

THE PANAMA COAT OF ARMS ISSUE, A PROGRESS REPORT

by Jim Cross

My article in the June 1998 issue gave an overview of this issue. I was the successful bidder for the production file of these stamps in the Helme sale. This unique file includes the original order for the stamps, the file envelope which documents the contents and the dates they were filed, the artwork (called models by the ABNCo.), and the final die proofs with the approvals of the various department heads (the 2c value is not in the file). These unique items are of utmost importance in a traditional philately exhibit of this issue. A number of additional ABNCo. production file items were sold separately to other bidders. These include additional small and large die proofs, plate proofs and rejected die proofs of the 2c and 5c values.

Shreve did not choose to make separate lots of the the Helme post 1909 covers and the entire accumulation was sold as a single lot. Therefore, I knew that I would have to assemble examples of uses on cover starting from scratch.

Two of the 15 volumes of Dr. Helme's notebooks were devoted to this issue. They indicate that he was interested in trying to match loose stamps showing dated cancels and stamps on covers with the various printings and deliveries of the stamp by the American Bank Note Co. I believe this is an impossible task because the quality control in the stamp production was good enough so that there are no easily recognizable differences between different printings. The notes do, however, contain a record of the deliveries taken from the information in the ABNCo. files. Dr. Helme also had the notes of Gustavo Schay who studied the records in the Panama archives. In most instances these two sources are in agreement, however, there are some differences.

Similar information is available in the Helme notebooks for the other issues printed by the American Bank Note Company and that information is available from our library for anyone who wants to study one of the issues.

The early printings of all the arms stamps have ABNCo. order number F7427. Later printings and deliveries had new order numbers as shown in Table II. Table I shows for each value the number of deliveries, the quantity delivered, the quantity overprinted or surcharged and the calculated quantity which were sold. There is no indication that any remainders were destroyed. The sale of ABNCo. files included a lot of

specimen sheets, generally one sheet for each order number for each stamp. These sheets were purchased by the Canadian dealer, Casimer Bileski of Winnipeg. He separated the stamps and made up stock cards for sale to the public with copies of each specimen. However, the only markings which indicate the origin of the stamps are on the cards and once the stamps are removed from the cards the source of most of them is unidentifiable. There should be sets of specimen singles or blocks which have the ABNCo order number in the selvedge, but I have not seen them.

The delivery dates and quantities for three orders submitted in 1941 are not available in Helme's notes. Since these were recorded from the auction lots of the ABNCo. archives it must mean that the data for 1941 was not in the ABNCo. files. It also means the total quantities delivered for these values in Table I may not be correct.

	VALUE	DEL	DELIVERED	OVERPRINTS	USED
½c	13	2,940,000	450,000	2,490,000	
1c	22	7,475,000	650,000	6,825,000	
2c	25	14,600,000	180,000	14,420,000	
5c	15	3,900,000	30,000	3,870,000	
10c	11	1,170,000	15,000	1,155,000	
12c	9	305,000	100,000	205,000	
15c	8	685,000	15,000	670,000	
24c	5	190,000	165,000	25,000	
50c	5	95,000	45,000	50,000	
1B	5	45,000	10,000	35,000	

The quantities of 10c and 15c stamps shown above are questionable. Helme shows deliveries of 500,000 of each in 1946. All previous deliveries had totalled 185,000 15c stamps and 670,000 10c stamps. It seems more likely that the quantities of each delivered in 1946 was 50,000. There are no significant numbers of 10c or 15c covers dated after 1946 and no indication that mint remainders of these values were sold or destroyed.

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The following is the breakdown of the quantities overprinted:

1936 Arosemena	2c on 24c	60,000
	5c on 1/2c (error)	300
	15c on 24c airmail	15,000
1938 Esc. Normal	2c	30,000
1940 Cancer	1c	200,000
1941 Constitucion	1/2c	50,000
	1c	250,000
	2c	150,000
	5c	30,000
	10c	15,000
	15c	15,000
	50c	10,000
	1B	10,000

	15c on 24c airmail	15,000
1947 Cancer	1c on 1/2c	100,000
	1c on 1c	400,000
	1c on 12c	100,000
	1c on 24c	70,000
1947	50c on 24c	20,000

The most surprising figures are those for the 50c on 24c stamps and 1c on 24c Cancer stamps. One would assume that these were overprinted in order to dispose of unsold remainders. However, the Helme notes show that 100,000 24c stamps were delivered on 18 Jun 1946, 90% of which were overprinted. Note that Dr. Helme believed that 300 copies of C19 were prepared. This was based upon a study of the known multiples of the issue.

TABLE I - ABNCo DELIVERIES		
DATE	VALUES	F-No.
19 Jan 1924	1c	F7427
6 Feb 1924	All except 1c	F7427
19 Sep 1924	1/2c	F7427
19 Nov 1924	1c	F7427
20 May 1925	1c	F7427
20 May 1925	1/2c	F7868
12 Sep 1925	2c	F7949
12 Sep 1925	5c	F7427
27 Jan 1926	1c, 10c, 12c, 15c, 24c, 50c, 1B	F7427
22-9 May 1926	1/2c, 1c, 2c, 5c	F8131
2 Feb 1927	2c	F8274
16 Jul 1927	1/2c, 2c, 5c,	F8402
11 Apr 1928	1/2c, 1c, 2c, 5c, 10c	F8605
16 Mar 1929	1/2c, 2c, 5c	F8883
16 Mar 1929	1c	F9003
31 Aug 1929	1c, 2c, 10c,	F9003
31 Aug 1929	12c, 15c, 24c, 50c, 1B	F7427
28 Jun 1930	1/2c, 1c, 2c, 5c,	F9220
28 Jun 1930	12c, 15c, 24c, 50c, 1B	F7427
30 Apr 1931	10c	F9392
5 Sep 1931	2c	F9450

30 Apr 1932	1c	F9570
15 Jul 1932	2c	F9598
9 Dec 1932	2c	F9651
14 Jan 1933	5c	F9663
12 May 1933	1c	F9570
2-10 Feb 1934	2c	F9798
19 May 1934	5c	F9844
23 Jun 1934	1c	F9851
18 Mar 1935	1/2c, 1c, 10c	F9967
18 Jul 1935	2c	F9967
13 Nov 1935	1/2c, 1c, 2c, 5c, 12c	F10051
16 Sep 1936	1c	F10196
20 Oct 1936	5c	10215
16 Nov 1936	2c	F10196
23 Mar 1937	1/2c, 10c	F10290
21 Sep 1937	1c	F10381
24 Mar 1938	2c	F10440
5 Dec 1938	1/2c, 1c, 5c, 10c, 12c, 15c	F10528
11 Sep 1940	1c, 2c, 5c	F10849
11 Nov 1940	10c, 15c	F10849
1941	1/2c, 10c	F10991
1941	1c, 2c, 5c	F10951, F11040 and F11179
18 May 1946	1/2c, 1c, 2c, 5c, 10c, 15c, 24c	F12129

The statistics above are good predictors of the relative scarcity of uses of the stamps on cover. Values from 1/2c thru 10c are fairly plentiful. The five higher values are much scarcer. A tabulation of covers in my collection, the Helme notes and the Brid collection includes 19 1/2c uses, 57 1c uses, 79 2c uses, 43 5c uses, 25 10c uses, 4 12c uses, 5 15c uses, 2 24c uses and no uses of the 50c or 1B. The figures for 1c and 2c uses are probably lower in proportion to the total number available, because most collectors use discrimination in purchasing examples of these common values.

The 1/2c stamp paid the internal printed matter rate. Examples available include advertising post cards sent to ships arriving in Balboa inviting the passengers and crew to visit their stores. The latest example is an unsealed letter from a stamp dealer, mailed aboard ship and cancelled in Curacao. An unusual use is in combination with a 2c stamp to pay the pre-1930 Acknowledgement of Receipt fee of 2 1/2c after the supply of the 1916 overprints was exhausted.

The 1c stamp paid the post card rate to members of the U.P.A.E. including the United States and Canada. The quantity printed is an indication of the volume of picture post cards mailed in Panama during the period of use. An unusual use is a revenue stamp on a rent receipt. Apparently the letter rate to U.P.A.E. countries was temporarily raised from 2c to 3c at the beginning of 1936. Two covers in my collector dated 5 Feb and 19 Feb show a 1c stamp added to the 2c. The rate increase probably caused a shift in mail from Panama to Canal Zone mails leading to a loss of revenue for Panama. The rate increase was soon repealed. No three cent stamps were issued by Panama at the time.

The 2c stamp paid the letter rate on domestic letters and also on letters to U.P.A.E. members, including the United States. These covers are plentiful enough to permit a search for unusual origins, destinations and postal markings. There are numerous covers from the correspondence of Montgomery Ward and the Wm. Gavitt Medical Co. of Topeka KS which show a variety of origins. Those in my collection include Almirante, Chitre, David, Puerto Armuelles and Santiago. Many of these are registered letters.

You can also find interesting return addresses, including the Panama Coca Cola Bottling Co and the Day and Night Garage Co. of Ancon which pictures a Firestone Tire. Both of these would be of great interest to thematic collectors.

The first Panama airmail rates required the letter postage to be paid with regular stamps and the airmail surcharge to be paid by an airmail stamp. Thus the 2c

stamps are used on a variety of early airmail covers including many first flight covers. Probably the most interesting are those from commercial and personal correspondence which were carried on later flights. Covers in my collection include David to La Lima, Honduras and Puerto Armuelles to Cartago, Costa Rica, both from 1932. There are also combination covers with Colombia SCADTA consular stamps paying for airmail service from Barranquilla to the interior of Colombia. These include both SCADTA stamps overprinted with the letter "P" and also stamps of the later general issue, Colombia Scott C68-79.A SCADTA use in the Helme collection is the earliest recorded cover of the arms issue. It was cancelled in Panama on 4 April 1924.

The 5c stamp paid the letter rate to Europe and Asia. Covers showing this rate are much scarcer than covers with the 2c stamps. 5c was also paid the registration fee from 1924 to 1929 and the 5c stamp was used for this after the supply of 1916 registration stamps was exhausted. From 1930 it paid the acknowledgement of receipt fee which had been raised to 5c.

The 10c stamp initially only paid for double weight letters to Europe and Asia or letters to U.P.A.E members which weighed from 60 to 75 grams. However, from 1930 it paid the registration fee and it is found most often on registered covers after that date.

The higher value stamps; 12c, 15c, 24c, 50c and 1B did not initially pay for any common rates and were probably only used on extra heavy letters or packages. From 1930 the 12c stamp paid the combined 2c letter fee and 10c registration fee and these are the two uses in my collection. During the same period the 15c stamp paid the combined registration and acknowledgement of receipt rate of 15c. Other later uses of the high value stamps are primarily on airmail covers when airmail stamps were not used.

Some years ago George Alevizos offered a large envelope (200x300 mm.) whose franking included the 50c and 1B values. The condition of the envelope was poor and an additional stamp had fallen off. The current whereabouts of this envelope, which is the only recorded postal use of these values, is unknown.

The 1936 Arosemena commemoratives are unusually scarce on cover. There may be more covers of C19, the so-called error, than of either of the other two stamps. However, all of the known covers of C19 were used on mail sent to local addresses in Panama and the Canal Zone and none of them were flown. The cover in my collection is cancelled by a Panama duplex which has not been seen on any other cover.

The normal school commemoratives were only used on a single day from Santiago. All that I have seen are on philatelic mail with first day cachets. There are stamps with inverted overprints and with double overprints which were probably deliberately made. Examples on cover were offered in our Mail Bid Sale 17. First day covers of the 1941 Constitution overprints exist. Most bear complete sets of the stamps and are obviously philatelic. Other uses of these stamps are not common and I have had more difficulty finding examples on cover than in finding covers of the basic arms stamps. At this writing I have not found examples of the 1c or 2c stamps on a post card or cover.

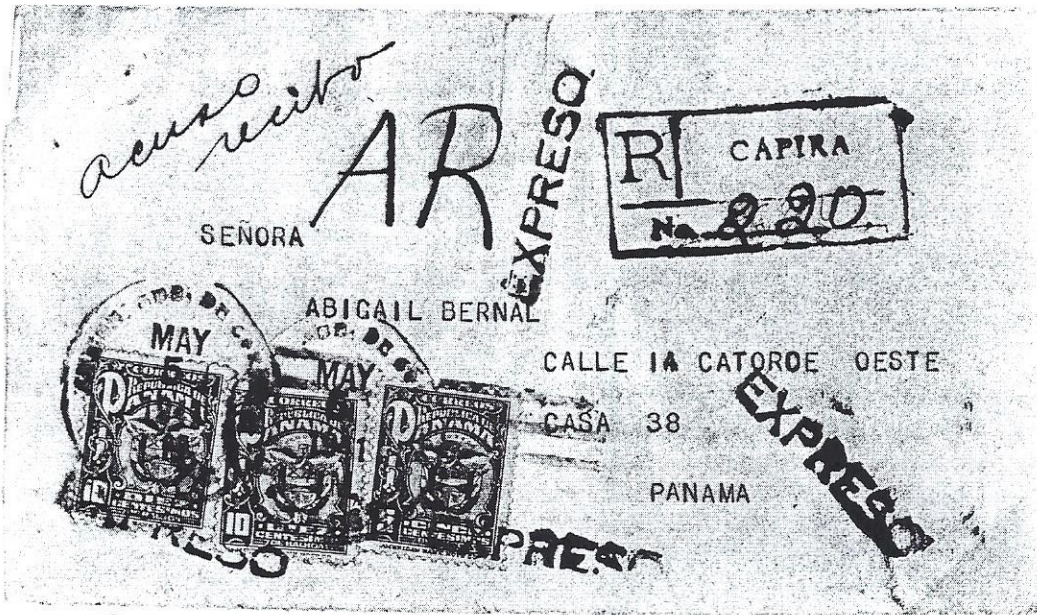
The quantities of stamps overprinted for the five cancer tax stamps were fairly large and since a postal tax stamp was required on all letters copies can be found on cover, but they are not plentiful, perhaps because there is demand for them from medical thematic collectors. The 50c on 24c stamp is also quite scarce. The only cover recorded thus far is a first day cover with this stamp and the other four stamps of the set.

One of the main challenges of assembling an exhibit of this issue is finding examples of covers originating in small towns. Thus far the following origins have been recorded: Aguadulce, Almirante, Boquete, Capira, Chame, Changuinola 5, Chitre, Chorrera, Coiba, Concepcion, Devala, El Volcan, Guabito, Guarare, Las Tablas, Los Santos, Macaracas, Penonome, Pese, Puerto Armuelles, Santiago and Sona. The search goes on.

A few unusual covers have been found. One is the registered letter from Devala shown on the front page of this issue. Note that the sender misspelled the town name in the return address. Apparently Devala had no registration handstamp at the time, so the markings was handdrawn and the town name and date were written in pencil. David Leeds has a cover mailed to the U.S. with a U.S. special delivery stamp affixed. Shown below is an unusual cover sent from Capira to Panama. Besides being registered with acknowledgement of receipt requested it is also marked EXPRESO and the postage includes the domestic special delivery fee of 10 centesimos. Examples of domestic special delivery letters from Panama are quite scarce. The Helme arms covers included five special delivery first day covers, sent to the same individual, but only one later use.

Other unusual items are two requests to trace a registered letter. A 10c arms stamp is affixed to each form to pay for the request. The forms have responses attached from the Canal Zone postal service indicating when the letters were dispatched to the United States.

Another challenge in assembling an exhibit of the issue is finding unusual destinations. Letters to Asia and Africa are especially scarce. Dr. Helme had three examples: a letter from David sent to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, a letter to Algeria and a letter mailed in November 1941 to Macao which was returned to the sender because mail service to Macao was suspended because of World War II. I have not found any.



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PLEASE ADD THIS PICTURE TO PAGE 51