

A Scandal in Bolivia

In 1894, Bolivia ordered a printing of seven stamps picturing the coat of arms from Bradbury, Wilkinson & Co. in London. Since Bolivia had no diplomatic representation in England at the time, the order was placed through the Bolivian legation in Paris. The final consignment of 1,625,000 stamps and the printing plates were delivered to the Bolivian legation in Paris for forwarding to La Paz.

The legation secretary, Jose Paz, and legation clerk, Enrique Gainsborg, intercepted the consignment of 1,625,00 stamps along with the printing plates. They used the plates to print 6,600,000 stamps in Paris. They passed 1,625,000 of the fraudulently printed stamps on to Bolivia as if completing the Bradbury, Wilkinson order. The Paris gang had 1,625,000 of the genuine London printing and 4,975,000 of their Paris printed frauds to sell on the philatelic market. A five bar grid "cancellation" was used in Paris to "cancel" both stamp printings.

The fraudulent Paris printed stamps that were sent to Bolivia were sold as genuine by the post office. The Bolivian P.O. finally heard of the swindle and demanded the printing plates. The plates were sent to La Paz, but not before a second bogus printing was made in Paris. Fortunately, because of perforation and paper differences, stamps from the three printings, one official and two bogus, may be identified.

This exhibit shows the following stamps from this philatelic swindle:

Bradbury Wilkinson London Printing

Unused, Used with Bolivian postmarks, Used with bogus Paris cancellation

First Paris Printing

Unused, Used with Bolivian postmarks, Used with bogus Paris cancellation

Second Paris Printing

Known only with bogus Paris cancellation

Bradbury, Wilkinson & Co. London Printing – Thin Paper – Perforated 14x14½



First Paris Printing from Bradbury-Wilkinson Plates

Perforated 13½, Thick Paper



Imperforate pair

The original Bradbury, Wilkinson & Co. London printing did not have any perforation or printing varieties. Any varieties which exist, were produced in the first Paris printing from the original Bradbury-Wilkinson plates.

Second Paris Printing from Bradbury-Wilkinson Plates

Rough Perforated 13½, Very Thick Paper



This printing is known only with the bogus 5 bar Paris cancellation

Perforation Appearance of Both Paris Printings



First Paris Printing



Second Paris Printing

Because of the very thick paper used for the second Paris printing, the perforations were very rough and paper appears to mound up on the back of the stamps around the perforations.

First Paris Printing from Bradbury-Wilkinson Plates

Used with Bolivian P.O. Cancellations



First Paris Printing from Bradbury-Wilkinson Plates

Cancelled with Bogus Paris Oval Grid with Five Thick Bars



block imperforate horizontally

Bogus Paris Cancellation – Oval Grid with Five thick Bars



Bolivian P.O. Cancellations



LONDON PRINT
THIN PAPER
PERF. 14/14½



PARIS PRINT
THICK PAPER
PERF. 13 1/2



ORIGINAL LONDON PRINTING — Post. 14/14 1/2 THIN PAPER

New Zealand

1-150

51-60

1/20

1/20

5- 1/25

7- 1/20

61-71

1/20

2- 1/20

3- 1/40

4- 1/40

5- 1/25

6- 1/25

7- 1/25

Suppl

67A-9

1/25

8-

1/40

70 - UNAUTHORIZED PARIS PRINTING — Post. 13 1/2 THICK PAPER

105-110

84-6

86-98 WITH BUGS CANEX APPLIED IN PARIS —

99-98

1/20

1/15

106-7

1/20

1/15

1/20

120

121/2-5