

GUATEMALA: THE UPU RESPLENDENT QUETZALS

1881-1886



Forerunner: a quetzal set ,denominated in reals, was issued before joining the UPU. This is a color trial sunken die proof.*

Approximately 250 covers exist for these stamps. Eight of them are in this exhibit showing various uses and rates.

Many of the rarities of the small quetzal stamps are included in this exhibit: the 2c inverted quetzal in a block of four, the 5c inverted quetzal, the 20c inverted quetzal in a block of four, a 1c inverted quetzal essay block of six, a unique 1c frame essay, discovery blocks of the frame plate proofs and a full sheet of the 2c. The cover rarities are: a local use showing the 1 centavo rate, aa cover to El Salvador and a 20 centavos stamp on cover.

The purpose of this exhibit is to tell the story of some of the most beautiful stamps in all of philately—the “UPU Resplendent Quetzals.” In 1881, Guatemala joined the Universal Postal Union and in November of the same year issued a set of five stamps featuring the resplendent quetzal, a bird native to that country. Guatemala had previously issued a set of similar stamps (see above) featuring the quetzal, however, the UPU issue included the words “UNION POSTAL UNIVERSAL—GUATEMALA” in an oval surrounding the central image. This exhibit covers these stamps from their date of issue (November 7, 1881) until their demonetization (July 1, 1886).

This exhibit includes essays, proofs, the regular issue, postmarks and postal history.

These stamps were used in the most colorful of the Guatemala cancel periods. Here you will see some of the most striking postmarks.

Rarities are highlighted in red. A red asterisk (*) denotes certification.

FRAME LAYOUT			
P1 Title Page	P2 Essays	P3 Die Proofs	P4 Die Proofs & Plate Proofs
P5 Plate Proofs	P6 The Regular Issue	P7 The Inverts	P8 Invert Forgeries The Bisect
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ESSAYS

1c black unissued frame essay.

“Un Centavo”. Similar to issued design, but inscribed “Correos de Guatemala” instead of “Union Postal Universal.” On heavy, shiny paper 49 by 61mm. Imprinted “C-17” and “American Bank Note Co. N.Y.”



UNIQUE

PLATE PROOF

1c inverted. Marginal block of six*.

An inverted 1c value was never issued.

A photograph shows that the complete sheet of the plate proof was printed from head plate "3" and the lack of a frame plate number suggests that it was printed from frame plate 1 in its first state. It is dated "Sept 5 / 81" in red crayon.

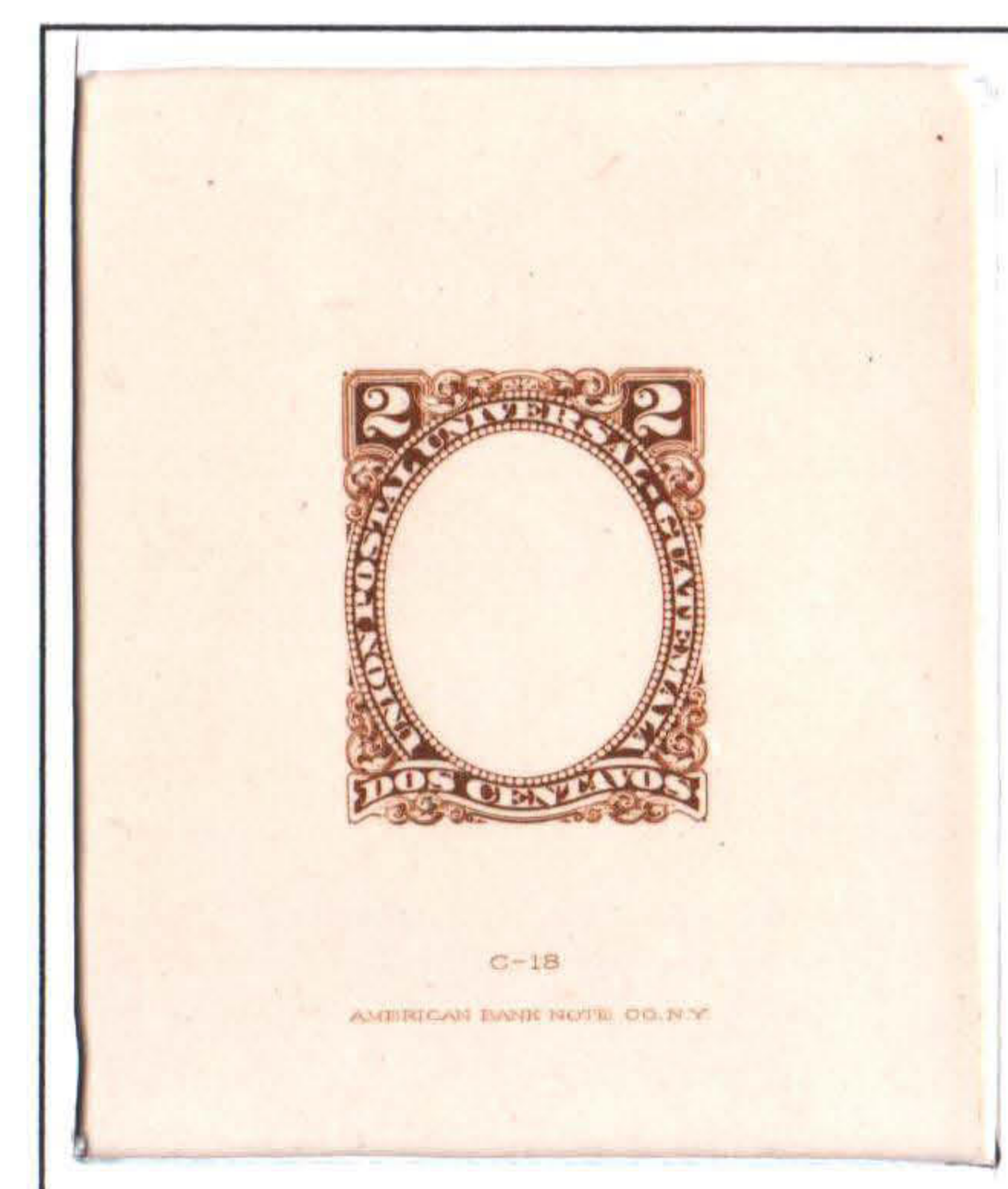
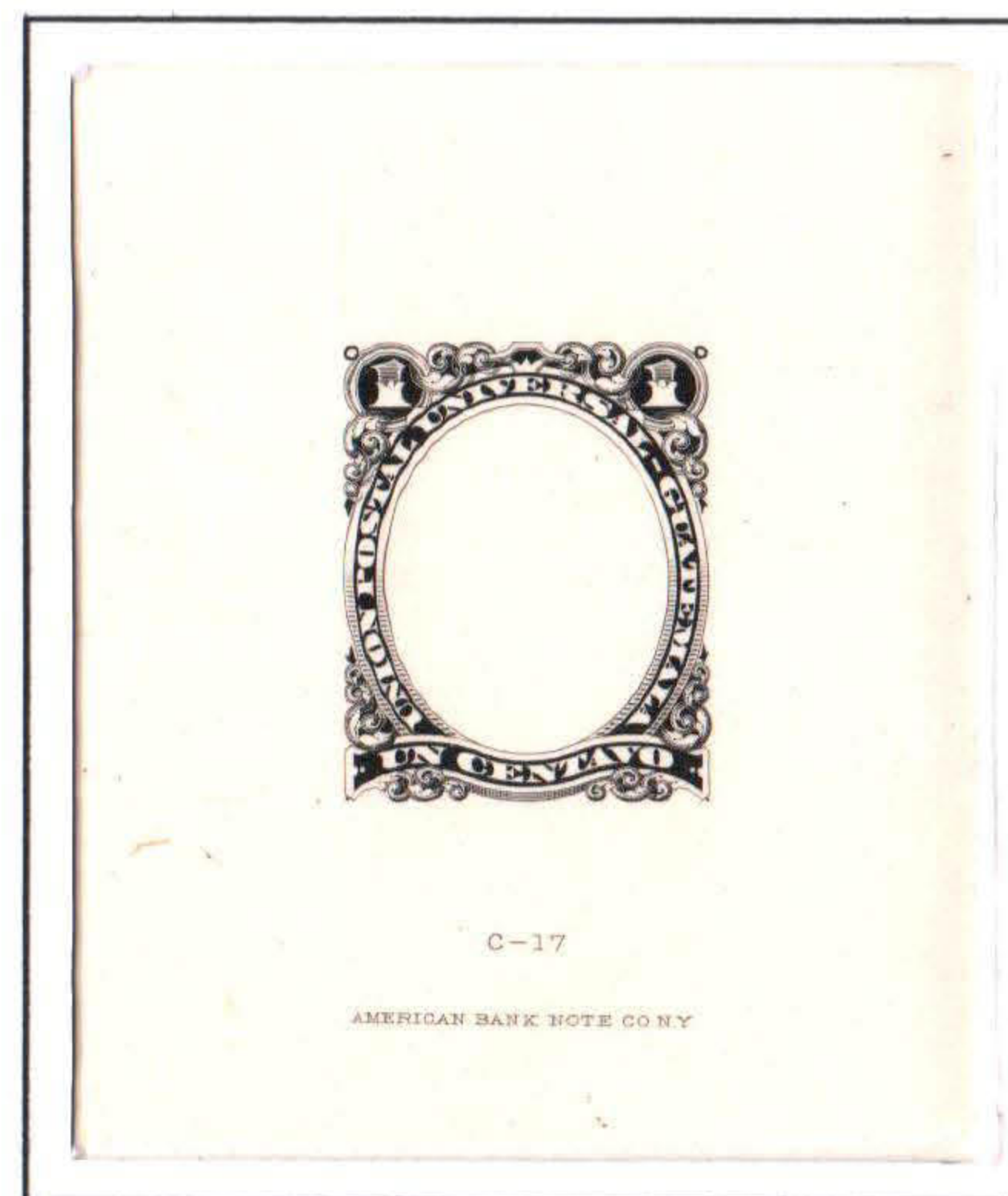
Brian Moorehouse: “The sheet came into my hands about five years ago, less the top left corner block x10 with the head plate "3" number which apparently stayed with the original owner. I have no idea who this was. Prior to this date I had no knowledge that the item even existed and there had been no record of the existence of a 1c proof with inverted center I split the balance of the sheet into the following:

Block of 36, block of 20, block of 16, * marginal block of six (this block!), marginal block of 4, block of four, and two pairs.

This block of six stamps are frame plate positions 68-69-70 and 78-79-80 and head plate positions 21-22-23 and 31-32-33



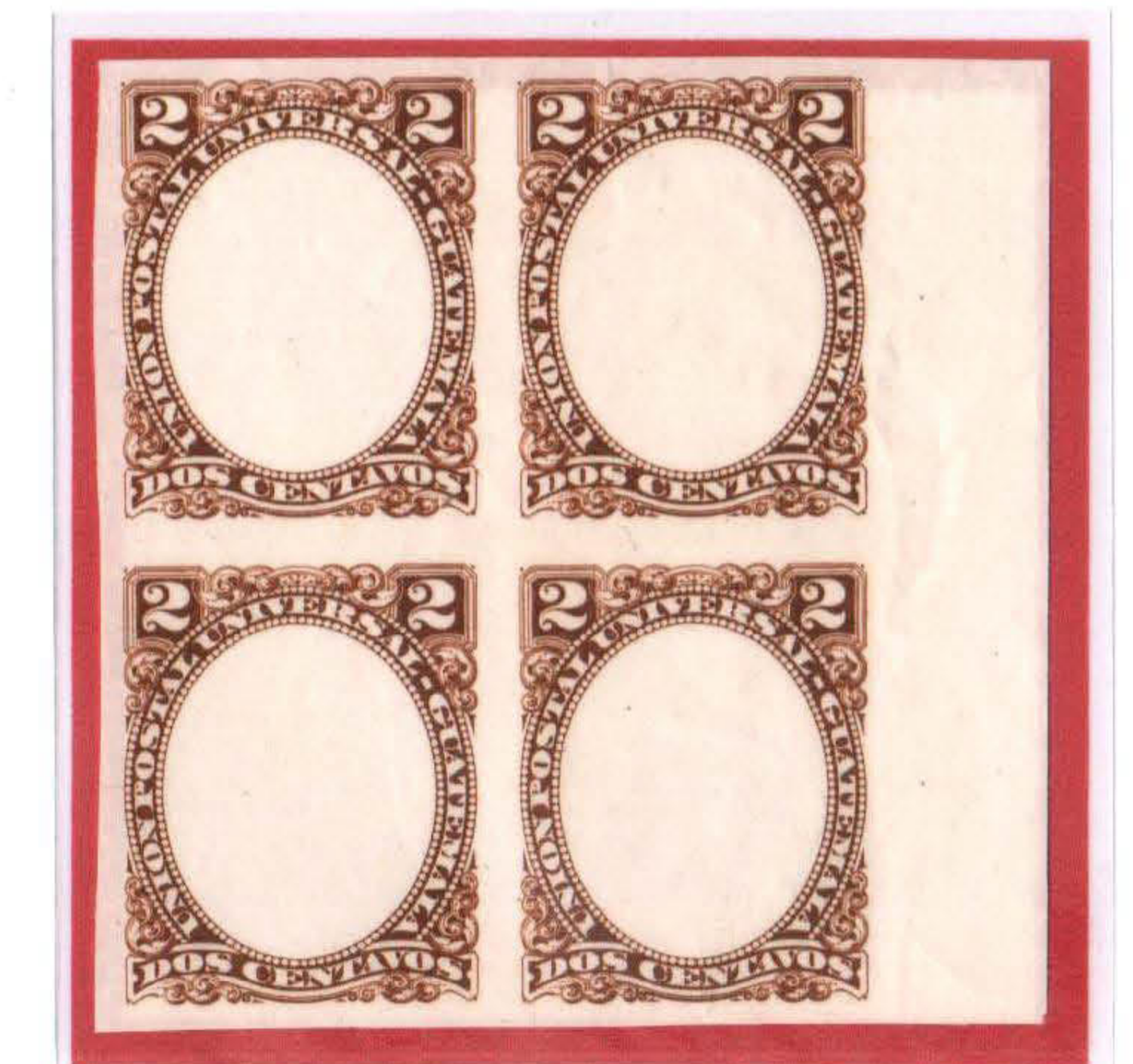
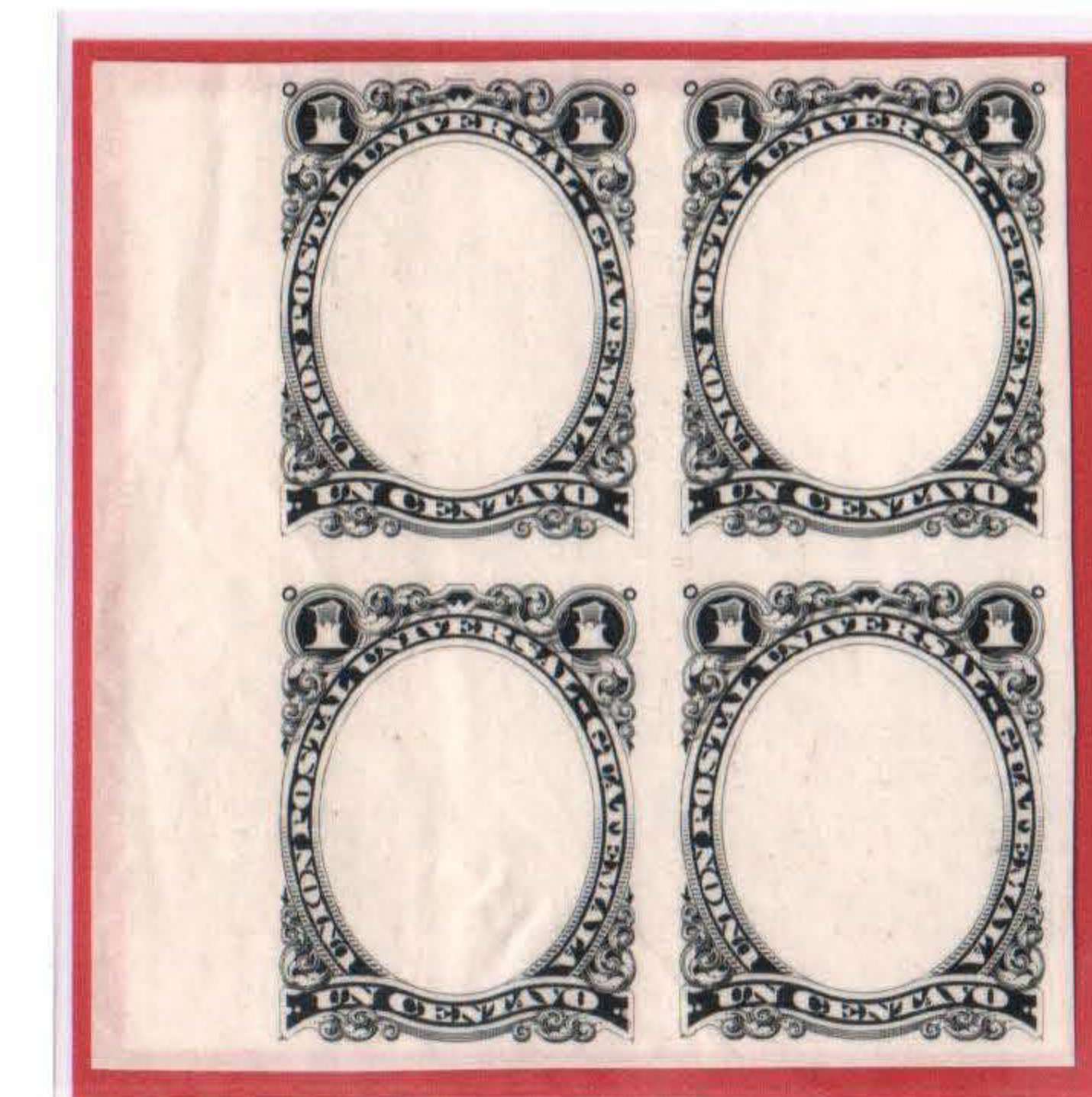
Sunken die frame proofs on cardboard



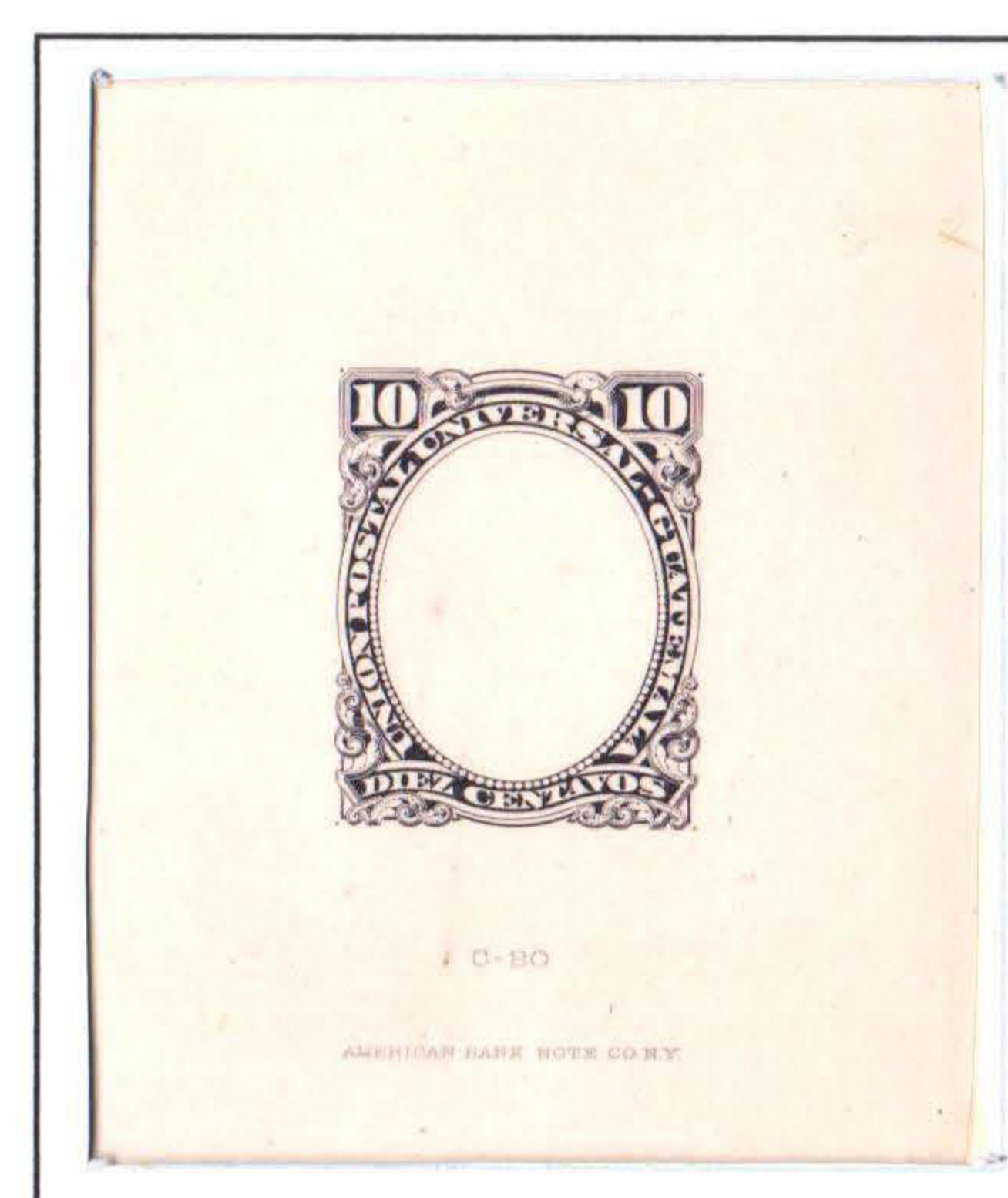
DISCOVERY COPIES

Not mentioned in any publications— Ungummed as issued

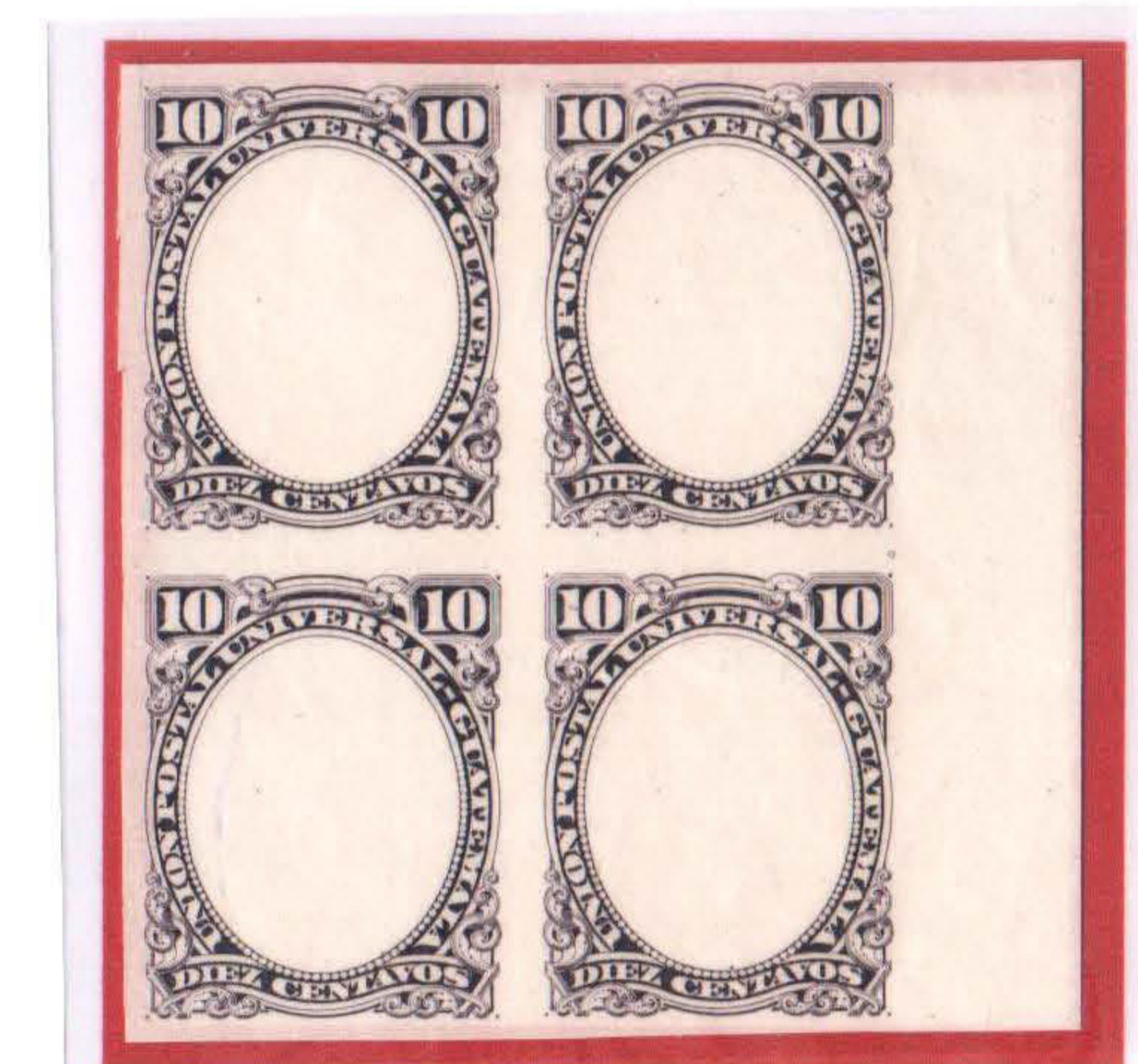
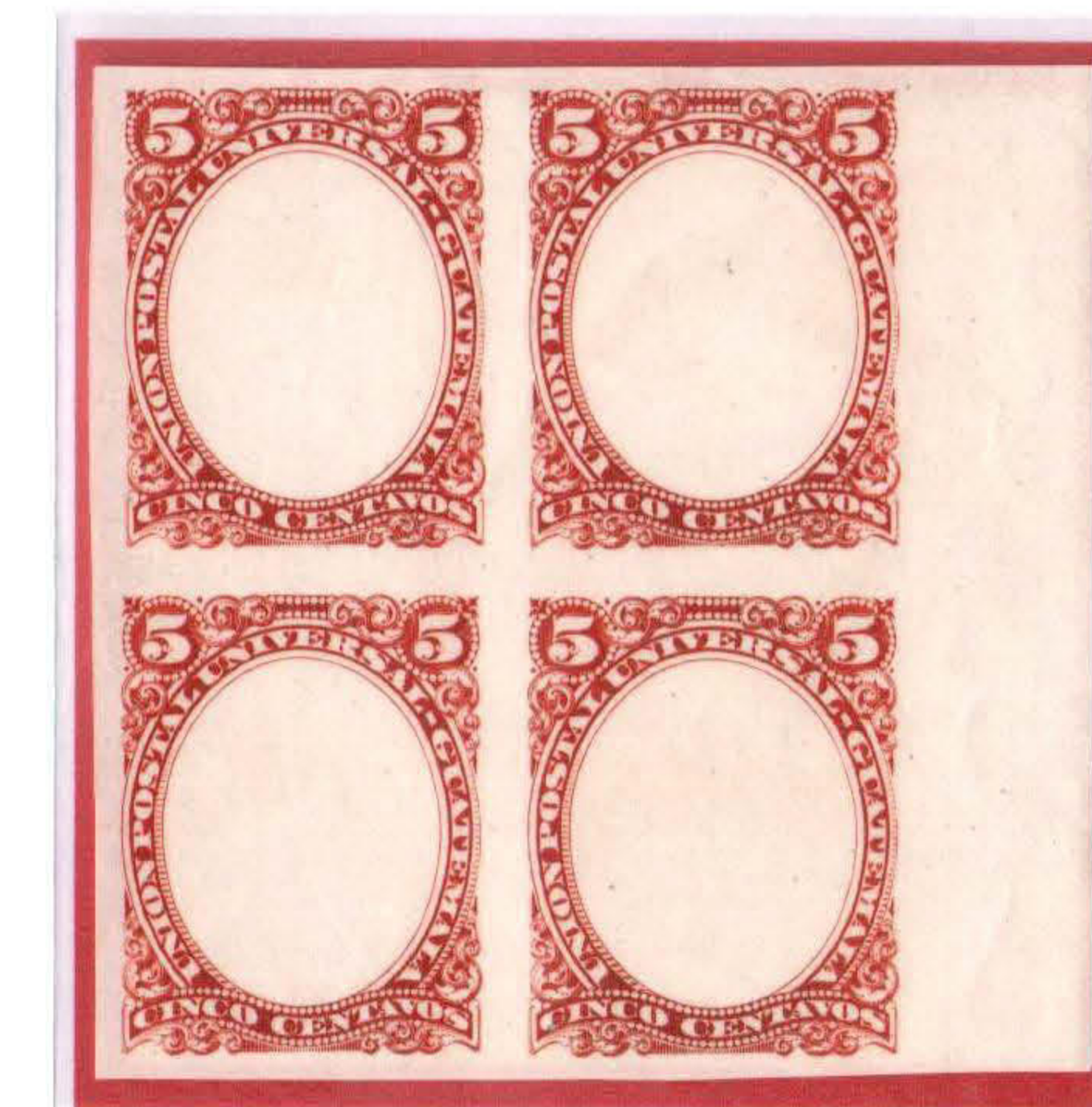
Frame plate proofs in blocks on India paper



Issued in a different color



Single color (black) plate proof on India paper



Die proofs of vignette on India paper—same die used for all values—Plate 2

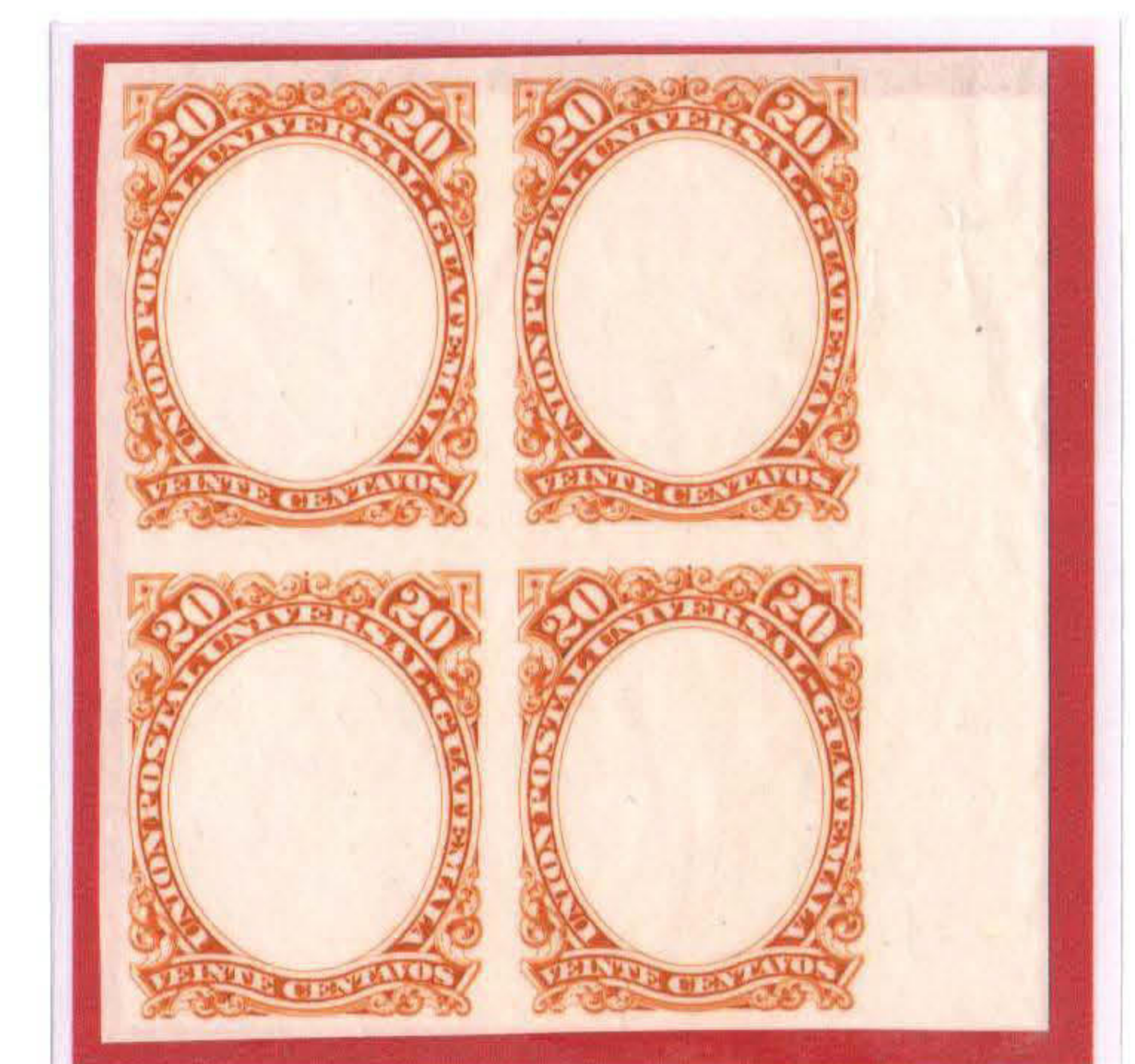
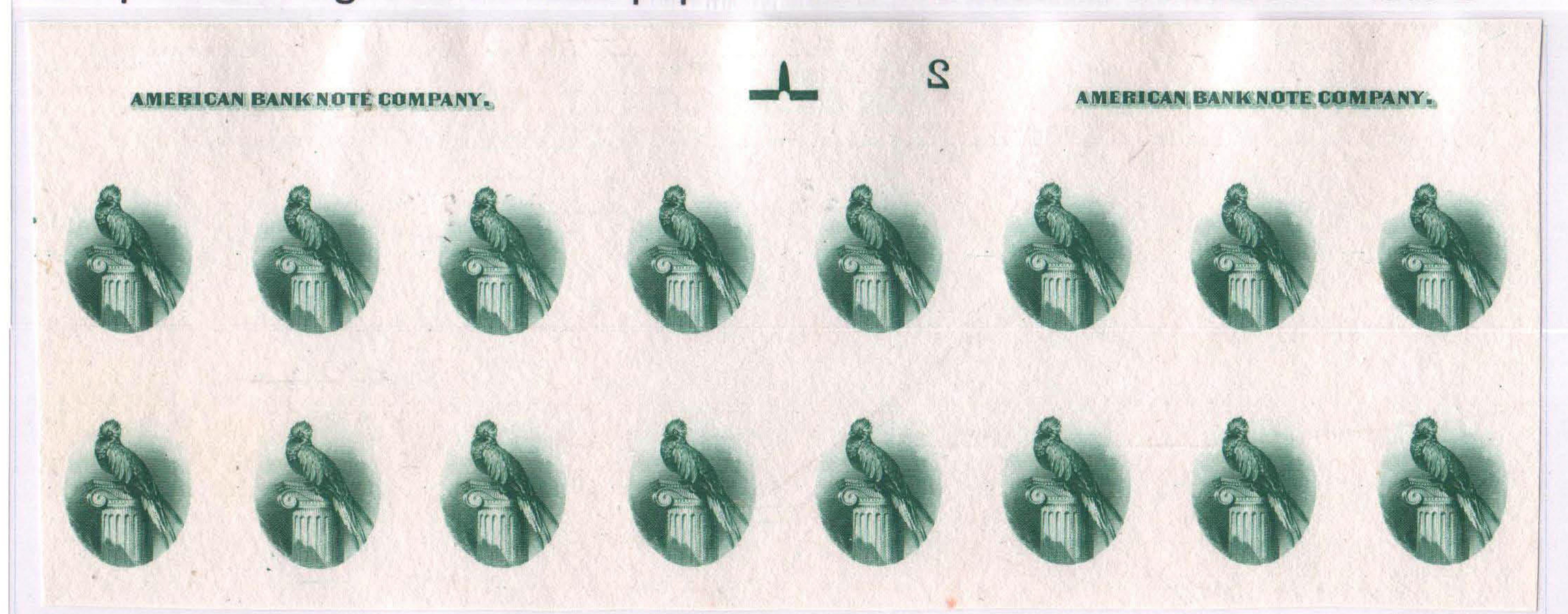
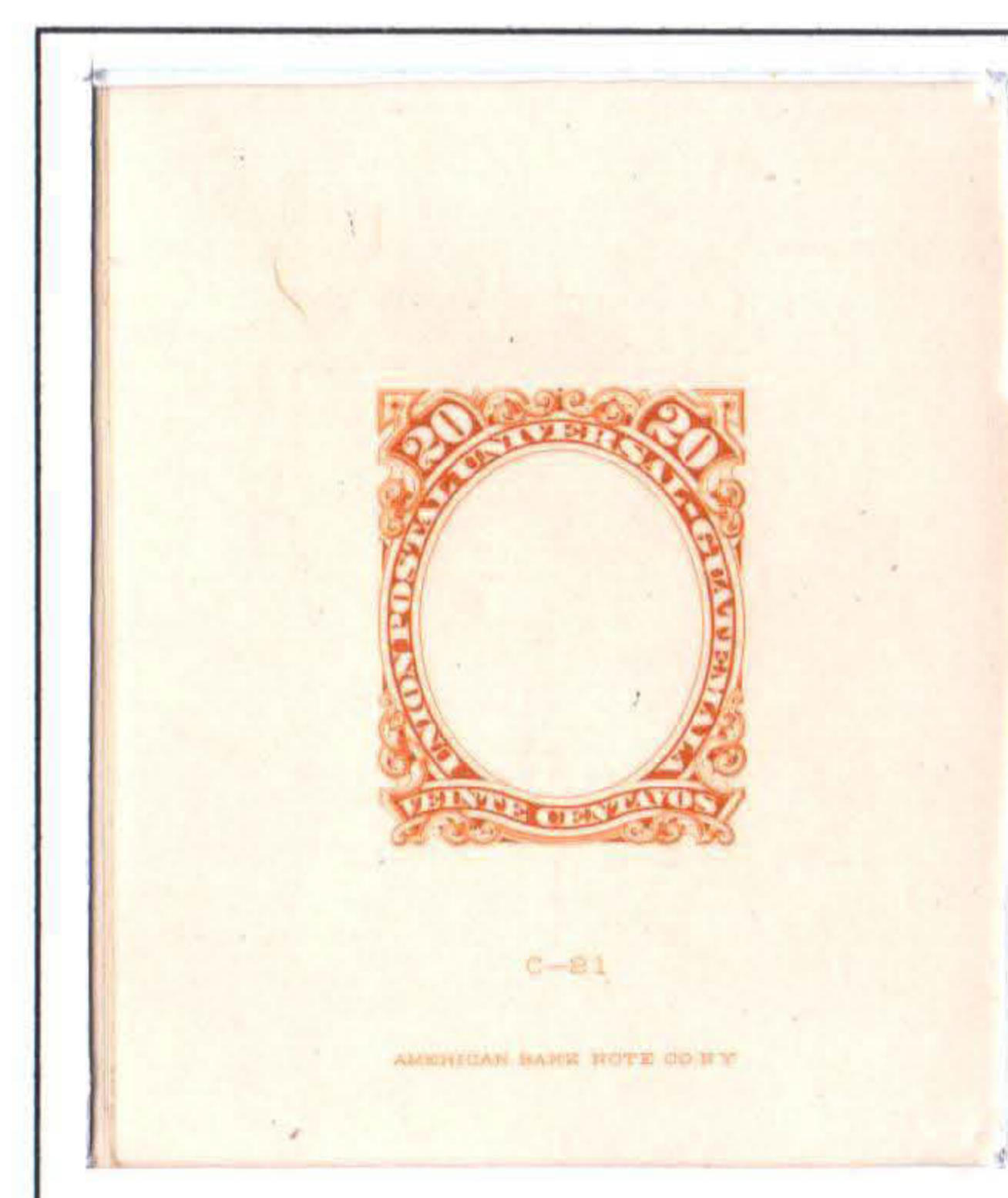


Plate proofs on India paper - colors as-issued



Plate proofs are relatively easy to find in singles. Even pairs are scarce. These blocks are from the lower right hand corner of the sheet with "American Bank Note Company." in the selvage.

These are blocks of sixteen; larger than any previously known die proof blocks.



THE REGULAR ISSUE

A presidential decree of July 13, 1881 authorized having new stamps printed abroad in the denominations and quantities of this "small quetzal" issue. The decree did not mention colors or designs, nor where the stamps were to be printed. It was obviously sensible, however, to have the American Bank Note Company, printer of the Real-denominated issue, adapt those designs to the new urgent need.

Considering that ocean transportation was not rapid in those days, and that recess engraving is not a high-speed process, it was quite an achievement for American Bank Note to deliver at least part of the stamps in Guatemala by November 4th for issuance before November 8th.



1c black and green
1,500,000 printed
Earliest known use is 1882 (no month or day)



2c yellow brown and green
1,500,000 printed
Earliest known use is 1881 (no month or day)



5c red and green
1,500,000 printed
Earliest known use is 1881 (no month or day)



10c dull purple and green
500,000 printed
Earliest known use is 1882 (no month or day)



20c orange yellow and green
500,000 printed
Earliest known use is January 8, 1882

This issue was demonetized on July 1, 1886, with the arrival of the "large quetzal" series, and the public was given until July 10, officially, to exchange old stamps for new. In practice, however, the 1881 stamps were used without challenge, as late as 1889.

We know that the remainders, in due time, reached the hands of H. L. Calman, who is quoted by contemporary sources as saying that he received 200,000 sets. Thus, more than half of the higher values and more than five-sixths of the lower values must have been sold at post offices for normal use.

THE INVERTS



This is the rarest of the three invert, and one of the rarest of Guatemala stamps. Only four unused copies have been reported , and only two of these have original gum. An inventory showed 20 used copies in ISGC members’ collec- tions. It is probable that only one sheet of the 5c error ever existed and that it was sold in a provincial post office.

Used with target cancel. (*)

Ex Hennan and Ex Ricoy.



The 20c invert was also found among the remainders, but it is less common than the 2c. Nicely centered copies are extremely hard to find. (*)



(*)



(*)

The vignettes were printed first, in a double-pane of 200. Then, the frames were printed around the vignettes. Therefore, these are *inverted frame errors*!

JEAN de SPERATI FORGERY

Forgery



Genuine

Forgery back, signed “Jean de Sperati”

Forgery: darker green, less acute beak



Genuine: lighter green, more acute beak

The Sperati forgeries are very deceptive. This Frenchman was a very skilled opera- tor, and he made an excellent reproduction of the genuine 2c invert. He was not perfect, however, and it is possible to distinguish his fake from the original. For ex- ample, in the beak of the quetzal, the curve is more acute in the genuine. The color of the center, which is occasionally too dark a shade of green, is sometimes a clue. The frame is closely matched.

This forgery is as rare as the original! (*)

de Sperati and his wife, Marie Louise Corne.



Quetzal Bisect

THE QUETZAL BISECT

Cover sent locally within Guatemala City. 1879 2c diagonal bisect tied by el- liptical datestamp. These bisects were created by a local dealer in Guatemala City (O.B. Hill) who also signed many of this covers in red ink. Two covers known, both signed by Hill. (Ex Spycher).

Note on back: “This envelope is in the exact condition that it was in when it was recd on April 27 / 86 from the post- man”.



SHEET LAYOUT

Sheet Markings:

"American Bank Note Company" at top and bottom

There are vignette plates and frame plates. Vignette plate numbers are mirrored in green at the top and bottom of the sheet. Three vignette plates were used.



Frame plate numbers are mirrored in the same color as the frame. Five frame plates were used.

The T-shaped markings are color alignment locators.

1879 ISSUE VIGNETTE PLATE USED AGAIN

On the 10c and 20c values, the Vignette plate is exactly the same as the 1879 issue indicating that the American Bank Note company re-used the old vignette plate.

This 2c sheet is printed from vignette plate 2 and frame plate 2.



Vignette plate, note the green alignment dot position is the same as 1879 issue.

1881 ISSUE VIGNETTE PLATE NUMBERS

It is not possible to determine the plate numbers based on examination of the stamps themselves. Only the sheet plate markings can determine this. Many combinations of vignette plates and frame plates exist.

Cork Obliterators: hand made by individual postal carriers from cork & wood
Some are identifiable. Many are not

Large Numeral: Only some are identifiable

Diligencia: Stagecoach mail with name of stage line

Registered Mail: Has not been seen on cover

POSTMARKS

CORK OBLITERATORS



LARGE NUMERAL POSTMARKS



CERTIFIED MAIL



NEW YORK SUPPLEMENTAL MAIL



Postage Due: Before the "T" marking, numerals we used

Ambulante: Mail by railroad

Mail to the Interior: Only postmark shaped like an eye

New York Supplemental Mail: Designates a special service in New York for sending mail after the regular mail is closed.

Circular Date Stamp: One of many examples



POSTAGE DUE



2

CIRCULAR DATE STAMP



AMBULANTE



MAIL TO THE INTERIOR



REGISTERED MAIL



DILIGENCIA



#1 Guat. City



#6 Quetzaltenango



#9 Mazatenango



#12 San Filipe de Retalhuelu



Guatemala City




Coban

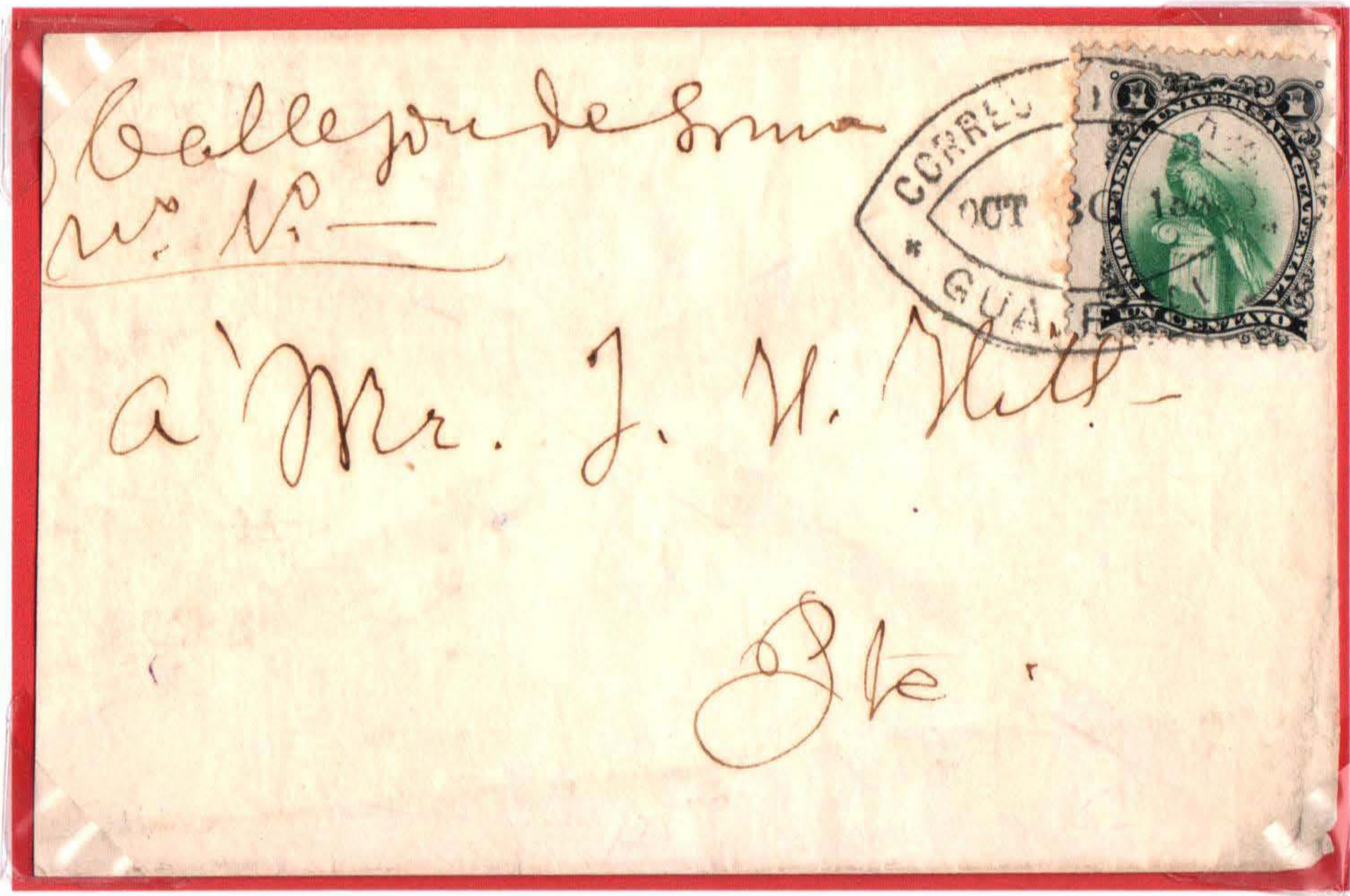


Local Rate

A special one centavo rate for letters within the capital was established. Few of these intra-city covers were saved and are therefore far more scarce than covers sent to the U.S. and Europe. The example shown is not attractive, but no other covers showing this local rate have been reported.



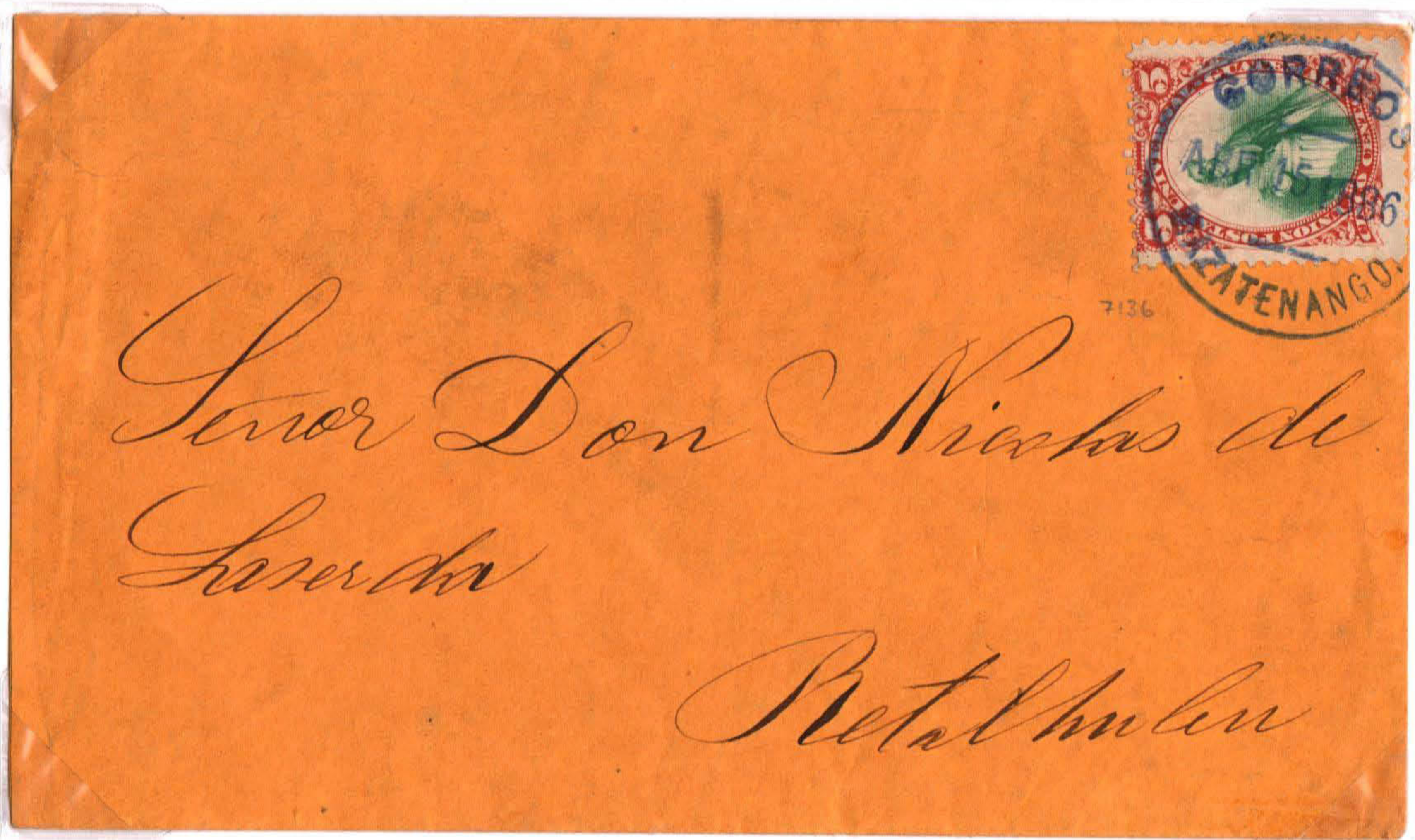
This almond-shaped postmark, used from 1884-88, is known in black and blue from Guatemala City and Quetzaltenango. Used within Guatemala City.



Interior Rate

This is the rate (5c for the first 15 grams) for use between cities and towns in Guatemala.

Sent from Mazatenango to Retalhuleu. Postmarked Mazatenango April 15, 1886. The postmark was duplex with the circular postmark and a three circle obliterator. The obliterator does not appear here.



UPU Countries Rate—To Germany

The cost of mailing a letter less than 15 grams to a member country of the Universal Postal Union was 10 centavos, including the 5 centavo base rate, plus an additional 5 centavos ocean transport surcharge.

Cover from San Filipe (Retalhuleu District) to Perleberg, Germany, via Guatemala City (unreadable date) and London. Postmarked, in purple, San Filipe (January 7, 1885), London (February 13th), Perleberg (February 15th). This kind of duplex postmark, with a three-ring target obliterator,



Special Rate—To El Salvador (and Honduras)

Although El Salvador and Honduras became members of the UPU in January 1879, some rates to Honduras and El Salvador were different from those of other UPU-member counties. The 10 centavo franking covers the Honduras rate of 5c for up to 15 grams, plus a 5 centavo marine surcharge.

Cover from Retalhuleu to San Salvador, El Salvador. Postmarked June 3, 1886, black CDS and star cork obliterator. Although El Salvador borders with Guatemala, very few covers exist.



Registered Mail to UPU Countries—To Halifax, Nova Scotia

The cost of mailing a registered letter less than 15 grams to a member country of the Universal Postal Union was 5 centavos plus a registry fee of 15 centavos

The Hechler Correspondence

Captain Henry Hechler, of the 63rd Rifles of Halifax, started his business as a stamp dealer in the 1870s.

1883 Cover from Guatemala City to Halifax, Nova Scotia. No additional routing information is shown. Registry postmark, June 27, 1883 is purple, with red star obliterations. This combination of registry marking and date stamp was only used in Guatemala City (1882-1884) and Quetzaltenango (1883-1884).

The cover is correctly franked.



1885 registered triple weight cover from Guatemala City, via New York, to Boston, to Halifax. Oval postmark (November 9, 1895) in blue "Oficina De Certificados" (postmark used 1884-88). New York (December 3rd) Boston (December 4th), Halifax (date unreadable). 45 centavos franking: 30 centavos for 45 grams (triple rate) plus 15 centavos registry.



Rare Usage of the 20 Centavos Small Quetzal

There are only 11 known examples of the 20 centavos issue on cover. Illustrated in the December 2016 issue of *El Quetzal* (ex Castillejo).

* Double weight letter from the Hechler correspondence. Cover from Guatemala City, to Halifax, Nova Scotia, via San Francisco. Postmarked Guatemala City (February 1, 1883), San Francisco (March 2nd), Halifax (March 11th).



Franking is 20 centavos . 10 centavos per 15 grams, double weight.



Use After Demonetization

This tiny domestic folded letter, from Guatemala City to Antigua, was sent on December 18, 1886: four and a half months after demonetization on July 1, 1886. The postmark is somewhat indistinct, but the letter inside is clearly dated December 17, 1886.



EPILOGUE

These UPU quetzals were demonetized on July 1, 1886, with the arrival of the "large quetzal" series. 200,000 sets were remaindered. However the quetzal has retained its place of primacy in the philately of Guatemala and appears on many subsequent issues."

Special Items of Interest:

- 1

Essay block of 6 of 1c invert (unissued)
- 2

Discovery set of frame proof blocks
- 3

Plate proofs - largest known blocks
- 4

All inverts plus two blocks of four
- 5

Local use 1c on cover
- 6

20c use on cover

One of the most beautiful species of birds is the resplendent quetzal, the national symbol of Guatemala as well as the unit of currency. In 1879 Guatemala issued a pair of stamps, known as the “small quetzals” in currencies of 1/4 real and 1 real. On January 8, 1881 Guatemala joined the Universal Postal Union. Later that year, on November 7th, a set of small quetzals with the words “UNION POSTAL UNIVERSAL—GUATEMALA”, and with decimal currency in centavos, were issued. These stamps are the subject of this exhibit.

While the rates and routes are discussed where appropriate, this is not an in-depth study of such. Rather, it is a look at how these wonderful stamps were produced and used from the date of issue until the demonetization on July 1, 1886.

Exhibit Notes

Essays

The design of this issue is very similar to the early pre-UPU designs The 1c frame is very much like that of the 1r of 1879 (see 1879 sunken die proof on title sheet), differing chiefly in the bottom part, and there is a good deal of similarity between the 2c and the 1r, suggesting that dies of these values were adapted to save time.

A sunken die frame essay from the American Banknote company, shows a denomination of 1 centavo, but still bears the old pre-USU wording of “Correos De Guatemala”.

Die Proofs

A full set of sunken die proofs are shown. Each die proof has an inscription “American Bank Note Company” followed by a code such as “C-17” and “C-19”

There are die proofs, on India paper, of the 5c frame and vignettes.

Plate Poofs

Note an imperforate block of six of the 1 centavo with inverted center. Why did this come into being? It was discovered only five years ago.

There is also a single-color black die proof of the 5c and a vignette die proof block of 16

The single plate proofs are all imperforate and in the colors issued. The full set is on India paper. Also shown is the discovery set of frame proofs in blocks.

The 2c and 10 c die proof blocks of 16 are larger than any previously known.

The Invert Errors

Inverted center copies of the 2 centavos, 5 centavos and 10 centavos reached post offices in Guatemala. Examples of all of the inverts are provided. All are rare but the 5 centavos is the rarest. The inverts include blocks of four of the 2 centavos and the 5 centavos.

APS STAMP SHOW
RICHMOND, VA
AUGUST 3-6, 2017



The Sperati forgery of the 2 centavos invert is rarer than the invert itself! An example, signed on the back by Sperati is shown, with images annotated to show the difference between the forgery and the real invert. Another genuine invert is provided for comparison

The Quetzal Bisect on Cover

Only two covers with bisects exist. They were prepared by a local dealer, O.D. Hill who signed his covers in red.

Sheet Layout

A complete sheet of the 2c shows how the marginal inscriptions indicate the plates used.

Postmarks

The postmark display shows the wide range of cancelling devices used on the small quetzals, including:

Cork obliterators were prepared by each postal clerk, usually in cork or wood, and occasionally in metal.

Large numeral cancels were prepared nationally and come in three types.

Other postmarks of interest include Diligencia (stagecoach) and Ambulante (railroad) .

SYNOPSIS OF EXHIBIT (CONTINUED)

Rates and Routes

Why are small quetzal covers so rare?

In the 1880s the literacy rate in Guatemala was less than 10%, so few people wrote letters. Between 500,000 and 1,500,000 of each value were printed. The remainders, in due time, reached the hands of H.L. Calman, who is quoted as saying that he received 200,000 sets. Unused stamps, probably from the remainders are, therefore, common, but relatively few covers survive.

Many of the covers that survive, including several in this exhibit, are from the correspondence addressed to Henry Hechler, in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

The 1 Centavo Local Rate

A special rate for letters within the capital of 1 centavo was established. Few of these intra-city covers were saved and are therefore far more scarce than covers sent to the U.S. and Europe. The example shown is the only such usage that I am aware of.

The 5 Centavos Domestic Rate

Valid for the interior of Guatemala.

Special Rate for El Salvador

Also valid for Honduras. These are rarely seen. I’ve only seen this one.

The 10 Centavos Rate to Other UPU Countries.

The 10c rate included the 5c basic rate plus a 5c additional charge. These are seen more often than any other small quetzal covers.



The 15 Centavos Registry Surcharge to Other UPU Countries

A fine example is shown that is part of the Hechler correspondence to Halifax, Nov. Scotia.

Use of the 20 Centavos Value on Cover

There are only 11 known examples of the 20 centavos issue on cover. In the December 2016 issue of El Quetzal, Robert Lee shows scans of all eleven, including the cover shown above in this exhibit (ex Castillejo).

Use After Demonetization

The issue was demonetized on July 1, 1886. In practice, the 1881 stamps were used without challenge as late as 1889. The example in the exhibit is dated December 18, 1886, nearly four months after mailers were required to exchange the small quetzals for a new issue.

What’s Not Here ...

Die proofs where only one or two copies exist.

Artists essays. None are known.

An “Official” New Years Greeting card of which only two examples exist.

Exhibit Plan

1.

Essays
2.

Proofs
3.

Inverts
4.

Postmarks
5.

Uses

Selected Bibliography

Guatemala The Postal History and Philately. “G1”	The Postal Markings of Guatemala, ISGC, Cecile Gruson
The Postage Stamps of Guatemala 1871-2007, Gruson and Jickling	The Jose Castellejo Collection of Guatemala, 1871-1886. SPINK June 2016
“Centennial of the Small Quetzal Issue of 1881”, Edward Diaz, El Quetzal #232	“20 Centavos Small Quetzals on Covers” Robert Lee, El Quetzal #367 and 368