



PHILATELIC BULLETIN

Sarasota Philatelic Club

United States Overrun Country Series Reverse Printings

By James Mazepa, RDP

2026

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The United States Overrun Country (ORC) series (1943-1944) has two varieties collectors look for: the “double prints” and the “reverse printings.” The double prints are a legitimate printing error caused by a “studder” and restart in the printing process. Unlike the printing process of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing which prints its stamps in a north-south direction, the ORC stamps were printed in an east-west process, thus only certain rows show the doubling, not the entire sheet. The reverse printings are a different story.

I was fortunate to acquire a collection/accumulation of the ORC stamps, which included the original owner’s extensive contemporary clippings from *Linn’s, STAMPS MAGAZINE*, and other philatelic publications, as well as his correspondence with other collectors during the time the ORCs were issued. What I learned is that the double printings and reverse printings were well known and studied from the very beginning of the series.

While the double-prints gained recognition in the catalog, the reverse printings became an afterthought until the early 2000s when collectors, and especially dealers, “rediscovered” these varieties. The American Banknote Company (ABNC), which printed the ORC stamps, was very secretive about the printing process and eventually destroyed their records that would have shed light on how the stamps were printed. One of the reasons the ABNC was asked to print the ORC series was that a multi-color process was needed, and the Bureau was unable to do this due to the amount of printing required for the war effort. Without going into extensive details, careful studies of the colors of the flags have given us some insight into the printing process. There is no doubt that the ABNC experimented with the sequence of the color printings. Some flags had two colors; others had three colors.

Stamp Quiz



Congratulations to Bob Inderbitzen, who correctly guessed last month’s Stamp Quiz. The stamp is a 1-centavo Ecuador definitive with a portrait of Luis Vargas Torres, an Ecuadorean revolutionary and national hero (Scott 137).



The stamp was issued in June 1899 — as per the clue, Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid robbed their first train together on June 2, 1899. Stay tuned for next month’s Stamp Quiz.



Figure 1. Soldier’s letter posted home from Army Post Office (APO) #512 in Caserta, Italy. The postage is overpaid with a block of the YUGOSLAVIA flag stamps with “reversed printing.” On the “normal printing,” the black of the flag is printed over the red and blue. On the “reversed printing” stamp, the red and blue are printed over the black.

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The Prez Sez ...

The May club meeting was oriented around some of my older Baltimore material but devolved into a spirited discussion of early mail practices in the US—I would especially like to thank Frank Blum who offered excellent commentary.

A number of club members including myself are off to attend the decennial International stamp show—which will take place in Boston from the 23-30 of this month. Phil Leber has arranged a room for talks by club members—maybe I'll see you there!

Right after we get back from Boston the next Club meeting will take place Tuesday June 2nd at 5:30 PM at The Alloro in University Groves. Anybody who attended Boston 2026 is invited to relate their experiences—

I have a request in relation to Dues—if you believe you have paid \$20 or more you “should” be on the booster list on the masthead—it has been thoroughly messed up and I “think” I have corrected it. Let me know if not.

Also several of you have not paid dues for this year (\$15 or more). Please pay at a meeting or mail to the PO box.

Best, Pat Walker

United States Overrun Country Series Reverse Printings (cont.)

There was a rush to get the stamps printed. The first public notice for the series by the Post Office Department was May 11, 1943, and the first stamp, the POLAND flag, was issued June 22, 1943. It can be deduced that the ABNC was not concerned with what was, for them, printing trials that basically all looked the same. For instance, for the POLAND flag stamp (Scott 909), the black over red and the red over black made little difference and the ABNC released all the stamps they produced to the Post Office Department. The question becomes, which is the “normal” print, or if there is a “normal” print? The red over black is more common on early uses, such as on FDCs, and the black over red on later uses, but note that this is a generalization based on my experience.

It is a fact that *all the ORC stamps have “reverse prints.”* Those with three colors even have double or “triple” reverse printings. These are not “errors”, but printing varieties. As such, I question if they should be listed with a Scott number, as some have fantastic valuations, or just a footnote.

Without a doubt these are interesting varieties. While military Post Offices did not receive any of the ORC stamps, families often sent the ORC stamps to their soldiers to pay for the postage home. Figure 1 shows a soldier's letter posted home from Army Post Office (APO) #512 in Caserta, Italy. The postage is overpaid with a block of the YUGOSLAVIA flag stamps with reversed printing.

Figure 2 shows what I consider the “ultimate” reverse printing cover. The letter pays the 25¢ airmail rate to Australia, using five ORC flags, each a reverse printing variety. Was this done on purpose, or by chance? (APEX Certificate).



Figure 2. The author considers this to be the “ultimate” reversed printing cover. The letter pays the 25¢ airmail rate to Australia, using five ORC flags, each of which is a reversed printing variety. Was this done on purpose, or by chance? (APEX Certificate). The author wonders whether the reversed printings should be listed with a Scott number or just a footnote as some of the reverse printings have high valuations. This also begs the questions which is truly the “normal printing.”

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James Mazepa Receives Grand Award at WESTPEX

The Western Philatelic Exhibition (WESTPEX) is one of the largest and most prestigious annual stamp and postal history shows in the United States, typically taking place in San Francisco on the fourth weekend of April. WESTPEX 2026, held April 24-26th in San Francisco, was its 66th annual exhibition. WESTPEX is a World Series of Philately exhibition and boasted over 250 frames of exhibits. Our member, Jim Mazepa, received the Grand Award for his exhibit "Poland: Warsaw Administration November 11, 1918 to July 1919. The First Issue of a New Country." He also received the APS Research Medal and the Collector's Club of New York's "Best Foreign Exhibit." Congratulations Jim!



Cover From Polish Forces in Egypt

By Vincent Centonze



In keeping with the Poland theme, and in honor of Jim Mazepa's Poland exhibit, I thought I'd share one of my favorite Poland-related items. This cover was sent by Polish forces in Egypt, a corps made up of the Polish expatriate army in Egypt during and after WW II. It formed in Kazakhstan and moved through Iran to Egypt. The Poles were stationed in Egypt from 1942-44, then moved to Libya and the Italian front. There was also a small Polish expatriate army brigade in Syria. Polish forces had their own canceling devices. Some Polish camps remained in Egypt during post-war repatriation in 1946 - 47. These were managed by the British-run Polish Resettlement Corps. This cover to London is dated December 15, 1947, and franked with a Great Britain 1½d George VI definitive (Scott 260; SG 487). The rates found on these Polish forces covers are often ambiguous. The rate for British forces in Egypt was 3d; therefore, this cover is likely shortpaid. Some were sent unfranked. This cover was sent from Polish unit 101; postmarks from Polish units 103 and 115 are also found from Egypt.

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