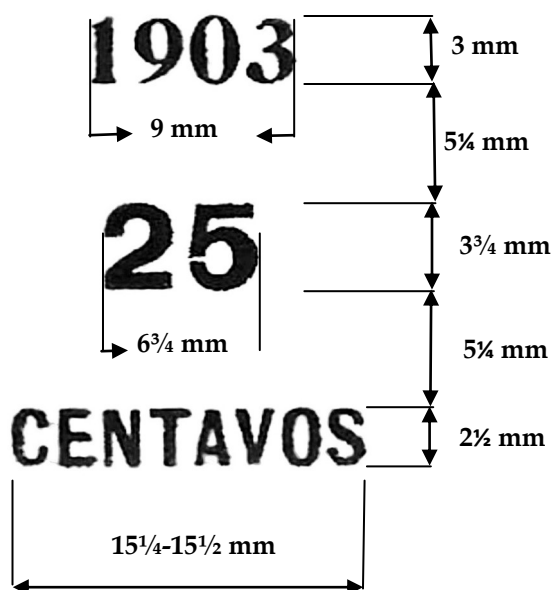


GUATEMALA FORGERIES AND FAKES SCOTT 124–130

By David Reitsema ISGC No. 803

The 1903 provisional issue consisted of seven surcharged stamps. Dimensions of the genuine surcharge are shown in the illustration here. Four of these surcharges significantly increased the low face value of the basic stamp and as such were attractive to forgers; the majority of the forgeries were on these stamps. Technically, forgeries are created to defraud the post office, fakes are intended to resemble genuine stamps but created to defraud collectors, and bogus items are unlike any issued stamp. In this article, as in the *Guatemala 1* and *2* handbooks, I refer to these generically as forgeries.



The diagram at the left shows the measurements of the genuine surcharge. This is the only sure way to verify a stamp.

There were two recognized genuine inverted surcharge errors, the 25c on 1c and the 25c on 6c light emerald green. Both of these have high catalogue values. Any other inverted or double surcharge is a forgery. These bogus varieties are often listed as 'uncatalogued' or 'rare' or some other description, but they are not genuine and were not printed or sold by the government.

There are four constant type flaws which are one way to identify genuine surcharges. These are illustrated below. The forgeries do not have any of these flaws, so identifying these simplifies identification of a genuine surcharge. Not all genuine surcharges have one of these four flaws but those which do are genuine.



Upper left curve of 'S'
nibbed away



Thin top bar of 'E'



Nick on top edge of 'E'



Part of '0' of '1903'
sliced off at lower left

Constant Surcharge Plate Flaws

Continued on following page



Template



The measurements illustrated above are the best way to verify a genuine surcharge [1]. At the left is a 'template' used to quickly determine the overall height and width of a surcharge. The template is created with a sharp knife. If the numbers and letters of the stamp being examined do not line up with those on the template it is a forgery. Anyone with a large number of these stamps to check will appreciate this tool.

Guatemala 2 states that there are at least 11 forgery types, and these exist inverted, double, shifted vertically and other varieties in addition to the normal position [2]. The 25c on 150c surcharge was printed in red, but all other red surcharges are forgeries.

Shown below are examples of various forgeries. These may exist with genuine postal cancels, as some were successfully sent through the mail, so the presence of a cancel itself is not adequate to indicate a genuine stamp.



Cancelled Forgery



Forgeries with shifted surcharge



Forged Surcharge



Forgery, Double Surcharge
One Inverted

[1] The illustration with the measurements is the author's. I use a thin clear plastic ruler with units graduated to $\frac{1}{4}$ mm and a 5x or 10x magnifying glass.

[2] *Guatemala 2*, p. 350

References:

Jickling, David L., "Detecting Fakes Among The Classic Issues", *El Quetzal*, Vol. 44, No. 280, pp. 90-4, International Society of Guatemala Collectors (1994).

Goodman, Roland A. ed., *Guatemala 2*, p. 350, Robson Lowe, Ltd., London (1974).

Ramirez, Gabriel P., "The Provisional Issue of 1903", *El Quetzal*, Vol 54, No., 320, pp. 59-61, International Society of Guatemala Collectors (2004).

The International Society of Guatemala Collectors was formed in 1948 and is Affiliate No. 38 of the American Philatelic Society. The Society is committed to assisting everyone interested in collecting Guatemala. Its award winning journal El Quetzal is published quarterly. Membership levels include a US\$10 online membership which includes access to most society publications including its two award winning handbooks, and the electronic version of the journal. If you collect Guatemala you will find much more information available on the society website:

<https://guatemalastamps.clubexpress.com/content.aspx?sl=197696320>