We have this essay of the $\frac{1}{2}$, 1, and 2 reales, all in the same shade of green. (Sanborn Collection.)

There is a possibility that these mystery stamps might be a government issue, produced locally in Cuba (or in Puerto Rico) during a shortage of stamp stocks. This startling hypothesis is offered, based of course upon theory, not upon fact. We do not wish to be misunderstood in having any reader jump to the conclusion that we ourselves are, as yet, ready to believe that these are printings from locally made designs; selves are, as yet, ready to believe that these are printing from locally made designs; we only state that they might be, because that is a reasonable assumption, if one considers what poor imitations they are of the genuine stamps then in general circulation.

Our reasons for forming this possibly fantastic hypothesis will require considerable explanation. We know that Spanish official stamps, showing use in either Cuba or Puerto Rico, are difficult to locate in spite of the fact that their use was required, in accordance with Royal Decree, for many years. When we come to our notes on the franking of official mail in Puerto Rico at this period, it will be seen that this type of mail was usually (a) franked with ordinary postage stamps or (b) sent stampless. This scarcity of Spanish official stamps used in the Spanish West Indies, may have been due in part to the fact that Spain was negligent in sending out supplies. We have previously mentioned the shortage of certain of the early one and two real postage stamps in Puerto Rico. The 1855 Spanish Colonial issue was supposed to have gone into general use in the Philippine Islands in the same year as in the West Indies, but actually was not put into use until for a short period in 1856, their use being both preceded, and followed by various locally produced Manila issues until 1864! We find an analogous case with the Spanish Official stamps that, according to Royal Decree, should have been in use in Cuba, where the supply was so short of their actual needs, that the Cuban government was forced to have the complete set of official stamps of the 1855 issue ($\frac{1}{2}$ oz. to 1 lb, Scott's Spain O2) lithographed locally in Havana. These stamps were formerly thought to be counterfeits⁽⁵⁾, but it is now known that they were official local reproductions.⁽⁶⁾

If one form of stamp had to be produced in Cuba to make up shortages of stock, would it not be logical to assume that Havana (or Puerto Rico) might have been in the same difficulty in respect to its supply of the commonly used $\frac{1}{2}$ real value (which paid postage on the average weight letter), and that they might have been forced to have taken steps to produce this stamp locally, resulting in what we call the type 5 counterfeit? We still class these stamps as counterfeits, making mention of the possibility of a local printing in the hope that further light can be thrown later on this interesting, but complex and perplexing problem.

COUNTERFEITS OF THE ONE REAL

Hanciau lists (7), but does not describe, six types of counterfeits of the one real, of which we have seen two types.

TYPE 1. This type was made from the same master die as our type 5 counterfeit (see Fig. 36) of the 1856-II, $\frac{1}{2}$ real value. In the 1 real counterfeit the lettering in the value label is rough, especially the "1", "R", and "P"; the "1" slants to the right, all of these defects being in the value of "1 RI PLATA F." The description of the balance of this design tallies with that given elsewhere of the type 5, $\frac{1}{2}$ real counterfeit, which is illustrated, with the 1 real value in Fig. 36.



Fig. 39. The type 2 counterfeit of the 1 real value.

TYPE 2. The lettering in "CORREOS" is very thick, while in the lower (value) label the "1" of "1 RI PLATA" is too thin, and the "R" much too open at the bottom. The circle enclosing the head is placed in the center of the stamp. Color, yellow green. Paper, thin white. Typographed (?). (See Fig. 39).

COUNTERFEITS OF THE 2 REALES

Hanciau lists, but does not describe (7), two types of counterfeits of the two reales. We have seen but one type.

In this counterfeit the lettering in "CORREOS" is far too thick, and the same defect is repeated in the lower label; the pearls in the four quadrants are irregularly spaced as well as being badly formed. It is very probable that other values may exist of this same type (the $\frac{1}{2}$ real or the 1 real), for we note that the entire lower panel, that is to say, the two corner squares with ornaments and lettering, has been added to the rest of the design. In other words, the original dies denomination was removed, and a new lower panel with the new inscription added in a very careless manner. Color, a brown color in which the genuine does not come; paper, thin yellowish white, lithographed.

(5) Histoire de Timbres-Poste D'Espagne, J. B. Moens, Brussels, 1891.
 (6) Catalogo Especial de *** Espana, Galvez, Madrid, 1934.
 (7) Gibbons Monthly Journal, May, 1912.