

SERIES



OF 1863

Genuine plate proofs of this issue are found on an astonishing variety of types of paper. The lightest weight paper, shown below, is almost as light as tissue paper. The heaviest weight is not too different from what we use today for the production of post cards. The reason for the many varieties of paper has never been adequately explained.



Plate proofs are also found overprinted "SPECIMEN". The $\frac{1}{2}$ r value has been so overprinted in both yellow and red. The 2r value can be found with the oblique overprint in black, and with a red overprint in either vertical or oblique positions.



SERIES



OF 1863

The first Costa Rican postage stamps were authorized by the government's Decree No. 2, dated August 18, 1862. $\frac{1}{2}$ and 2 Reales values were printed by the American Bank Note Company in sheets of 100. It is believed that they were first placed in use in March, 1863. Total usage of these stamps consisted of 1,973,000 of the $\frac{1}{2}$ r value (Plate No. 1) and 355,000 of the 2r value.



The 4r and 1P values were released several months later, probably in December, 1863. Printings of these two values were relatively small, the total number of copies placed in circulation being only 42,000 and 24,500 respectively. Only a fraction of them were postally used; today a used copy is more difficult to obtain than an unused one.



SERIES



OF 1863

Plate proofs of the 1863 issue are known to exist, both in the actually issued colors, and in other colors. These are invariably imperforate. Perforated copies of the 2r value, in five different colors, are also known, having been produced as color essays.

Plate Proofs on India Paper, in Actually Issued Colors

($\frac{1}{2}$ r Value is from Plate No. 1)



Plate Proofs, Printed on a Similar but Lighter Paper

($\frac{1}{2}$ r Value is from Plate No. 2)



SERIES



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After 12 years of use and the printing of 3,000,000 impressions, the plate for the $\frac{1}{2}$ r value required replacement, and a second plate was prepared. The stamps printed from the new plate (Plate No. 2) were first placed in use about September, 1875. During the life of Plate No. 2, a total of 2,750,000 impressions were printed, of which 1,082,000 were actually placed in circulation. Stamps from this plate are easily identified by the absence of shading in many areas of the design, and by their generally washed-out appearance.



Detailed examination of the 1863 issue has shown several identifiable plate positions to exist on Plate No. 1 of the $\frac{1}{2}$ r value. Stamp No. 87 shows a small dot in the center of the second star. Stamp No. 89 has a similar dot in the center of the third star.

Stamp #87



Stamp #89



SERIES



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Plate proofs of the 1863 issue may also be found printed on a heavy card stock. The paper used for the printing of proofs is carefully selected to accept a perfect impression and show the finest details of the design. Since the plates are new and unworn, the proofs show the beauty of the stamp design to a degree that is never attained in the printing of the stamp itself.



HISTORICAL



NOTES

For a period of 20 years, from 1863 to 1883, stamps of this first series fulfilled all of the postal needs of Costa Rica. A detailed summary of the total printings and their ultimate disposition is given below.

Value:	$\frac{1}{2}$ Real Plate 1	$\frac{1}{2}$ Real Plate 2	<u>2 Reales</u>	<u>4 Reales</u>	<u>1 Peso</u>
Quantity used without surcharge	1,973,000	1,082,000	355,000	42,000	24,500
Quantity used with 1881-82 surcharges	23,000	45,000	9,100	4,510	-
Sold to Ross without surcharge	1,000,000	1,615,000	385,000	23,000	10,500
Sold to Ross with 1881-82 surcharges	<u>4,000</u>	<u>8,000</u>	<u>900</u>	<u>490</u>	<u>-</u>
Total printing	3,000,000	2,750,000	750,000	70,000	35,000

The purchase of over 3 million demonitized postage stamps by a philatelic speculator is clear evidence that stamp collecting was "big business", even in 1883. It was not recognized at the time, however, that such practices damage the philatelic reputation of a country, and are therefore not in a nation's best interests.



$\frac{1}{2}$ real, Plate 1, Position #96
showing damage to the plate.

EARLY TOWN CANCELS



SERIES



OF 1863

EARLY DATED CANCELLATIONS



June 29, 1873



July 7, 1873



Jan. ?, 1875



May 22, 1877



Apr. 13, 1879

OTHER TYPES OF EARLY CANCELLATIONS



SERIES



OF 1863

Costa Rica's series of 1863 received early attention from the stamp forgers. Three different forgeries of this series are known. In two of the three, the forgers have not been identified. However, the earliest and best-known forgeries are those produced by the Spiro brothers of Hamburg, Germany some time between 1864 and 1879.

All forgeries of this issue are readily identified by the fact that they are lithographed rather than engraved. The Saenz Catalog indicates that the Spiro forgeries were produced in perforation $12\frac{1}{2}$; no mention is made of their existing imperforate.



The Spiro forgeries (shown above) can be readily identified by two distinguishing major features. The center (third) star contains six rather than five points. Also, the ornament over the word "CORREOS" is badly distorted, giving the general impression of being a snake rising from behind the scroll.

Genuine



Forgery



1881-82

5
cts

SURCHARGES

Due to the need for stamps of other denominations, surplus quantities of the $\frac{1}{2}$ r blue of 1863 were surcharged, beginning in 1881. The first surcharges of this series were the 2¢ and 5¢ values. All known copies of the 5¢ were printed on $\frac{1}{2}$ r stamps of Plate 2. The 2¢ surcharges are found on stamps from both Plates 1 and 2.

2¢ (Plate 1)



2¢ (Plate 2)



5¢ (Plate 2)



In 1882, the 1¢ denomination was created by surcharging copies of the $\frac{1}{2}$ r stamp. Two basic variations of this surcharge exist, the difference being in the letters "cto." which in one case are erect, and in the other case are slanted to the right. The slanted overprint is found only on Plate 1 stamps. The erect overprint exists on stamps from both plates.

Plate 1



Plate 1



Plate 2



1881-82

10
cts.
U. P. U.

SURCHARGES

Also in 1882, a set of three stamps was prepared by overprinting the 1863 series with both a surcharge to indicate a new value, and the letters "U.P.U." in honor of the Universal Postal Union. The 5¢ surcharge was printed on $\frac{1}{2}$ r stamps from Plate 1. (This same surcharge on Plate 2 stamps clearly indicates a forgery.) The 10¢ and 20¢ values utilized, respectively, the 2r and 4r stamps of the 1863 series.



Varieties exist in both the 5¢ and 10¢ surcharges. While the majority of the stamps were overprinted in full sheets, some were individually overprinted using a different printing plate. The major identifying feature of such stamps is the enlarged period following the last letter of "U.P.U." in the overprint.



Quantities of these stamps printed were as follows:

10¢ on 2r:	9,100 copies
20¢ on 4r:	4,510 copies
5¢ on $\frac{1}{2}$ r:	unknown (probably about 5,000 copies)

1881-82

10
cts.
U. P. U.

SURCHARGES

COUNTERFEIT OVERPRINTS

Due to their high price and comparative rarity, counterfeits of these issues are rather common. Cancellations have also been counterfeited, since clear, readable cancels are quite rare. The stamps shown below are genuine stamps of the 1863 series, to which have been added fake surcharges in an attempt to reproduce the more expensive issues of 1881-82.



THE ROSS



SURCHARGES

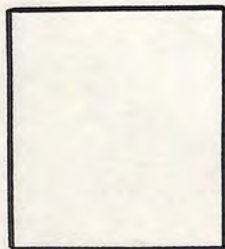
In 1883, unsold remainders of the first issue were purchased by James Ross. The purchase price was considerably below face value, the stamps having previously been demonitized by the government. Quantities purchased by Ross were as follows:

$\frac{1}{2}$ r (Plate 1):	1,000,000
$\frac{1}{2}$ r (Plate 2):	1,615,000
2r:	385,000
4r:	23,000
1P:	10,500

To these stamps, Ross applied a variety of surcharges to indicate new stamp values. While these surcharged stamps had absolutely no legal status, they cannot be regarded as forgeries, since they did not attempt to duplicate any existing stamp. The obvious attempt, however, was to create stamps that superficially resembled the 1881-82 overprints, and to sell them to collectors.

In addition to applying fraudulent surcharges, certain of the purchased stamps were overprinted "OFICIAL". These stamps obviously had no actual official status with the Costa Rican government.

Several typical examples of these fraudulent overprints are shown below.



THE ROSS



SURCHARGES

Most common of the Ross surcharges are the ones shown below. The stamps were surcharged in full sheets of 100 stamps, the printing plate being arranged so as to produce six different surcharges on the same sheet.

A study of these stamps has shown that Ross' printing plate was arranged as follows:

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A A A A A A A A A A
A A A A A A A A A A
B B B B B B B B B B
C C C C C C C C C C
D D D D D D D D D D
D D D D D D D D D D
E E E E E E E E E E
F F F F F F F F F F
F F F F F F F F F F
F F F F F F F F F F
    
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Type A



Type B



Type C



Type D



Type E



Type F

