

1874. 'Contrasello' Issue



Figure 3-1. 1874 issue with Type I handstamp.

Figure 3-2. 1874 issue with Type II handstamp.

Figure 3-3. 1874 issue with Type III handstamp.

Emission details :

1867 issue handstamped in black with the national coat of arms and the legend 'Contrasello / 1874'.

Type I Handstamp:

- 5 ½ r blue or dark blue
- 6 1 r bright vermilion
- 7 2 r green
- 8 4 r deep bistre or bistre

Type II Handstamp:

- 9 ½ r blue or dark blue
- 10 1 r bright vermilion
- 11 2 r green
- 12 4 r deep bistre or bistre

Type III Handstamp:

- 13 ½ r blue or dark blue
- 14 1 r bright vermilion
- 15 2 r green
- 16 4 r deep bistre or bistre

Seven years after the first volcano issue, the Government of El Salvador decided to discontinue its use, and handstamp its stock with a black control mark that had the national coat of arms in the center, surrounded by the legend 'CONTRASELLO - 1874' and a circle.* The reasons for the use of this handstamp remain unknown. Nevertheless, over the years two explanations have been developed:

- The issue was counterstamped because a significant quantity of stamps was stolen from the San Salvador post office. Suggested by Moens in the October 1874 issue of 'Le Timbre-Poste', this theory was soon copied by other philatelic magazines of the period and it is the most known explanation now.
- The handstamp was a measure taken by the government to prevent the circulation of counterfeit stamps, which could have been the second counterfeit type of the 1867 issue (see chapter 1). This hypothesis was also reported, but at the same time discredited, by Moens, having being later supported by an article written by Samuel Dawson, who was in El Salvador at the time.

The lack of official records from the time prevents us from knowing for sure which theory is correct. In any case, the reason for using this handstamp had to be significant enough to set aside most of the second printing of the 1867 issues (which must had arrived to El Salvador during the summer of 1873) and overprint it for further use.

* 3-1, 3-2, & 3-3 are not photographs of the actual stamps; instead they are illustrations prepared to show how the handstamps would had look like if they had been clearly applied. Collectors should be aware that such clear examples would probably not be found on any genuine copy of the issue.

Three handstamps were used during the process :



Figure 3-4. Type I Handstamp



Figure 3-5. Type II Handstamp



Figure 3-6. Type III Handstamp

The three types illustrated above are the only ones found so far in genuine covers of this issue. From the study of these covers, it can be inferred that Type II was the first one used, followed for a short period by Type I (possibly concurrently with Type II), and then both superseded by Type III, which is the most commonly found. Regarding rarity, it has been calculated the following ratio for the 3 types: 100 Type III : 35 Type II : 1 Type I. As far as is known, all the stamps were overprinted in San Salvador.

It is also important to note that the Type III handstamps were carelessly applied and are often hardly more than a blob of ink, rendering many of them practically uncollectable. Type I and II handstamps are generally more neatly applied but the same strictures apply to them as well. Being handstamped, there was no consistency on how the overprint was applied, so there is no particular significance on having it sideways, inverted, etc. However, there are many other varieties in all types, such as double (Variety a on all values & types), or partially overprinted (Variety b on all values & types).

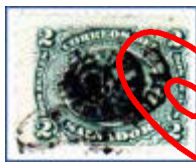


Figure 3-7. Double handstamp.



Figure 3-8. Pair, one with handstamp, the other without. As very few of these varieties are known, a reliable listing by overprint type is not possible.

Handstamp Proofs.



Figure 3-9. 1874 Issue Essays

No essays or specimen items are known of this issue. However, collectors consider some of the handstamps of Type II as trials or proofs for the counterstamp. This assumption is based on their clear strikes, a characteristic not present on the almost all of the examples, but as there is no definite evidence to support this, they are not going to be numbered as proofs.

Recorded Cancellations.

The cancellations used in El Salvador during this issue are the same as the ones employed for the 1867 issue.

Recorded Usage.

Rates for the 1874 issue were the same as the ones for the 1867 issue. What is significant during this period is that on May 21, 1874, the government passed a decree making it mandatory for the sender to pay for the postage. Until that day, for internal mail, either the sender or the receiver could pay for the postage, depending on the sender's wish, something that was causing considerable trouble for the postal service. Also important to mention is that on November 7, 1875, four courier mails per week were established between San Salvador and Guatemala via Chingo, and that on January 30, 1877, the first contract for mail between San Salvador and the port of La Libertad was awarded to Manuel Merazo.

So far, we have been able to record 36 covers belonging to the 1874 issue. Covers illustrated have their numbers in blue.

1874-0. 1877 La Libertad to Bordeaux, France. *Administración General de Correos* official mail with July 12 cds. Via Panama, July 17 and London, August 14. Received Bordeaux, August 15. and taxed '17' (decimes). 2 Reales Single Outbound Rate with $\frac{1}{2}$ Real Penalty for Late Posting. This is the only known combination of $\frac{1}{2}$ r first issue and 2r "Contrasello".



Figure 3-10. 1874-0

1874-1. 1877 San Salvador to New York. Letter addressed to Seebeck with $\frac{1}{2}$ r and 2r tied by 'FRANCO' blue cancels. *Administración General de Correos* datestamp (Sept. 1). Charged 40c. on arrival.



Figure 3-11. 1874-1

1874-2. 1878 San Vicente to Paris. $\frac{1}{2}$ r x 4 for outbound rate tied by blue framed 'FRANCO' alongside Dec. 20 datestamp. Via Panama, Jan. 4, and charged 16 decimes on arrival.



Figure 3-12. 1874-2



Figure 3-13. 1874-3

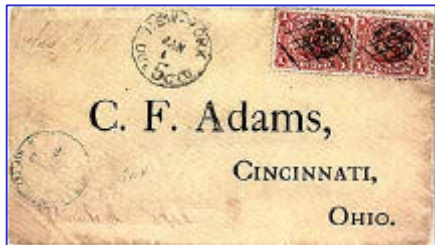


Figure 3-14. 1874-4



Figure 3-15. 1874-5

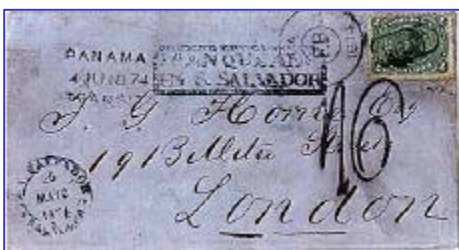


Figure 3-16. 1874-6



Figure 3-17. 1874-7

1874-3. 1875 Zacatecoluca to Bordeaux. 1r pair untied by pen cancels alongside Nov. 23 datestamp. Via Panama, Dec. 4, GB 1F90c accountancy marking, and charged 15 decimes on arrival.

1874-4. 1876 San Miguel to Ohio. Pair of 1r tied by pen cancellation. San Miguel cds with datestamp (Dec. 8th). 5 c. Due marking applied in New York.

1874-5. 1879 La Libertad to Paris. Four 1r for double outbound rate tied by diamonds cancel. Mar. 3 datestamp. Via Panama, Mar. 8, received in Paris, Mar. 29, and charged 30 decimes on arrival.

1874-6. 1874 San Salvador to London. 2r. cancelled by 'FRANCO' and with boxed 'Franquedo en S. Salvador' and datestamp (May 25). Panama Transit, Jul. 4 and taxed 1/6 upon arrival. Believed to be the earliest recorded use of this issue, although some collectors think it could be a fake.

1874-7. 1874 La Union to Bordeaux. Mourning cover with 2r. Tied by blind cancel alongside Jun. 20 (?) Cds. Panama Transit (Jul. 12), and GB 1F90c accountancy marking. On arrival, redirected to Barbastre and charged 15 decimes.

1874-8. 1874 Suchitoto to London. 2r. with Aug. 15 datestamp. San Salvador datestamp, Aug. 18. Panama Transit, Sep. 7 and taxed 1/6 upon arrival.



Figure 3-18. 1874-8

1874-9. 1874 to Paris. 2r untied. Panama transit stamp, Aug. 18. GB 1F90c accountancy marking, and charged 15 decimes on arrival.



Figure 3-19. 1874-9

1874-10. 1874 San Salvador to Liverpool. 2r tied by blind cancel alongside San Salvador cds, Dec. 20. Panama transit stamp, Jan. 12, 1875. Received in Liverpool, Feb. 13, 1875. Charged 1/6 on arrival.



Figure 3-20. 1874-10

1874-11. 1875 La Libertad to Liverpool. 2r untied by pen cancel alongside Mar. 14 cds. Panama transit stamp, Apr. 2. Received in Liverpool, Apr. 28. Charged 1/6 on arrival.

1874-12. 1875 La Union to Bordeaux. 2r tied by Jul. 27 Panama datestamp. Routed via London Aug. 4, and Paris, Aug. 28. London GB 1F90c accountancy marking, and charged 30 decimes on arrival.

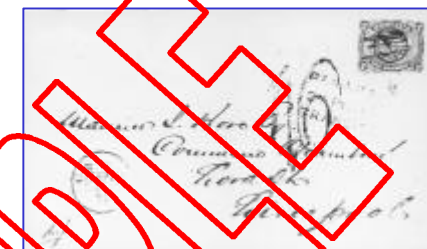


Figure 3-21. 1874-11

1874-13. 1875 Suchitoto to New York. 2r. cancelled by 'FRANCO' and double ring 'Correos del Salvador / Paquetes' datestamp (Dec. 27). Stamp tied by 'New York / Due 10 CTS' cancellation.

1874-14. 1876 La Libertad to Genoa. 2r tied by blind cancel alongside Apr. 12 datestamp. Panama transit, Apr. 20, and Genoa May 20 datestamp. Taxed 23 decimes in Nantes, and charged on arrival 2L 30c as postage due.



Figure 3-22. 1874-12

1874-15. 1876 La Libertad to Bordeaux. 2r tied by blind cancel alongside Jul. 10 Cds. Panama transit, Jul. 18, and taxed 17 decimes upon arrival.



Figure 3-24. 1874-14



Figure 3-23. 1874-13



Figure 3-25. 1874-16



Figure 3-26. 1874-17



Figure 3-27. 1874-18



Figure 3-28. 1874-19



Figure 3-29. 1874-20

1874-16. 1876 to Barbaste. 2r tied by crayon cancel. Panama transit during July, and Calais datestamp, Aug. 26. Taxed 23 decimes on arrival.

1874-17. 1876 to Bordeaux. 2r tied by cds, November. Panama transit stamp, Nov. 30. Received in Calais, Dec. 30, and charged 23 (decimes) upon arrival.

1874-18. 1877 San Salvador to Ohio. 2r. tied by blue 'FRANCO' cancel. San Salvador datestamp (April 6). Charged 10c. upon arrival.

1874-19. 1877 La Union to Barbaste, France. 2r untied. Via Panama, May 2, London, May 28, and Nantes, May 30. Redirected to Bordeaux, and charged 23 decimes on arrival at Nantes.

1874-20. 1877. Suchitoto to London. Administración General de Correos official mail with May 17 cds. Via Panama, May 31 and London, June 28. Taxed 1 /- on arrival.

1874-21. 1877 La Union to London. 2r. tied by blind cancel. Administración General de Correos datestamp (July 6). Panama Transit, July 16, and London 2/- obliterated by 'B16' and corrected to 1 /- accountancy mark.



Figure 3-30. 1874-21